

## Introduction

The mining heritage of East Helena, Montana, dates to the late 1800s, when the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO) began operating a lead smelter along the banks of Prickly Pear Creek. For over 100 years, the smelter was a vital part of the East Helena community. Many residents worked at the facility and ASARCO organized community activities, including an annual town picnic and a baseball league. The smelter stack and the ever-growing slag piles served as a daily reminder of the facility's importance to East Helena's economy. While the number of employees steadily declined in the last decade of the smelter's operating life, the City of East Helena (City) nevertheless experienced a major economic blow when ASARCO shut down the facility in 2001.

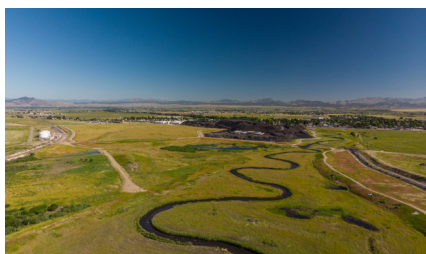
After the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the State of Montana discovered health effects from soil and groundwater contamination at the site, EPA added the smelter to the Superfund program's National Priorities List (NPL) in 1984. EPA transferred cleanup of the ASARCO facility to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) program in 1998. Contamination on property not owned by ASARCO continued to be cleaned up under Superfund. In 2005, ASARCO filed for bankruptcy. In 2009, the bankruptcy court approved a settlement agreement under which all ASARCO-owned lands in East Helena (about 2,000 acres) were transferred to an environmental response and custodial trust along with about \$96 million to complete the cleanup. The Montana Environmental Trust Group, LLC (METG) was appointed Trustee of the Montana Environmental Custodial Trust (Custodial Trust) in December 2009.

In 2011, EPA hosted a redevelopment planning design charrette to gather and synthesize ideas from a broad group of stakeholders, including local government representatives, non-profit organizations and residents, about how the property owned by the Custodial Trust might be redeveloped. EPA, the State of Montana, METG and community stakeholders met regularly during the cleanup to share information, provide feedback and consider potential future uses for the

former ASARCO property. The Custodial Trust designed and implemented interim measures approved by EPA to address contaminated soils and groundwater. EPA and the Custodial Trust worked with local government agencies to implement land and groundwater use controls to ensure the protectiveness of the soil remedy, limit groundwater use and protect residents from exposure to contamination.

Today, most of the cleanup has finished and the community is well on its way to making its reuse vision a reality. East Helena Public Schools (EHPS) has built a new elementary school on a 50-acre parcel of remediated lands and is moving forward with plans for a new public high school. A Montana-based developer has purchased 100 acres of Custodial Trust property and is working with the City on plans for a residential subdivision with 300 single-family homes. Another Montana-based company acquired about 230 acres from METG for a mixed-use development. Prickly Pear Creek has been restored, and plans for a network of trails that provide public access to the waterway and connect the area with other parts of the community will soon be a reality. An ArtPlace grant is funding a robust community collaborative effort to create a culinary education center and employment opportunities in the food and hospitality sector. "The community's collaboration in East Helena shows how Superfund and RCRA site cleanup and redevelopment can help create unique opportunities to strengthen communities," said EPA Region 8 Superfund Redevelopment Coordinator Fran Costanzi.

This case study explores the tools and partnerships that have led to successful cleanup and transformation at the East Helena Superfund site. The following pages trace the evolution of cleanup and reuse efforts, highlighting the community's leadership, project partnerships, and coordination of remedy and reuse considerations. The case study provides information for parties interested in Superfund site revitalization, including beneficial public educational and recreational land uses as well as private sector tax- and job-generating reuses.



Participants in ArtPlace East Helena Food & Culture Hub Project culinary classes. The reconstructed Prickly Pear Creek corridor. Playground at the new Prickly Pear Creek elementary school.

## Site History, Contamination and Remediation

In 1888, a smelter began operating on Prickly Pear Creek, 3 miles east of Helena. ASARCO formed and assumed control of the operation in 1899. The company produced lead, and later began smelting zinc, from ores mined in Montana and other states. Over time, the smelting operation contaminated soil, surface water and groundwater in Helena Valley with heavy metals including arsenic, lead and selenium, as well as other hazardous chemicals. In the 1970s, health studies found that some area children had high blood lead levels. Superfund cleanup activities began in the late 1980s. Additionally, air pollution control measures were installed on the smelter stacks in the 1990s to help reduce the levels of airborne lead and arsenic.

