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## Renewed interest for Palmyra brownfield

**By Todd McHale Staff writer**

PALMYRA — A former proving ground for the military, also once a drive-in movie theater, and several adjacent parcels in the borough again may be the subject of redevelopment.

“We’ve had some interest in the site from a number of developers,” Borough Administrator John Gural said of the 189-acre brownfield on the south side of Route 73.

For some time, the municipality has tried to transform the property into a mixed-use commercial and residential development, but efforts stalled when the housing and construction industries began to slide in recent years.

But as the economy continues to improve, officials believe now is the time to strike a deal for the land between the Palmyra Cove Nature Park and Pennsauken Creek.

“We’ve launched a new website in order to solicit developers interested in redeveloping the site,” Gural said of a secure FTP site that contains technical information and other documents related to the property.

The site can be reached by a link in the redevelopment section of the borough’s website, <http://boroughofpalmyra.com>.

“It allows the developers to look at all the detailed and environmental information collected (about the land),” Gural said.

Even though the property has been designated as a brownfield, meaning it has actual or possible environmental contamination, officials believe that can work in the town’s favor in landing a developer because it would be eligible for technical support and millions of dollars of state funding for remediation.

Cleanup turned into more of a challenge in 2007, when crews discovered unexploded shells, which ranged in size from 57mm to 105mm, just below the surface of the former drive-in.

The Army had used the site as a testing range for howitzers. After World War II, the military abandoned the location, and the area was paved over in the 1950s and became home to the theater. The drive-in closed in 1986 and was transformed into a flea market.

The borough closed the flea market for several months in 2008 as munitions experts cleared nearly 300 shells.

Later this year, workers will return to conduct inspections of adjacent properties to ensure that no more shells remain, according to Gural.

Until then, the municipality will continue to market the site to developers online and in person.

Officials also plan to join a large contingent from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in Chicago for a national conference, "Brownfields 2015: Sustainable Communities Start Here."

"Anybody who is anybody in the brownfields community will be there," Gural said.

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