



## NEVILLE ISLAND

**LOCATION:** Pittsburgh, PA

**SIZE:** 1,200 acres (whole island), 400 acres (brownfields only)

**FEATURES:** Access by Rail, River, and Highway; Flat Land; Proximity to the Airport and Downtown, Significant Acreage

**OWNER:** The 33 parcels of land are held by more than 19 property owners, including Neville Development Company and Neville Township

**CURRENT USE:** Hotel (currently being developed), Restaurants (expected), None (vacant land)

**PAST USE:** Military Production

**CONTAMINANTS:** Lead, Tetrachloroethane (PCE), Arsenic

**TOTAL ACTUAL COST:** n/a

### TIMELINE

- 1803 General John Neville dies on Neville Island.
- 1918 The island's first ammunition plant is constructed.
- 1945 The end of World War II brings unemployment.
- 1992 Pittsburgh International Airport opens a new terminal in the area.
- 1998 Neville Island opens a sports center.
- 1999 The Neville Island Development Association is formed.
- 1999 The township receives an EPA Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot grant.
- 2000 The township receives an EPA Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund grant.
- 2003 The Western Pennsylvania Brownfields Center facilitates a workshop focusing on Neville Island.
- 2008 Fairfield Inn is expected to open its doors.

### HISTORY

Neville Island is named for its first owner, General John Neville, who was given the property by Congress because of his valuable service during the Revolutionary War. There is no evidence that the island, previously referred to as Montour's Island or Long Island, was inhabited prior to that time.

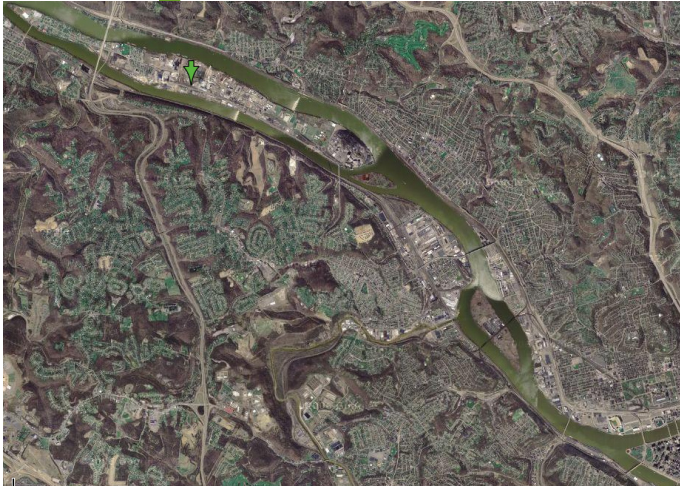
Neville died on the island in 1803, and later, the island became high-quality farmland. However, the land usage changed from agricultural to industrial when two bridges were constructed at the North and South ends of the island. This connection joined the island to the rapidly industrializing Pittsburgh region.

In 1918 during World War I, the U.S. Government acquired 130 acres of the island for use as a large ammunition plant. After the war, more than 50 industries, ranging from steel companies to chemical plants, existed on the island.

The Dravo Machining Corporation, specializing in shipbuilding, made a large mark on the history of the island. After the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941, Dravo officers were contracted to produce 300 ships for the war effort. This greatly expanded development of heavy industrial infrastructure on the island. In addition to in-plant transportation and parking needs, the Navy built five miles of four-lane highway and an auxiliary timber bridge to connect the island to the shore.



Photo courtesy of <http://www.coalcampusa.com/>



Picture courtesy of Google Maps



The end of the war resulted in rapid employment reductions. The closure of many industrial facilities and increased environmental regulation has hindered further economic development in the island.

#### TOPOGRAPHY

Neville Island, located on the Ohio River, is approximately five miles long and 2,000 feet wide. One-third of the island, or 400 acres, are brownfields.

The island, just a few miles northwest of Pittsburgh, is favored for its easy access, level topography, and natural amenities.

- It is serviced by multiple transportation networks including Interstate 79, Route 51, Route 65, the Ohio River, freight rail lines, and the Pittsburgh International Airport. The terrain of the island appears relatively flat thanks to many years of industrial land filling. The island also has functional infrastructure, including additional capacity for water supply, sewers, and natural gas and access to two separate electrical grids, and significant parcels of underutilized property.

#### ● MARKET CONDITIONS

- Neville Island is in close proximity to the Pittsburgh International Airport. When the new airport terminal was open in 1992, the facility was expected to attract substantial new development to the entire area, including Neville Island; however, development in the area has not been considerable.

- The construction of the Island Sports Complex in 1998 encouraged some development in the northwestern part of the island. Formerly a Superfund site, the sports complex was able to bring more outside interest into the area.

- Nearly one-fifth of the island's total area is available for immediate development. In spite of this, a local community group, the Neville Island Development Association (NIDA), has been unable to overcome the long-time negative image as a regional 'toxic waste' dump site.