In 1998, ASARCO entered into a Consent Decree to address violations of the Clean Water Act and RCRA, which required ASARCO to clean up contamination at the facility under the RCRA Corrective Action program. Residential yards and outlying properties continued to be cleaned up under the Superfund program. EPA is the lead agency for the RCRA and Superfund cleanup of the site in consultation with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Under a 2009 court-approved settlement of the ASARCO bankruptcy, the Custodial Trust was established with responsibility for owning and managing more than 4,000 acres of former ASARCO lands and contaminated sites in Montana, which included the East Helena site and three other mining sites. METG, a Montana-based subsidiary of the Greenfield Environmental Trust Group, was appointed by the federal district court as Trustee of the Custodial Trust. METG, an independent, non-profit entity, oversees the cleanup, restoration and revitalization of the four former ASARCO sites, and manages a trust of nearly \$138 million, of which \$96 million was earmarked for cleanup in East Helena.

Cleanup activities in and around East Helena have included cleanup at the facility itself as well as cleanup of 1,700 residential yards, commercial properties and public lands, groundwater remediation, and restoration of Prickly Pear Creek. Cleanup at the former ASARCO plant included demolition of all former smelter facilities and structures, and consolidation of more than one million cubic yards of contaminated soil under a 64-acre protective, evapotranspirative cover system, the largest of its kind ever built. The cover prevents precipitation from seeping through the contaminated material and further contaminating the groundwater below, eliminates the potential for human and wildlife contact with contaminated surface soil, and eliminates the need to treat contaminated stormwater that was previously collected and treated on site.

To manage and reduce a large plume of arsenic- and selenium-contaminated groundwater, on-site water bodies have been drained. A 1.25-mile stretch of Prickly Pear Creek has been completely reconstructed and the former smelter dam has been removed. These actions have lowered the groundwater elevation by 12 feet, reducing the mass of groundwater in contact with contaminated soils on the smelter property that contributes to contaminant plumes that are migrating off site. Groundwater use controls are in place to eliminate the installation of new wells in the community and prevent exposure to contaminated groundwater. Restoration of Prickly Pear Creek included creation of 50 acres of wetlands and reconstruction of the 100-acre floodplain. The north end of the large slag pile on site has been reshaped and armored to prevent contamination entering the creek.

Contaminated topsoil in residential yards and other properties has been removed and replaced across hundreds of East Helena parcels. A 2013 soils ordinance now governs the displacement and disposal of soil and EPA partners with Lewis and Clark County's Lead Education and Assistance Program, which provides education and outreach, blood lead testing, contractor training, and soil removal permitting.

Today, most of the active cleanup work is complete. Remaining activities include implementing a final plan for addressing the site's large slag pile. As vacant former ASARCO properties are redeveloped, they are and will continue to be cleaned up as well. Perpetual maintenance and management of some areas of the site, as well as groundwater monitoring, will be needed in the future.

### CERCLA and RCRA

Congress enacted RCRA in 1976 to address municipal and industrial waste generated by operating facilities.

Congress enacted the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), commonly known as Superfund, in 1980. The Superfund program is responsible for cleaning up abandoned or uncontrolled hazardous waste sites.

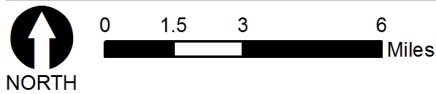
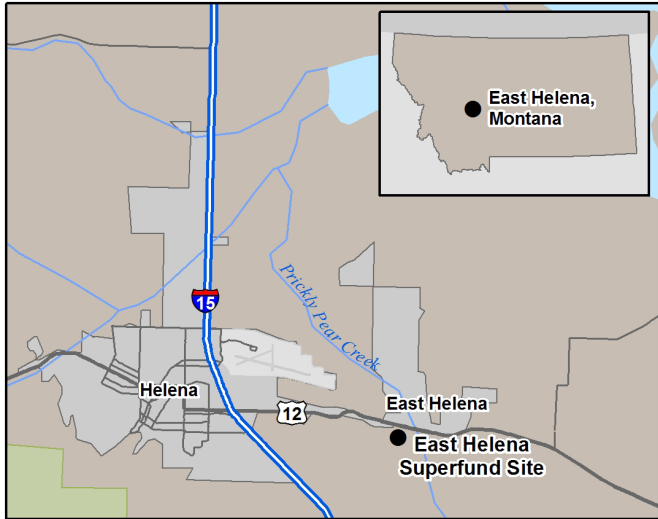
# Project History

2005 – 2011:

## *Creating a Vision for the Future*

When East Helena’s ASARCO smelter facility shut down in 2001, many believed that the closure would be temporary and that operations would soon resume, making it difficult for many in the community to move on. “There was a lot of consternation when the plant shut down – it was really hard on people,” said EHPS Superintendent Ron Whitmoyer. As the primary local employer, the ASARCO facility was the center of community life, organizing sports teams and an annual community picnic. After ASARCO filed for bankruptcy in 2005, East Helena faced an uncertain future and thousands of acres of land that would require extensive cleanup. The closure of the facility resulted in declining tax revenues, leaving the City with reduced funds at a time when it needed more resources than ever to deal with the challenges of the present and the challenges ahead.

