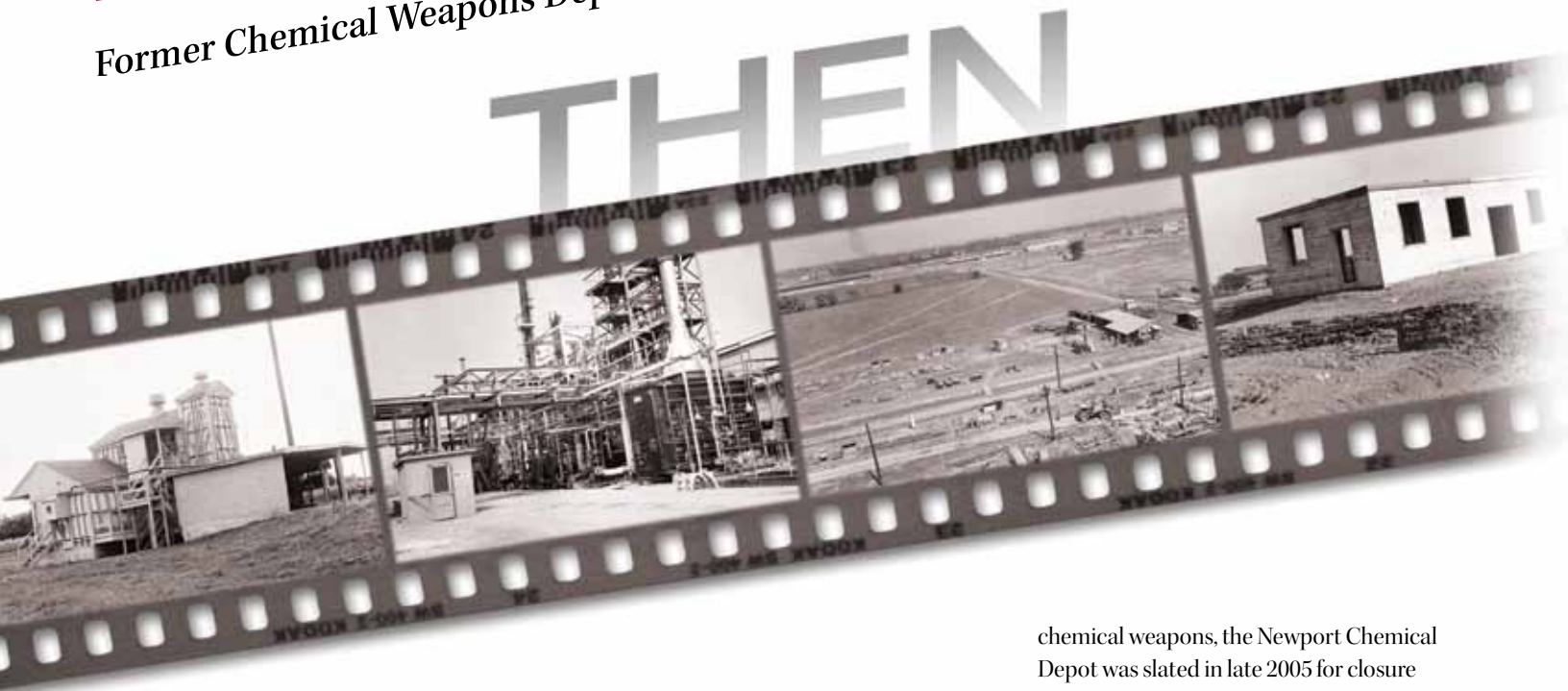


# VERMILLION RISES AGAIN

Former Chemical Weapons Depot Is Cast in a New Role After Redevelopment Process



**It's a commercial real estate developer's dream: an 11-square-mile area in the heart of America that comes ready-made with electric and gas utilities, a sewer system, and an abundant water supply. Rail line access is conveniently located within a mile of the site. What's more, the site is just minutes from two major interstates, putting two-thirds of the United States within reach by truck. And it is all available through a single owner.**

Until recently, a mega site like this was indeed just a dream.

But it became a reality in October 2011 when the former Newport Chemical Depot in west central Indiana was rechristened the Vermillion Rise Mega Park.

Today, Vermillion Rise is being marketed for industrial development and other uses, says Jack Fenoglio, president of the Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Authority, which was deeded the decommissioned chemical weapons depot from the U.S. Army after devoting more than five years preparing it for private use.

### **The Fast Track**

One of nine Army installations that manufactured chemical agents and stored

chemical weapons, the Newport Chemical Depot was slated in late 2005 for closure under the Department of Defense's Base Realignment and Closure program.

The reuse authority was created to work with the community to create a plan and implementation strategy for converting the 70-year-old depot to civilian use.

"We had 11 square miles of a former military installation, and we weren't sure what shape the infrastructure was in," Fenoglio says. "We had lots of questions."

To get answers, the authority retained Burns & McDonnell to help identify the site's strengths and weaknesses and then develop, among other things, an infrastructure master plan to guide its future.

"When news comes out that a military base nearby is closing, the local reaction is often

# NOW



not good,” says Lawrence Fieber, a principal for Burns & McDonnell in Chicago. “The local community is often in shock, focused only on the negative financial impact that a base closure can have.”

But a closure is not necessarily bad news. “Dozens of previously closed bases have been reinvented as centers of industry and research. The same thing can happen here,” Fieber says.

The key is to move quickly and cooperatively. And the reuse authority did.

“It was better for the Army that we redevelop the property quickly to reduce its operating costs,” says Bob Rendaci, treasurer of the authority’s board. “It was also better for the region, which has a highly skilled workforce. By moving forward quickly with our reuse plan, we can limit the resources that might otherwise migrate from our area.”

By performing the preliminary work before the base closure, the authority was able to move quickly when it was officially decommissioned

in July 2010. The property was transferred just 14 months later.

Assessing the site and designing infrastructure improvements required the resources of multiple Burns & McDonnell service areas and divisions. The knowledge of environmental, infrastructure, energy and business technology groups were called into action, as well as the company’s aviation facilities and electrical transmission and distribution specialists.

“It was great to have all the resources in one place that we could call on for answers quickly. It was also a very practical approach for us to get the results we needed,” Rendaci says.

### A 50/50 Plan

The reuse authority’s plan balances large-scale industrial and commercial uses, while retaining much of the surrounding natural environment.

It was developed with substantial input from the local community. “In our outreach, we found an interest in a balanced reuse — using some land to support business development

while reserving some land for natural and open spaces,” Rendaci says.

That plan, in fact, includes a near-50/50 split between natural and built areas, with abundant parkland, natural and open spaces, agriculture and forestry encircling areas designated for business and technology, conference and support facilities, and highway-oriented commercial development.

The board has already identified and is working with potential business partners, including a diversified mix of large and small industrial users.

“Our plan demonstrates that we can attract investment and create jobs, while protecting the environment,” Fenoglio says. “We’re excited to put it into action.”

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