

Brownfield Redevelopment:

Transforming Urban Blight into Economic Opportunities in Rome, New York



Project Blue Crab, Conceptual Rendering



Rome Cable Corporation in Rome, New York (circa 1950)

Project Background

Situated in the heart of the scenic Mohawk Valley in central New York State, Rome, New York has long been known as 'The Copper City,' a tribute to its role during the United States Industrial Revolution.

From the early 1900s until 2003, the Rome Cable Corporation was a successful wire manufacturer located in downtown Rome. The company designed and manufactured wire and cable products that were used in fire alarms, security installations and traffic signal controls for a wide variety of commercial, utility and mining applications.

Featuring an 800,000-square-foot facility as its main plant, the Rome Cable Corporation was historically one of the area's largest employers and perhaps the most prominent of several wire manufacturers that were the pride of the small, but industrious community.

The Issue

During its tenure, the Rome Cable Corporation persevered through several owners and numerous business challenges including the Great Depression. When the plant finally closed its doors, the unoccupied, unused goliath of a building became yet another hopelessly abandoned industrial property leaving a substantial environmental liability in the shadows of an urban footprint. Unfortunately, this is an altogether too common occurrence in what is referred to as the "Rust Belt" across the United States. These properties are also commonly referred to as brownfield properties.

Redevelopment Strategies

Sharing a vision of a better future for the people of Rome, a number of concerned groups partnered on a redevelopment initiative. Rome, the Oneida County Industrial Development Agency (OCIDA), the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council (MVREDC), the Rome Community Brownfield Restoration Corporation (RCBRC) and the Mohawk Valley Economic Development Growth Enterprises Corporation (EDGE) created a community-centered redevelopment plan for the former Rome Cable Corporation site as part of the Department of State's Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) planning process. Making visionary brownfield redevelopment projects of this size possible requires significant financial support. Entities such as the New York State Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI), the USDA Rural Development program, National Grid and the Rome Industrial Development Corporation (RIDC) became supporters.

Grants from the Regional Economic Development Council and Empire State Development were also obtained. The Center for Creative Land Recycling (CCLR), U.S. EPA's Technical Assistance to Brownfields Communities provider for New York, played a crucial role in connecting key stakeholders and agencies about the project. The site was featured at the 2019 Mohawk Valley Redevelopment Forum hosted by Mohawk Valley EDGE in collaboration with CCLR and obtained critical resources and traction from diverse public and private stakeholders, including NYS DEC.



Project Blue Crab, Redevelopment Construction Activities (circa 2020)

An initial part of the redevelopment strategy was leasing the northeastern portion of the former Rome Cable Corporation site to Owl Wire and Cable, a manufacturing company that had occupied the space as a viable entity since 2004.

Collaborative efforts with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and Rome focused on addressing and remediating remaining environmental contamination in the central portion of the site referred to as Complex 3.

In 2010, over 160,000 square feet of the building were razed and additional remediation included:

- **Abatement of asbestos-containing material**
- **Transportation and proper off-site disposal of 180 tons of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) and oil-contaminated wood block**
- **Collection and proper off-site disposal of over 64,000 gallons of contaminated waste and process water**
- **Removal and proper off-site disposal of 250 tons of solid waste.**
- **Cleaning, collection and disposal of mercury-filled drains and mercury-containing components**
- **Collection and proper off-site disposal of 1,245 gallons of wire processing liquid**



Project Blue Crab, Redevelopment Construction Activities (circa 2020)



After further review, the NYSDEC concluded in a Record of Decision for this portion of the site that the remedial measures were sufficient and that no additional remediation was necessary.

Project Blue Crab

Project Blue Crab was a critical litmus test as the first project for both the RCBRC and the New York State DRI. In the summer of 2019, the construction phase of Project Blue Crab began when ground was broken in the Complex 3 portion of the Rome Cable Corporation site. The proposed 50,000-square-foot manufacturing facility was to be occupied by Cold Point Corporation. A home-grown Rome company and manufacturer of water-sourced heat pumps and cooling units, Cold Point Corporation had outgrown its current facility and was looking for a new home. This new facility allowed the growing company to remain in Rome, retaining 30 jobs while planning to add another 30 jobs in the future.

The conclusion of this project represents a major win for the community.

Recognizing Efforts

Without the efforts and energies of multiple organizations and numerous individuals working together for the common good, a complex undertaking like Project Blue Crab could never have been realized.