At that time, all land within East Helena’s boundaries was almost completely developed – less than 1 percent of the land area was vacant and available for development. Over 2,000 acres of vacant former ASARCO property outside the boundaries of East Helena presented a potential growth opportunity. In 2009, within weeks of the ASARCO bankruptcy settlement and creation of the Custodial Trust, the City annexed the land, incorporated it within city boundaries and established a plan to guide future growth.



Sources: Esri, DeLorme, AND, Tele Atlas, First American, UNEP-WCMC and USGS.

*East Helena is located in western Montana.*



*Early on, the Dartman Property (top) and Lamping Field (bottom) both lay vacant and presented development opportunities. Today, the Dartman Property features the new Prickly Pear Elementary School with plans for residential development as well as the new East Helena High School. Plans for mixed-use development at Lamping Field are underway.*

## Natural Resources Damage Settlement

To compensate for environmental resource damages in East Helena, which are accounted for as part of the Natural Resources Damages Assessment process, ASARCO transferred \$5 million to the State of Montana to be used for the restoration or replacement of injured or lost natural resources. In addition, METG currently holds 232 acres of former ASARCO land, including wetlands along Prickly Pear Creek, that the state has an option to retain.



*Constructed wetlands at the East Helena site.*

The annexed land presented new challenges and responsibilities. The land is contaminated and lacks basic infrastructure and, because of the annexation, the City expends tens of thousands of dollars to maintain miles of roads previously been managed by Lewis and Clark County. Over time, city officials began to wonder whether the annexation had been a good idea. “At the time, they were worried about Helena annexing the land and East Helena losing its identity,” said East Helena Department of Public Works Director Scott St. Clair. “If we had this to do again, it would be better to wait for development plans to be put in place before annexing the land.”

To tackle these challenges, the community needed to come together and create a vision for its future. In 2011, EPA’s Superfund Redevelopment Initiative funded a day-long visioning process, or charrette. During the workshop, community representatives and key stakeholders developed a preliminary vision as well as long-term goals and priorities to shape the remediation and local planning processes. The discussion focused on three areas: land use, cultural heritage and habitat/recreation. The process helped the community better understand how the Custodial Trust could partner with local stakeholders as METG fulfilled its cleanup responsibilities and gave EPA valuable information about what the community wanted from the cleanup and redevelopment of the site.

Community development priorities identified during the charrette process included developing an industrial park at the East Fields, expanding public and residential uses at the Dartman Property, developing commercial, retail and office uses at Lamping Field, and preserving the historic former Plant Manager’s house on site (see map, next page).

The community also discussed recreational and ecological priorities, including restoring Prickly Pear Creek, establishing a recreational and heritage resource along the creek, and establishing a regional trail network connecting East Helena to Helena, Lake Helena and Montana City. The Prickly Pear Land Trust (PPLT), which works to preserve the rural character of the surrounding valley and connect people with public lands and trails, first articulated a vision for the Prickly Pear Creek restoration and trail system at the charrette. “It was gratifying

to hear such a positive reaction to our idea,” said PPLT Land Protection Coordinator Andrea Silverman.

With a clearer idea of the possibilities for the future, East Helena was ready to take the next steps in laying the foundations for that work.

