

Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market

On a typical visit to the grocery store, few of us give much thought when selecting our produce about where it came from or how it got to the store. But there's a good chance if you live within 500 miles of Philadelphia, your produce arrived first at this state-of-the-art Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market.

The market has a long and rich tradition in Philadelphia. Its origin dates back to the 1600s when farmers would bring their food to the city and trade it off the backs of wagons near the docks and in Independence Park. In 1959, the descendants of these early traders formed the Philadelphia Regional Produce Market, which operated successfully for more than 50 years at a location on South Galloway Street in the city.

In 2002, when the open-air facility became outdated, Pennsylvania nearly lost this regional landmark to New Jersey when officials tried to lure the produce market across the river to the Garden State. But thanks to an innovative package combining private financing and local, state and federal funding, the new Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market not only stayed in Pennsylvania, but grew in Pennsylvania, providing 5,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The \$218 million, 63-acre brownfield site was formerly home to a conglomeration of five junk and scrap yards, an auto salvage operation and a landfill. The cleanup of this important and strategically located waterfront site was the result of an effort begun by the City of Philadelphia's Scrap Yard Task force, a multi-governmental group made up of members from local, state and federal government agencies.

In addition to \$50 million in private financing, Pennsylvania's PENNVEST program provided an \$11 million low-interest loan to help clean up the site. The commonwealth also invested another \$152 million in grants and subsidies to develop and operate the site.

O'Neill Properties Group, operating as Essington Avenue Partners, entered into a voluntary agreement under Pennsylvania's Land Recycling Program to clean up and remediate the site, removing all surface debris including more than a quarter million abandoned tires and a half million pounds of solid waste.

Today, the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market is the nation's first 100 percent fully refrigerated facility of its kind. The 700,000-square-foot facility prevents the "cold chain" from breaking from truck transport to loading docks to cold storage at the distribution center.

