
U.S. EPA Begins Lead Soil Cleanup Project

Heart of Chicago Area Soils Site

Chicago, Illinois

June 2017

For more information

If you have questions, comments or need more information about the Heart of Chicago neighborhood lead cleanup project, contact one of these U.S. EPA team members:

For general questions

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800-621-8431, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30
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Websites

*About the Heart of Chicago
Superfund site:*

<https://www.epa.gov/il/heart-chicago-area-soils-site>

*About lead hazards and how to
avoid them:*

<https://www.epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this spring has begun cleaning up lead-contaminated soil in 21 residential properties in the Heart of Chicago neighborhood. The cleanup schedule calls for work to last throughout the summer. U.S. EPA representatives will contact property owners prior to the cleanup work. Cleanup will consist of excavating contaminated dirt in the yards and gardens of homes with lead in surface soil greater than 400 parts lead per million parts soil. Parts per million is abbreviated “ppm.” You will also see the metric equivalent of parts per million, which is milligrams of lead per kilograms of soil abbreviated “mg/kg.”

Engineering controls such as dust suppression and monitoring will protect workers and residents during the cleanup project. The soil will be disposed of at a permitted disposal facility. Yards will be filled in with clean soil and restored to their original condition as much as possible.

For other residents wondering about their yards, U.S. EPA continues to work closely with the city of Chicago and community organizations to address lead concerns in the neighborhood and to provide information about ways to reduce exposure from potential lead contamination.

Site background

The site consists of 580 acres bounded by West 16th Street and railroad tracks to the north, South Loomis Street to the east, South Blue Island Avenue to the South, and Campbell Street and railroad tracks to the west (*see map P. 2*).

In 2013, 21 soil samples from 20 residential properties were collected inside a Superfund area called the Heart of Chicago Area Soils site (originally called the Harrison Park site). The target zone is just west of the Pilsen Area Soils and East Pilsen Soils sites. Heart of Chicago was part of a routine background study area for the Pilsen Area Soils site when excessive lead levels were found unexpectedly. An additional residential property was identified, and two samples were collected from it in March 2016. All 21 residential properties had lead in surface soil greater than the “action level” of 400 ppm, with the highest concentration at 3,700 ppm.

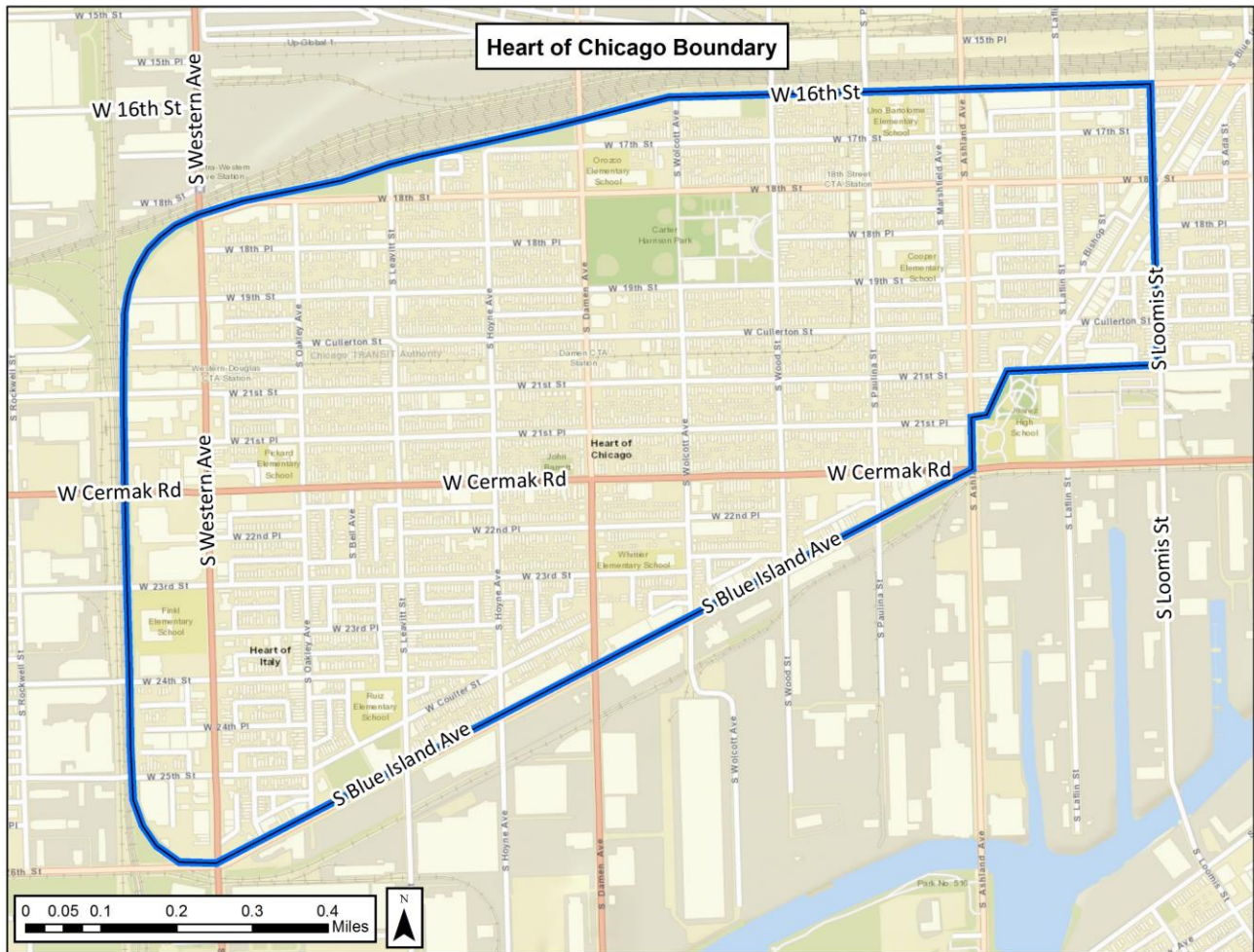
Eleven potential industrial sources for the Heart of Chicago Area Soils site contamination were identified including former foundry and smelting operations. During 2015 and 2016, EPA collected samples from seven potential source locations. This study confirmed the lead source was industrial, but no clear connection between the potential source material and the residential samples was found. All of the former source locations have been heavily reworked, making a connection between any potential source and the residential properties very difficult.

In April 2016, U.S. EPA evaluated schools in the vicinity of the Heart of Chicago site (Orozco Academy & Cristo Rey Jesuit High School) and did not find any soil exposure areas. In November 2016, U.S. EPA conducted sampling in Harrison Park and did not find elevated lead levels.

In summary, the site contains residential properties with elevated soil lead levels.

Because of that, there exists a potential for human exposure to lead, a hazardous substance. Lead exposure by inhalation and ingestion can have detrimental effects on almost every organ and system in the human body. Off-site movement of the lead would greatly increase the potential exposure to nearby people, animals and the food chain.

U.S. EPA's website about lead hazards and prevention tips can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead>.



Street map shows the boundaries of the Heart of Chicago Area Soils Superfund site. U.S. EPA is beginning a lead soil cleanup project at 21 properties this spring and summer.