### Montana Environmental Trust Group (METG)

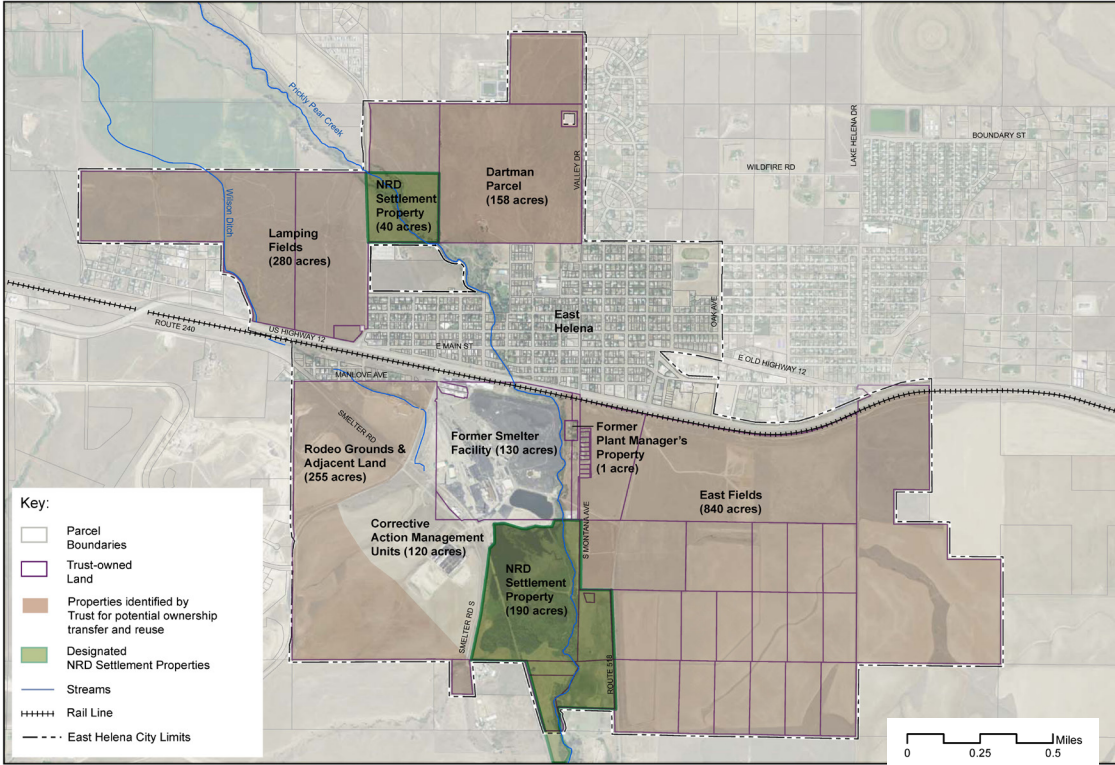
The Custodial Trust is one of three trusts established as part of ASARCO’s bankruptcy to manage cleanup at former ASARCO properties in 13 states. Greenfield Environmental Trust Group, of which METG is a subsidiary, has 30 years of experience managing environmental trusts for complex cleanup and redevelopment of federal Superfund sites across the country. Greenfield has won two national Phoenix Awards, and many other awards for its redevelopment success at sites including the Industri-Plex Superfund site in Woburn, Massachusetts, and the Mountain Pine Pressure Treating Superfund site in Plainview, Arkansas. METG views its relationships with the community of East Helena as a priority, hosting and attending meetings and open houses to discuss remediation and redevelopment progress, sponsoring important public events, and conducting educational and community outreach activities. “They have been a great partner – we wouldn’t have been able to do what has been done without the trust,” said EPA Project Manager Betsy Burns.



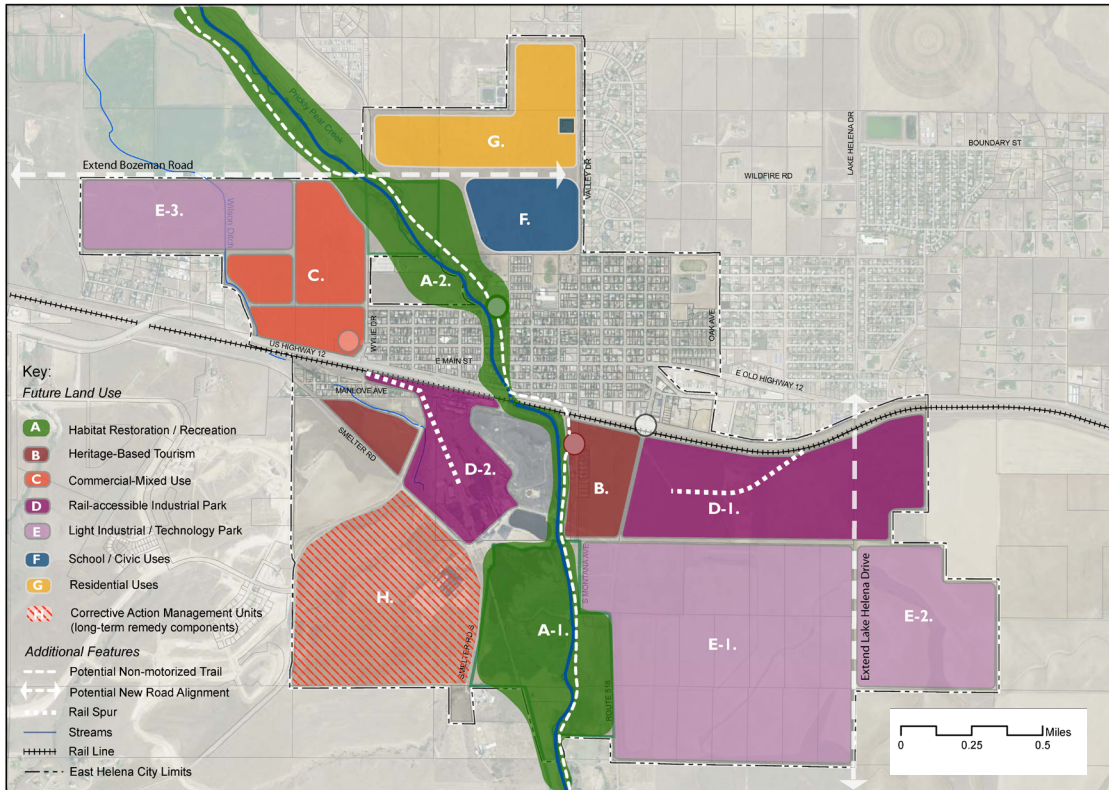
Prickly Pear Creek prior to restoration, with the site’s slag pile in the background.