RCBRC President Roberto Angelicola, RCBRC Vice President Frank Carzo and Vice President of Mohawk Valley EDGE, Christian Mercurio provided enthusiastic leadership to push the site through the redevelopment process.

Christian Mercurio commented, "With the right team in place, the true catalyst for this project was the NYS Environmental Restoration Program (ERP) and the Department of Environmental Conservation team in Region 6 and Central Office. Providing the critical funding for investigation and interim remedial measures, the ERP allowed us to delineate and characterize the contaminants. Without the DEC's funding, patience, and creativity, we never could have pulled this off."



Project Blue Crab, Redevelopment Construction Activities (circa 2020)

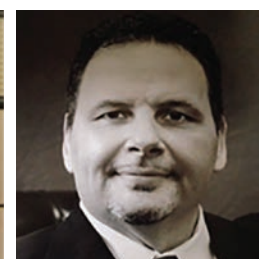


These energizing efforts proved essential in enabling the project to arrive at a point where it could be redeveloped and become a community asset rather than an eyesore as is the case with so many brownfield properties.

Roberto Angelicola added, "No longer in the cruel shadow of industrial decay, hope is restored and the rebuilding of this south Rome neighborhood will play a leading role in downtown Rome's renaissance."



Roberto Angelicola
President
RCBRC



Frank Carzo
Vice President
RCBRC



Christian Mercurio
Vice President
Mohawk Valley EDGE

D&B's Role

D&B Engineers and Architects' East Syracuse office, headed by Frank DeVita, was retained to serve as the environmental consultant for both Mohawk Valley EDGE and RCBRC during the redevelopment phase of Complex 3. The firm was tasked with ushering the project through to completion in conformance with a NYSDEC-approved Site Management Plan and applicable NYSDEC guidance.



Frank DeVita
Vice President
Investigation & Remediation
D&B Engineers and Architects

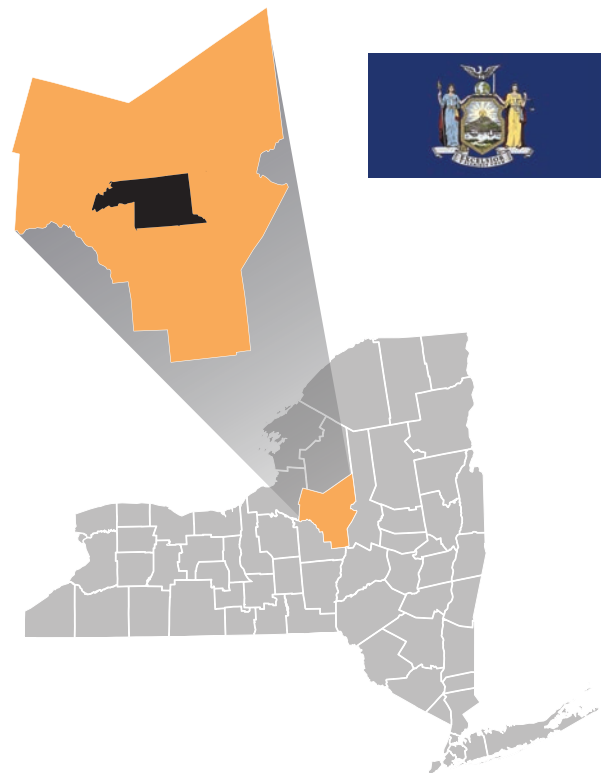
For further information, contact:

Frank DeVita

fdevita@db-eng.com,

516-364-9890, Ext. 3064.

Rome, New York



Rome, New York doesn't have the Colosseum, the Trevi Fountain or the ancient history of its Italian namesake, but it has made its mark on American history. Rome, New York gained its reputation as 'The Copper City' during the Industrial Revolution when it produced some 10 percent of all the copper in the United States. Once a thriving industrial city, Rome has transformed itself by focusing on next-generation cybersecurity initiatives and unmanned aircraft systems as well as testing and research in conjunction with the world renowned Air Force Research Laboratory located at the former Griffiss Air Force Base.



About D&B Engineers and Architects

Since 1965, D&B Engineers and Architects has been recognized as a regional industry leader and innovator that delivers sustainable and cost-effective engineering and environmental solutions. The firm's experts work with partners to develop creative and effective approaches for solving a wide array of challenges with a special emphasis on wastewater management and drinking water quality issues. The firm prides itself on implementing environmentally acceptable engineering solutions that offer safe and budget-conscious solutions for clients in the public and private sectors.