- The heavily industrialized eastern end of the island continues to have a declining tax base (2006).

#### ● SITE ASSEMBLY AND CONTROL

- Thirty-three parcels of land on the island are held by more than nineteen different property owners, including Neville Development Company, Neville Island Commons, and Calgon Corporation. Twenty acres of the site, formerly owned by Vulcan Materials Company, has operated under various owners since 1912. That site is known today as the AMG Resources site.

#### ● ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

- In 2001, Chester Engineers created the Brownfield Revitalization Initiative Environmental Strategic Plan. Approximately thirty parcels were studied, their environmental history was documented, and clean up procedures were recommended. Information was also provided from Environmental Data Resources, Inc.

- By 2003, Neville Township received funding for two Phase I investigations. A Phase II investigation for most of those sites was abandoned following the collapse of negotiations for a commercial development near the I-79 interchange.

- A 20-acre site that formerly housed Vulcan Materials Company completed clean up in



Photo courtesy of <http://www.coalcampusa.com/>

2000. The site, now called AMG Resources, conducts recycling of tin-plated ferrous scrap and post-consumer cans. Elevated lead concentrations, PCE, arsenic, and a high soil pH were found on the property. Electrolytes leaked and contributed to the contamination. Their site-specific clean up standard required either pathway elimination by asphalt pavement or six-inch gravel covers.

Other sites, such as Allegheny Shenango, Inc. and Allegheny West Rentals, Inc., have completed site-specific clean ups.

## SOCIAL/COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Neville Island is part of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Growth Alliance – a ten-county public-private partnership that advocates legislative and regulatory changes to promote economic development in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Also, in 1999, the Neville Island Development Association (NIDA) was formed as a 501c3 charitable organization by the Neville Township Commissioners. The organization's purpose is to promote and facilitate development on Neville Island. NIDA also initiated the Neville Island Business Association (NIBA) as a communications forum for the island's business community.

In 2003, Neville Township Board of Commissioners and NIDA in cooperation with the Western Pennsylvania Brownfields Center at Carnegie Mellon University (WPBC) conducted a workshop to look at the redevelopment of brownfields on Neville Island. The focus of the workshop was to improve the image of the island.

The WPBC brought national redevelopment experts into the area. They spent several days surveying the land and providing their unbiased opinions and comments regarding the community and possible development.

## PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Various locations on the island have a multitude of existing infrastructure, such as water, sewers, natural gas, and electricity. The island's proximity to the airport adds to the infrastructure of the site. A regional water and sewer plan must be developed. While some area townships have extensive and well-developed systems, others do not. This inconsistency has held back the entire airport area.



Photo courtesy of US Environmental Protection Agency

## COSTS & ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

In 1999, the township applied for and received an EPA Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot grant of \$200,000 to perform Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments on approximately five sites, to complete an inventory of the island's brownfields, to design clean up plans for assessed sites, to educate the community about the assessment, to clean up, and to redevelop. However, the Phase II assessment had been abandoned as of 2003.

In 2000, the township and NIDA jointly applied for and were awarded an EPA Brownfields Clean Up Revolving Loan Fund grant of \$500,000 to make low interest loans for environmental clean up activities.

In 2003, the state legislature designated fifty-one acres on Neville Island, known locally as the Light Metals site and the Dravo Boatyard site, as a Keystone Opportunity Zone, as a Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ). The principal benefit of a KOZ is the elimination of all local, county, and state taxes on activities in the zone.

Also in 2003, the township considered a tax abatement schedule for commercial and industrial properties on the island. The program, known as a Local Economic Revitalization Tax Act (LERTA), permits forgiveness of increased real estate tax assessments due to new construction or substantial reconstruction activities.



Photo courtesy of <http://www.coalcampusa.com/>

## CURRENT STATUS AND LESSONS LEARNED

In 2007, the area began its Neville Road beautification project. The program involved planting trees and landscaping. NIDA's Streetscape Revitalization Plan and Riverfront Redevelopment Strategy hopes to initiate the community's revitalization process.

The Marriot Fairfield Inn & Suites being constructed near the I-79 interchange is expected to open by mid-2008. It is just one of a handful of hotels that Concord Hospitality Enterprises Co. has in mind for development.

- With the Fairfield Inn as an incubator for more business, the 2007 redevelopment plans for this area also include a King's Restaurant, a Subway Restaurant, a 100-employee office building, and a second sit-down restaurant with a bar.

This site is a reminder of the time a brownfield redevelopment sometimes requires patience.

## ECONOMIC/COMMUNITY IMPACT

In 2007, a representative from NIDA estimated, "Right now if everything goes as planned, within five to 10 years we're looking at increasing the island's net worth to \$100 million."

Case Study Completed Summer 2007

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