Participants in the day-long charrette sketched out ideas for future reuse on large maps of the area.



Map of trust properties prepared for the charrette process.



Conceptual map of future site uses based on feedback from community stakeholders during the charrette process.

## 2012 – 2017:

### ***Laying the Groundwork***

In addition to the long-term vision established during the charrette, East Helena stakeholders had defined concrete near-term goals. These included completing the zoning for the annexed lands, integrating the vision for future uses into the City's updated growth policy, establishing institutional controls and putting a development process in place. Work on these key activities began immediately after the completion of the charrette.

In 2012, METG commissioned a redevelopment planning initiative to evaluate potential future uses in more detail and help guide zoning plans in East Helena consistent with the goals of the East Helena Growth Policy. Based on an analysis of prevailing market conditions as well as the opportunities and constraints for redevelopment of its 2,000 acres of East Helena land, the Custodial Trust developed several conceptual redevelopment plans that aligned with community goals and priorities.

### ***Working Together to Protect Public Health***

Working closely with EPA and the Custodial Trust, local governments developed the land and groundwater restrictions – known as institutional controls – to help protect public health and prevent exposure to contaminated soil and groundwater. The cornerstone of the institutional controls is the Lewis and Clark County Lead Education and Assistance Program (LEAP), which works with community stakeholders, providing environmental assessments, blood lead screening services, training, and public education and outreach. LEAP is one of the most effective lead abatement and education programs in the country.

When it was first established, LEAP had to develop relationships with community members who saw LEAP as an extension of the government that they blamed for shutdown of the ASARCO facility. East Helena families did not distinguish between the county and federal government agencies. LEAP managers worked hard to turn things around. “We reached out to contractors, banks and the real estate community to develop

***“The Lead Education and Assistance Program implemented by the Lewis and Clark County Health Department has been very effective at educating parents on how to reduce their children’s exposure to the remaining lead in the residential soils.”***

– Karen Ogden  
Community Involvement Coordinator  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality

