

Greater Johnstown High School

This brownfields success story begins like so many others in Pennsylvania: a small town that relied on a once-thriving steel industry finds itself in a downward spiral after the steel mill closes its doors, leaving behind skyrocketing unemployment, an exodus of its young people and an environmental legacy of contaminated property.

The City of Johnstown is located in Cambria County, about 70 miles east of Pittsburgh. In the 1970s, Bethlehem Steel employed nearly 12,000 workers. When it closed, Johnstown saw its population drop from 63,232 to its current day 23,906.

In 1999, the Greater Johnstown School District decided to build a new school, something it hadn't done in 75 years. While there were plenty of available greenfield sites in the surrounding area that would have been easier to develop, it was important to the district to keep its high school in the city. So the school district partnered with the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority which assisted in the acquisition of seven industrial and commercial properties adjacent to the existing high school to provide for an upgraded and expanded high school campus.

The authority obtained state and federal grants on behalf of the school district to undertake assessment and cleanup activities, assuring a safe and clean environment for all visitors and users of the site. KU Resources Inc. was retained to perform the environmental assessment and to oversee all cleanup activities, including the removal of 26 underground storage tanks. Remediation was conducted pursuant to the Pennsylvania Act 2 Land Recycling Program.

Grant funds were secured by the Redevelopment Authority from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that enabled the school district to continue the project without a tax increase.

The new high school and stadium were opened in 2003. The expanded high school campus boasts a new 221,000 square foot building that houses 85 academic and vocational classrooms, renovated Cochran Auditorium, and the state-of-the-art 4,200 seat multi-purpose athletic facility—Trojan Stadium. The stadium marks the first high school campus football facility in the history of Johnstown High.



"We've had a rebirth of the high school, rebirth of the community and a refocus on Johnstown pride and tradition."

Michael J. Vuckovich, Principal
Greater Johnstown High School Principal

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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Office of Community Revitalization and Local Government Support