

## Site Redevelopment Profile

Allied Paper, Inc./ Portage Creek/  
Kalamazoo River Superfund Site (Operable Unit 7)

211 North Main Street, Plainwell, Michigan 49080

### Property Overview

#### Size

36 acres

#### Current Site Uses

- Commercial and public services, including a restaurant, offices, a public safety building and city hall.
- The Kalamazoo River is a recreational resource
- Additional commercial, residential and adjacent recreational reuses are planned for the site.

#### Use Restrictions

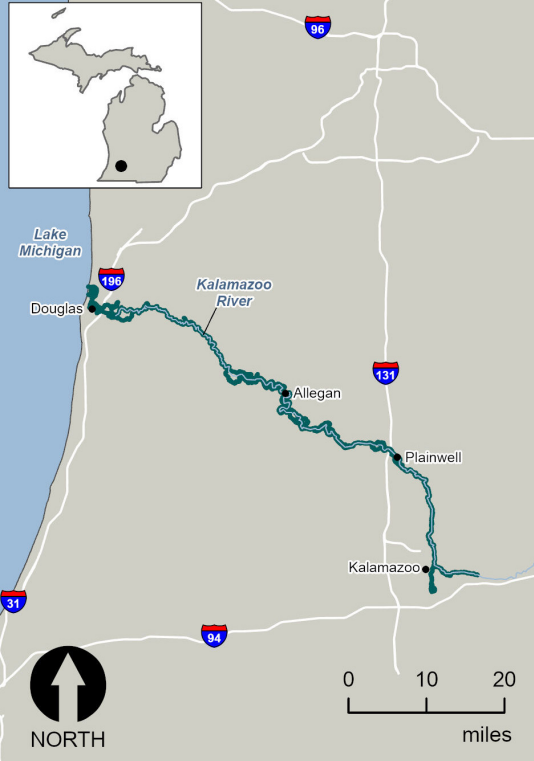
- Planned deed restrictions will limit residential use, subsurface excavation, and removal of select building foundations and slabs, and restrict groundwater use.
- A 2005 restrictive covenant states that site property owners must prevent continuing release of hazardous substances and cannot use the property in a manner that causes existing contamination to migrate beyond the property's boundaries. Cleanup of parts of the site is ongoing.

#### Surrounding Population

**7,017**  
1 MILE

**70,597**  
3 MILES

**134,722**  
5 MILES



A map of the site in Michigan.

### Site History and Redevelopment Timeline

#### 1900s

Largest concentration of 1900s paper mills in the world located along the Kalamazoo River.

#### 1990

EPA added the site to the Superfund program's National Priorities List.

#### 2000

Closure of the Plainwell paper mill.

#### 2004

EPA-supported reuse planning process at the site.

#### 2006

Acquisition of site properties by the City.

#### 2010

Agreement by the City and GHD signed for redevelopment of the former Plainwell paper mill.

#### 2012

Fifty GHD employees moved into renovated office space in the mill. New public safety building opens on site.

#### 2014

Relocation of Plainwell City Hall on site.

#### 2018

Opening of Sweetwater's Donut Mill on site.

#### Present

Cleanup of parts of the site is ongoing.

## History and Cleanup

A successful public-private partnership in west Michigan has resulted in historic preservation, adaptive reuse and mixed-use redevelopment. The project has begun to restore the Plainwell Paper Mill as a vital community resource.

In the early 1900s, this area along the Kalamazoo River had the largest concentration of paper mills in the world. Wastewater from the mills, and the later dismantling of dams on the Kalamazoo River, contaminated area soils and river sediments with polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs. Cleanup has focused on removing these materials and monitoring the river's health.

Starting the day Plainwell Paper Mill closed in 2000, Plainwell city government (City) focused on the future. Local officials reached out to EPA Region 5 and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to learn more about the status of the 36-acre mill property. In 2004, a reuse planning process supported by EPA enabled the community to lay the groundwork for redevelopment. A 32-member, community-based Mill Committee created a comprehensive plan focused on mixed land uses, river access and the mill's history.

Places. Looking forward, the City remains dedicated to developing and supporting reuse plans for the rest of the site property.

*"We wanted to make sure the community had a voice...we wanted to control our own destiny."*

**Erik Wilson,  
Plainwell City Manager**

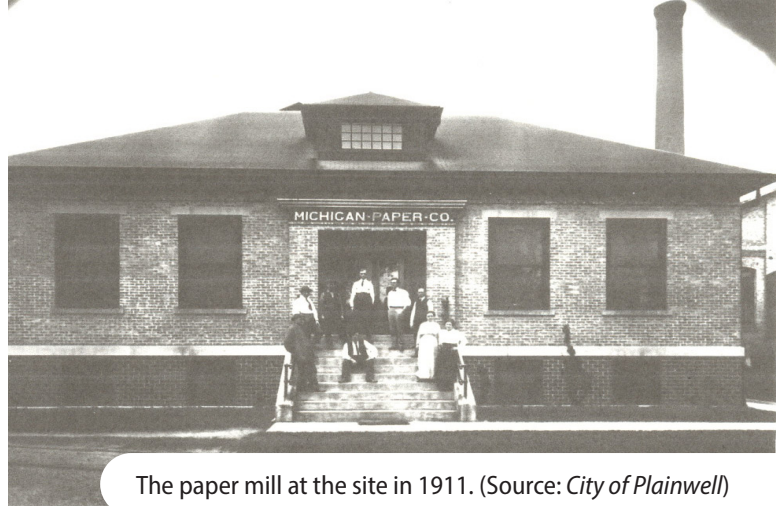
## Redevelopment

The City worked with EPA and Weyerhaeuser, and the responsible party, to conduct environmental assessments, qualify as a bona fide prospective purchaser (BFPP) and acquire the mill property. The City also prepared a Due Care Plan to manage the property moving forward. Meetings with EPA staff confirmed that the City was taking all necessary steps to address liability concerns.

After acquiring the mill property, the City invited proposals from interested developers and chose GHD Services (GHD, formerly ConestogaRovers & Associates) as its partner. The project transformed a former dewatering facility into a new public safety building. In 2012, GHD moved 50 employees into renovated office space in the mill. The City opened its new city hall on site in 2014 and used grant funding to expand parking for employees at the site. Using salvaged material from the mill, the community commissioned a sculpture to represent the mill's rebirth. Renaissance Race is now located near the new main entrance to the mill complex. GHD and city officials remain focused on filling the property with residential and commercial facilities. In 2018, a Sweetwater's Donut Mill restaurant opened on site. The mill itself is now part of a historic district on the National Register of Historic



Demolition at the site.



The paper mill at the site in 1911. (Source: City of Plainwell)



A view of the Plainwell Paper Mill.

*"The City is proud of the accomplishments we have made and the partnerships that have formed in propelling this project forward."*

**Richard Brooks,  
Mayor, Plainwell City**

## Contacts

For more information, please contact:

**Chelsea Sebetich** | (202) 566-1151  
[sebetich.chelsea@epa.gov](mailto:sebetich.chelsea@epa.gov)

**Tom Bloom** | (312) 886-1967  
[bloom.thomas@epa.gov](mailto:bloom.thomas@epa.gov)

For more information see: [www.epa.gov/superfund-redevelopment](http://www.epa.gov/superfund-redevelopment)



The new public safety building at the site.