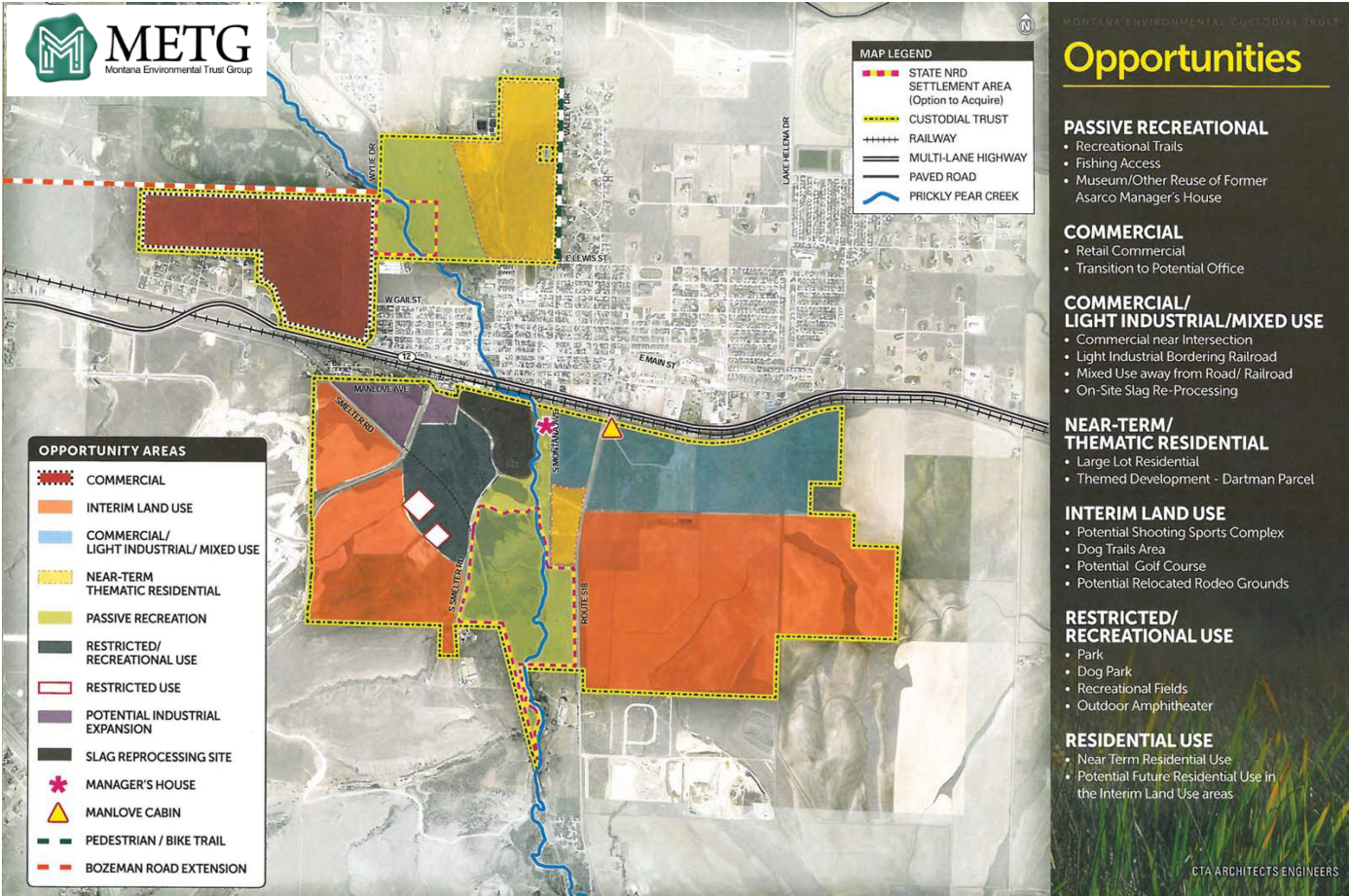
### **Institutional Controls: A Brief Overview\***

- Institutional controls are legal and administrative tools used to maintain protection of human health and the environment at sites. They do not involve construction or physical changes to a site.
- Institutional controls play an important role when a cleanup is conducted and when it is too difficult or too costly to remove all contamination from a site.
- Institutional controls are designed to lower the potential for people and the environment to be exposed to contamination that remains after active removal is complete.
- There are four types of institutional controls: government controls (local laws or permits), proprietary controls (private property use restrictions), enforcement tools (consent decrees; unilateral orders), and informational devices (deed notices; public advisories).
- Institutional controls are usually most effective when layered (i.e., multiple institutional controls of different types working together) to improve protectiveness.
- Seeking community input and involvement can maximize the effectiveness of Institutional controls.
- Most cleanups will need to use a combination of engineered remedies and institutional controls.

\* Information adapted from EPA's *Citizen's Guide to Understanding Institutional Controls*

relationships, and to demonstrate that the institutional controls are not just an additional regulation – they are an assurance that the community is safe and someone is watching out,” said Lewis and Clark County Environmental Health Services Division Administrator Kathy Moore. To minimize downtime and the burden on businesses, LEAP provides soil displacement permitting and contractor training on site.

LEAP's community outreach and education efforts have been a tremendous success, and recent testing has confirmed low blood lead levels in area residents. “Now, we are focusing on reaching out to the banking community,” said LEAP staff member Jan Williams. “Refinancing for home renovation is a key time to reach homeowners with information about lead, because opening up attics and removing old carpet can expose homeowners to lead.”



Opportunities identified in METG's 2012 Opportunities and Constraints Plans: Redevelopment Planning Studies for East Helena Smelter. Image used with permission of the Montana Environmental Trust Group, LLC.

