



CRE Consulting Corps partners with CCLR on Rome Brownfield site

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Rome, NY A team of advisors from The Counselors of Real Estate has assessed how the city can best leverage community assets to redevelop the former Rome Cable Complex Site 4, a mitigated Brownfield located near the city's urban core. The group's public service initiative, the CRE Consulting Corps, partnered with The Center for Creative Land Recycling (CCLR) to develop a best-use strategy for the 40-acre site.

The team considered all types of uses for the property and, among the recommendations offered, concluded that the community of 32,000 had sufficient demand for 50,000 s/f of flex or industrial space to redevelop the site for a use that will meet the objectives of the city and stakeholders.

Rome Cable, long a sustaining industry for Rome, terminated its operations in 2003. The site has become the epicenter of the Erie Boulevard Brownfield Opportunity Area and was designated a New York State Superfund site. A \$13 million cleanup was completed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, rendering it available for a variety of reuses. 10 acres are developable with the remaining likely to be dedicated to open and recreational wetlands space.

"Before arriving onsite, we were concerned that this was a story of a rust-belt struggle to survive population loss and industrial decline," said P. Barton DeLacy, CRE, executive director with Cushman & Wakefield in Seattle and team leader for The Counselors' Rome assignment.

"Rome suffered a 25% drop in population over several years in the wake of the closure of the Griffiss Air Force Base that had been a significant contributor to the local economy as its largest employer," said DeLacy.

"However, a remarkable recovery began as Griffiss was converted to a business park and attracted defense-related contractors that made use of the energy and logistical infrastructure that remained in place. At the same time, we found the park full, with only limited large development sites available in the Rome market to meet emerging tech-related demand."

In addition to DeLacy, the Counselors' team included Graham Grady, Esq., CRE, Chicago; Michael P. Hedden, CRE, Philadelphia; Maribel Koella, CRE, Knoxville, TN; R. J. Neary, CRE, Omaha; and Christina H. Thoreson, CRE, Lookout Mountain, TN. Representatives from CCLR included Jean Hamerman, executive director, and Joelle Greenland, AICP, senior planning consultant.

“This site can be activated in ways that will make Rome even more a destination where people will want to live and work and where community members can identify with and embrace,” said Hamerman.

The clients for the assignment were Rome Industrial Development Corp., Rome Community Brownfield Restoration Corp., and Mohawk Valley EDGE.

“Rome Cable is one of the largest and most challenging brownfields in the region,” said Steven DiMeo, president of Mohawk Valley EDGE. “Revitalizing properties like this one is fundamental to creating places that continue to attract new residents, talent, and investment to the region. Working with the CRE team has truly been a pleasure and has given this effort new momentum.”

“This is exactly the type of inspired collaboration that Chris envisioned when RCBRC was founded,” said Rob Angelicola, president of Rome Community Brownfield Restoration Corporation, recalling Chris Destito’s vision for redevelopment of the site. “It was reassuring to see everyone embrace the effort, including the City, the Council, manufacturers, downtown businesses, and residents. The Consulting Corps brought much-desired perspective, creativity, and enthusiasm to an extremely complex problem,” said Angelicola, citing a decades-long effort to reverse the blight and mitigate environmental hazards.

“We were very fortunate to host the team of Counselors in Rome,” said Mayor Jacqueline Izzo. “They were impressed with the level of redevelopment of the Griffiss Business and Technology Park as well as the unfolding success of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. They provided valuable feedback and strategies that have helped us attract light industrial interest to the site as our city continues to grow.”

The team designated for the assignment was selected for its objectivity and experience related to the project’s needs. Nearly 60 projects around the world have been completed by CRE Consulting Corps’ teams since 1997. CRE members volunteer their time and expertise for Consulting Corps assignments—ranging from adaptive reuse projects to strategies for development of affordable housing—offering pro bono guidance and representing high levels of industry knowledge. The CRE Foundation supported the Rome Consulting Corps project.

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