

113 Hamilton Avenue, Brooklyn

Renaissance Realty Group, a family company that owns and develops gas stations, acquired 113 Hamilton Avenue, Brooklyn, a parcel overlooking the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel in 2003. An automobile repair shop leased the site, which previously had been a Mobil service station for at least 40 years. The site had four closed and one open petroleum spill. Working under the direction of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Exxon-Mobil had worked to characterize, delineate and remediate contaminated soil and groundwater both horizontally and vertically. It had removed 20 tanks, hydraulic lifts, a dispenser island and 884 tons of petroleum-contaminated soil. Yet the open spill remained.

At the time of its purchase, Renaissance believed the open spill had been substantially remediated. Fifteen years later, it learned that this was not the case. In 2017, a real estate broker informed Renaissance that a barbecue restaurant wanted to open at the site and would pay market rent. Renaissance opted to develop the property and signed a lease with the restaurant.

The open spill would prevent Renaissance from delivering the site on schedule and from obtaining project financing. Renaissance decided to push ahead and hired an environmental attorney who began negotiating liability for the spill with Exxon-Mobil. Two years later, the oil giant assumed responsibility for most of the spill.

Although the site did not have an E-Designation, the owner enrolled the project in [OER's Voluntary Cleanup Program](#) because Exxon-Mobil insisted on a government-approved cleanup, and Renaissance believed that the City cleanup program would be faster to navigate than the state Brownfield Program.



New restaurant space at 113 Hamilton Avenue

When remedial action began in May 2019, the gasoline spill was concentrated along Hamilton Avenue. Groundwater in the area is tidal, and over 30 years the tide had pushed the spill up against Hamilton Avenue, bringing it to within 100 feet of the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel. Innovative measures, including a cofferdam and hydraulic monitoring, were used to remediate the spill and prevent it from reaching the tunnel.

Renaissance's contractor built a bathtub of sheeting and shoring 85' long, 15' wide and 15' deep. As groundwater is shallow, contaminated soil was removed in sections. Each section was preceded by pumping out contaminated water which was collected in several 20,000-gallon Adler tanks placed on the sidewalk and then hauled away. Contaminated soil within the cofferdam was excavated down to 15'. DEC, the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel Authority and OER each approved the end of Renaissance's excavation of petroleum-contaminated soil.

The rest of the site was excavated to six feet. Clean backfill was then brought in to bring the site to grade, an active sub-slab depressurization system was installed and a new foundation poured. The remediation took almost nine months and cost almost \$2 million.

Meanwhile, COVID arrived and upended the restaurant industry, causing Renaissance's barbecue tenant to walk away. Later, Renaissance signed a new tenant—Bass and Bourbon, a kosher restaurant that serves dairy, pasta and pizza. It opened in September 2022 and promotes its business through a massive rooftop billboard that Renaissance salvaged from the original Mobil gas station. The restaurant can seat nearly 300 people, including on the building's roof which offers views of the Brooklyn waterfront and Manhattan.

The New York City Brownfield Partnership awarded 113 Hamilton Avenue the 2023 Big Apple Brownfield Award for Innovative Remediation for its improvement to public health and the environment in the Columbia Street Waterfront District in Brooklyn.