**Putting Former ASARCO Lands Back to Use**

METG also got to work on its goal of cleaning up and transferring all lands in its holdings to other parties. The first land sale took place in 2012, when METG sold about 5 acres of property to American Chemet, the largest employer in East Helena, to allow the company to expand its plant next to the former smelter. In 2014, the Custodial Trust donated a number of parcels, easements and road rights-of-way to the City, allowing them to formalize agreements that had been handshake agreements with ASARCO in the past. The Custodial Trust also donated a parcel to Lewis and Clark County where the locality has since built a new search and rescue facility.

In 2016, the Custodial Trust donated 50 acres of the Dartman Field Property to EHPS for construction of a new elementary school, helping the community address one of the priorities identified during the planning charrette: with the area's population growing, the school system needed to consider facility expansion. Expected growth in new home construction included the Mountain View Meadows subdivision, which had the potential for 1,800 new homes. EHPS had commissioned a study evaluating options for a new elementary school and

the Dartman Property, Lamping Field and East Fields had all been among the sites considered. The Dartman Property was selected over other proposed alternatives after weighing factors including financial feasibility, public opinion, environmental impacts, operation and maintenance, technical feasibility, access and safety, and long-term flexibility.

While substantial work was underway to advance the area's cleanup and reuse of the area, much of that work was not easily visible or tangible to community members. That was about to change.



Sign for lands managed by METG.

## The Plant Manager's House

One of the last remaining historic features in East Helena was the smelter plant manager's house. It was identified by charrette participants as an important resource to preserve and restore as a heritage museum and catalyst for community revitalization. Unfortunately, before restoration efforts could get underway, the structure was destroyed by fire. Today, the most prominent historical feature at the site is the slag pile that lies along Prickly Pear Creek.



Ribbon cutting celebrating the Prickly Pear Elementary School opening.



Prickly Pear Elementary School entrance.

## 2018 – Present: *Turning Plans into Actions*

With project partnerships and foundational building blocks in place, the community's vision laid out in the charrette began taking shape over the next several years.

EHPS completed construction of the \$12 million Prickly Pear Elementary School on the Dartman Field property donated by METG. The school opened in August 2018. EPA coordinated closely with EHPS on a soil remediation plan and oversaw cleanup work. According to Cindy Brooks, President of the Greenfield Environmental Trust Group and head of METG, "the community's investment in a new elementary school on Dartman Property sends a powerful message to the risk-averse private sector that Dartman Field and other former ASARCO lands can be safely and protectively redeveloped."

Additionally, METG entered into a public-private partnership with the Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC). Grants from the Montana Department of Commerce Big Sky Trust Fund and matching funds from METG funded the development of materials to support the marketing and sale of the 254-acre Lamping Field property. Due to its prime location and its suitability for commercial development, the goal was to leverage redevelopment of Lamping Field to help to catalyze redevelopment of the remaining METG lands. That effort became a reality in 2018 when Town Pump, a Montana-based company that owns and operates hundreds of convenience stores, gas stations, restaurants, hotels and casinos, acquired the 254-acre Lamping Field property for mixed-use development.

In December 2018, METG sold 100 acres of Dartman Field property to the Montana-based Oakland Companies, which specializes in development of single-family homes targeted at first-time home buyers. Oakland plans to construct a 300-unit residential development on property that abuts the Prickly Pear Elementary School, the future East Helena High School and the proposed location of a trail system.

***"The realignment of the creek has been a huge milestone over the last few years that will help with site conditions."***

– Jenny Chambers, Montana Department of Environmental Quality Waste Management & Remediation Division Administrator



