

EPA's Superfund Redevelopment Initiative (SRI) is helping communities reclaim and reuse contaminated lands for a wide range of purposes, including healthcare industry facilities. At an increasing number of sites, local governments, communities, local and state health departments and public health practitioners are working together to reclaim properties in underutilized and often underserved areas to provide direct health benefits to communities. The types of facilities built on these sites range from large-scale hospital complexes that provide thousands of jobs, to small dental practices in commercial and retail redevelopment. By increasing access to healthcare services, such transformation of formerly blighted land not only protects the environment, but benefits the local economy and helps address the health and well-being of the surrounding community.

Considering sites for healthcare reuse and engaging health practitioners in redevelopment may provide the possibility to address health and economic disparities existent in certain populations and build strong, healthy communities. Over one hundred additional sites are being reused for recreational and ecological purposes, encouraging healthy and active lifestyles. Through an array of tools, partnerships and activities, SRI continues to provide local communities with new opportunities to grow and prosper.

## Overview of the Healthcare Industry

The healthcare industry is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the United States. In 2008, healthcare provided 14.3 million jobs and by 2018, it is projected to increase by more than 22 percent generating another 3.2 million jobs.<sup>1</sup>

The healthcare industry provides a range of services from complete medical care to optional procedures and testing services. The main segments of the healthcare industry include:

- Hospitals.
- Nursing and residential care facilities, e.g. assisted-living facilities, drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers, halfway houses, etc.
- Offices of physicians, e.g., group medical practices or clinics.
- Offices of dentists.
- Home healthcare services.
- Offices of other health practitioners e.g., chiropractors, optometrists, occupational and physical therapists, alternative medicine practitioners, etc.
- Ambulatory healthcare services e.g., outpatient mental health and substance abuse centers, blood and organ banks, medical labs, etc.

## Superfund Sites Reused for Healthcare Facilities

Urban Superfund sites are often located in close proximity to large numbers of people, as well as lower-income neighborhoods that may have limited access to healthcare services. Many Superfund sites are large enough to support redevelopment into hospital complexes. Smaller healthcare facilities, such as offices of physicians, dentists or other health practitioners, together constitute three-quarters of healthcare establishments, and may be well-suited for location at Superfund sites that have been redeveloped into commercial and office space. By incorporating healthcare facilities in reuse plans, a formerly contaminated site is replaced with a community amenity that beneficially impacts the health of the surrounding community through increased access to health services. In addition, reuse can boost the local economy with jobs, businesses, tax revenues, local spending, and often enhanced recreational and ecological benefits that further builds the health of the local community.



The new Intermountain Medical Center at the Murray Smelter Superfund site in Murray, Utah

<sup>1</sup>Forty percent of growth has been in hospitals, 21 percent in nursing and residential care facilities and 16 percent in offices of physicians.

## Not-for-Profit Clinic: Serving the Underserved at the Abex Corporation Superfund Site

The Abex Corporation Superfund site, located in one of Portsmouth's oldest urban neighborhoods, is a leading example of how a cooperative effort by EPA, the state, the local community and the private sector can bring positive, lasting results to area residents, the local economy and the environment. Opportunities for community input were provided throughout the decision-making process for the site's cleanup and redevelopment. The property was made more suitable for redevelopment at a time when developable land was in high demand in the area by using a comprehensive cleanup that minimized potential liability concerns. The community surrounding the site is a designated Medically Underserved Area or Population, with a high need for medical services/healthcare facilities. New development on the site includes:



The welcome sign for the new Southside Plaza at the Abex Corporation Superfund site.



The new fire station located on the Abex Corporation Superfund site.

**Fire Station 1**, located centrally on the site as an anchor for redevelopment, has improved response time for fire and medical emergencies, and is an added attraction for new businesses.

**The Hampton Roads Community Health Center** (formerly the Portsmouth Community Health Center), is a private, not-for-profit clinic, funded through federal, state and local grants. It is a Federally Qualified Health Center, providing primary health care to underserved/underinsured/uninsured Americans. The Center charges fees that are adjusted based on ability to pay. The Health Center also provides the local community with laboratory services; pharmaceutical services; behavioral health and preventive health services; and education, translation and transportation services that promote access to healthcare.

**The Healthy Smiles Dental Center** (part of the Hampton Roads Community Health Center) provides much-needed dental services to the community.

In 2009, the Health and Dental Center served over 8,900 medical and dental patients with 29,586 medical and dental patient visits.

Since twenty percent of healthcare establishments consist of dentist's offices, there may be significant opportunities to locate dental practices on formerly abandoned sites thereby increasing access to dental services for local communities. The Silver Lakes Dental Offices, located in the mixed-use corporate park redevelopment of the MacGillis & Gibbs / Bell Lumber & Pole Company Superfund site in New Brighton, Minnesota is an example of such reuse.

## Hospitals: Comprehensive Medical Services Benefiting Communities in Utah and Massachusetts

Superfund sites may be well-suited for the location of hospitals. Although hospitals constitute only one percent of all healthcare establishments, they employ 35 percent of all workers. Introducing a hospital to an underutilized area benefits the local economy by bringing thousands of diverse wage and salary jobs to an area.



A side view of the Intermountain Medical Center at the Murray Smelter Superfund site.

### **The Murray Smelter Superfund site in Murray,**

**Utah** is an example of the community revitalization that can occur through a healthcare reuse of a contaminated property. Redevelopment of the site includes the Intermountain Medical Center's 100-acre campus, which brought thousands of jobs to the area, and continues to do so with the addition of an Information Technology Center. The underutilized industrial site has been transformed into one with important commercial, retail and public services uses and is expected to boost property values throughout the community leading to complementary office and commercial development.



An aerial view of the Fort Devens Superfund site.

**Fort Devens Site, Devens, Massachusetts** was home to military base operations for almost 80 years. Upon closure of the base, 7,000 jobs were lost, and the economies of several nearby towns were placed at risk. A large portion of the existing land and buildings on the base have the potential for reuse because of their location and access to major highways and rail service. As part of the redevelopment, the Department of Defense (DoD) transferred large portions of the site to other federal departments and the state. The Department of Justice developed the Federal Medical Center (FMC) Devens, a Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) Hospital on 222 acres of the site. FMC is one of only six medical centers in the BOP system, and treats inmates referred for mental health, medical or sex offender evaluation or treatment. In addition, FMC Devens offers comprehensive drug treatment programs, including drug education classes and nonresidential treatment for the substantial number of inmates who have substance abuse problems. Fort Devens is one of the largest redevelopment projects in Massachusetts' history. The large-scale public and private reuse and redevelopment, has allowed the site to reemerge as a thriving business center that is restoring the area's economic health.

### **For More Information**

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