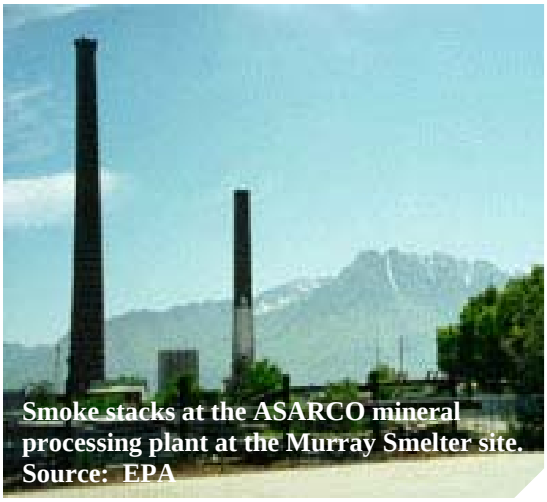
Celebrating Success: Murray Smelter

Murray, Utah

Superfund Redevelopment Initiative



Smoke stacks at the ASARCO mineral processing plant at the Murray Smelter site. Source: EPA

"Existing concrete structures and large quantities of slag from the decommissioned smelter were extensively reused on-site as foundation and pavement underlays, eliminating the need to export this material off-site. A new landmark has now been created from the old; one that stands for healing."

Healthcare Design Magazine – Architectural Showcase

The Intermountain Medical Center at the Murray Smelter site. Source: John Linden

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Until recently, two giant smokestacks, a host of industrial buildings, and two mobile home parks were situated among slag piles formed Murray City's prominent landmark. This blight on the community was a remnant of former lead smelters, the first of which opened in 1872. Later the American Smelting and Refining Co. (ASARCO) operated a larger smelter on the site from 1902 until ceasing operations in 1949.

EPA discovered contamination at the site in 1986. Follow-up testing revealed that years of smelting and refining activities had heavily contaminated the site's soil, surface water, ground water and sediments. The site was proposed to the National Priorities List in 1994, but it was never finalized. EPA and ASARCO entered into settlement agreements for performing site investigations and cleanup. EPA and Murray City also entered into a unique agreement, allowing the City a formal role in the Superfund process.

EPA initiated a series of collaborative problem-solving meetings with ASARCO, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, Murray City and site property and business owners to discuss remedial options and to gather input about possible future land-use scenarios. Murray City received a Brownfields assessment grant to develop a plan outlining City needs and the site's reuse possibilities. This effort exemplifies EPA Superfund program's efforts to minimize barriers to reuse while protecting human health and the environment. Cleanup of the site involved excavation and disposal of the most hazardous waste off site, with consolidation and capping of less-contaminated materials in a repository on site. EPA and Murray City coordinated with ASARCO on the design of the repository so it could be placed under the new roadway into the site and property owners dedicated the land for the road. Monitored natural attenuation for ground water contamination is ongoing. ASARCO accelerated the remedial activities to facilitate redevelopment. Murray City also created the Smelter Site Overlay District to enforce institutional controls that have been established to protect the remedy and regulate redevelopment. This group effort allowed for a less expensive remedy that facilitated reuse of the entire property.

Today, the smokestacks are gone, and Intermountain Medical Center's (IMC) 100-acre campus is emerging as the City's new landmark and the flagship for Intermountain Healthcare. "Green" construction practices, such as crushing the smokestacks and using them as part of the foundation materials, instead of moving them to landfills, were used when building the campus. IMC opened in 2007 and consists of centers for women and newborns, heart and lung, outpatient care, cancer specialties, and trauma facilities. The Informatics Research Center, which will support IMC's clinical information systems and create information technology jobs in the area, opened in February 2011. In addition to IMC, a Utah Transit Authority light rail station with a 300-space parking lot and a Costco store are also located on the site.

This site has been transformed from a contaminated, underutilized industrial property into one with important commercial, retail and public services uses. The economic impact of revitalization is expected to boost property values throughout the community leading to complementary office and commercial development.