

From Eyesore to Art Destination, The Transformation of the Lost Pines Art Center

The cars in front of the mechanic shop were almost as rusty as the abandoned grain silos themselves. Although this piece of property was located centrally in Bastrop, concerns over potential environmental liability had up to this point precluded redevelopment. But for the Lost Pines Art League of Bastrop, the property was perfect for a new art center with galleries, classroom space, and a creek path that meandered through a sculpture garden and past the existing silos. They secured a \$100,000 grant from the Bastrop Economic Development Corporation and a matched grant of \$100,000 from a Houston arts foundation and began on the ambitious project. It took a bold vision to imagine this land as a destination art center, but that vision is finally being realized.



Figure 1. Two large tanks, a rusted 50 gallon drum, old shells of cars and various other debris litter the grounds.

Before the project could move forward, the art league needed to determine if there was contamination at the site. To address those environmental concerns, the site entered the [TCEQ Brownfields Site Assessment Program](#) in 2010. Approximately \$88,000 was spent by the TCEQ and EPA to investigate the site. After response actions for the site achieved residential land use standards, a Conditional Certificate of Completion was issued on August 12, 2012.



Figure 2. Outside the Lost Pines Art Center building facing the front.

The Lost Pines Art League was then able to purchase the property and began fundraising for the new art center. They developed a master plan for the site and presented it at an event at the Hyatt Regency Lost Pines, where the room, equipment, and refreshments were provided as in-kind contributions. From that, the Bastrop City Council approved a \$100,000 investment. Once they had shown that the project was destined for success, the money started pouring in. They leveraged over \$3.8 million in various grants and donations, including ArtPlace America's Creative Placemaking 2014 Grant.

The main building was completed in December 2016 and since then over 13,000 non-members have visited the center. In 2017, it won the Best of Bastrop Art Galleries award as well as the Best New Construction Under 50k population and Best New Construction People's Choice Awards from the Texas Downtown Association. This project exemplifies the amount of funding that can be leveraged from a small state investment in assessment and the impact that redeveloping a brownfield property can have on a community. Starting with that initial environmental assessment, what was once an eyesore has become an award-winning art destination for Bastrop.

For more information contact the TCEQ Brownfields Site Assessment Program by email at <mailto:brnfls@tceq.texas.gov> or contact the BSA Program Manager at (512) 239-2252.