## Realizing Recreation and Open Space Aspirations

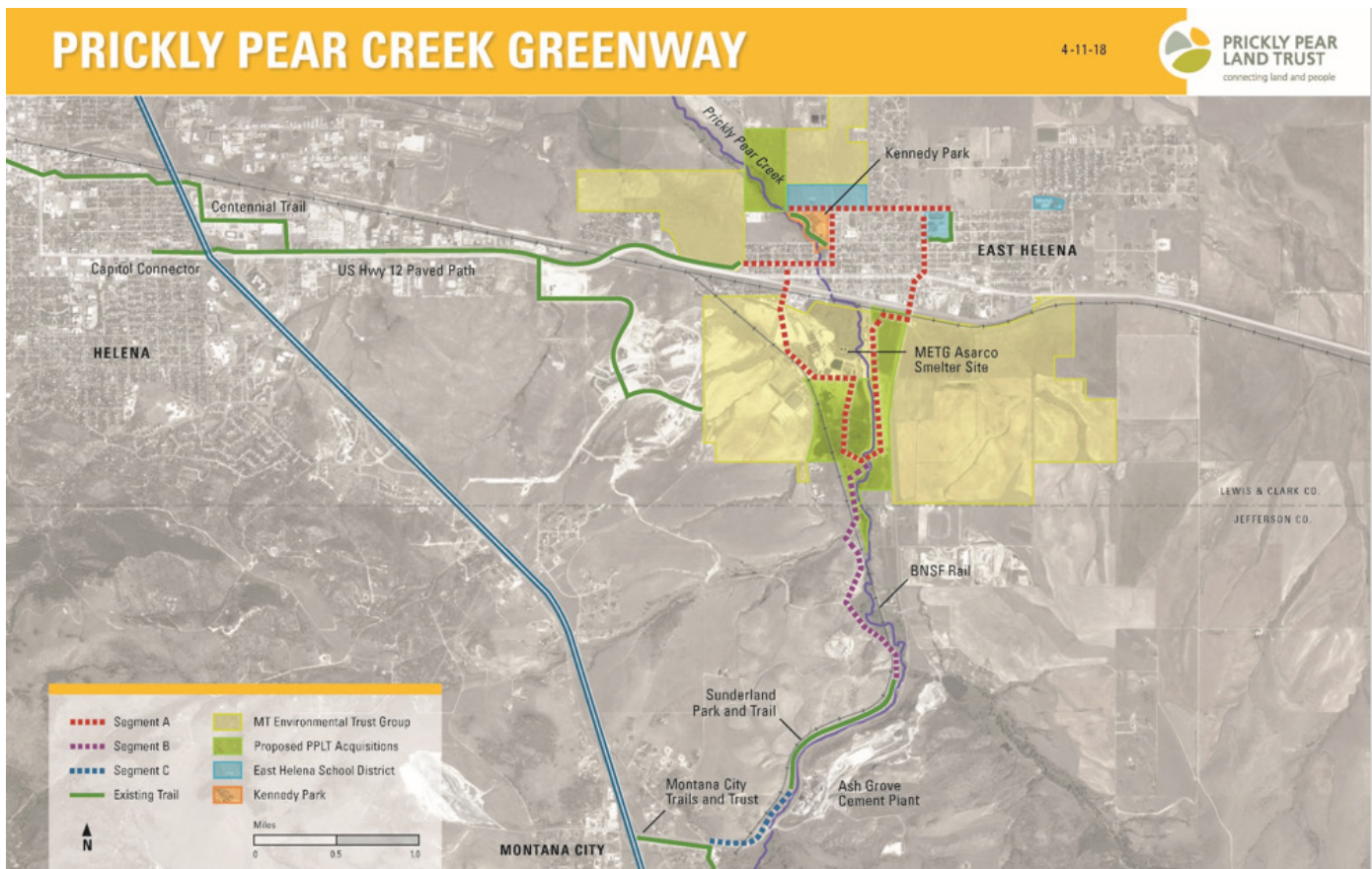
PPLT, a non-profit community land trust, has been hard at work on plans for the Prickly Pear Creek Greenway Project, a proposed trail system from Montana City to East Helena and beyond that would provide educational opportunities for local students, public access to Prickly Pear Creek, and options for a safe transportation corridor through the area.

In 2016, PPLT received a grant from the Montana Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) to evaluate the feasibility of constructing the Greenway Project, including a trail system along Prickly Pear Creek, which has been revitalized by METG as part of the RCRA cleanup. Based on the study results, PPLT has proposed acquiring over 300 acres of land owned by METG, including a riparian corridor and open space as well as 232 acres of floodplain and wetlands set aside for open space under the bankruptcy settlement.

Under its proposed plan, PPLT would manage the land and trail system until a future date when it can hand over control to the City or a regional parks system. The organization’s public outreach for the effort has included stakeholder meetings, public open houses, meetings with city and state agencies, organizations, and private companies, and an opinion survey. PPLT and METG have partnered on the scope and plans for the Greenway Project. PPLT and EHPS are collaborating on creation of a walking path near the new elementary school that will provide access to Prickly Pear Creek.



Prickly Pear Creek has been restored and a trail runs along a portion of its length near Kennedy Park.



Proposed plan for the Prickly Pear Creek Greenway. Image used with the permission of the Prickly Pear Land Trust.

## ***Creative Community Development***

In 2016, a unique grant opportunity appeared on the community’s radar. Krys Holmes, Executive Director of The Myrna Loy, a community culture center and theater in Helena, attended a workshop organized by ArtPlace America, a place-making grant program that seeks to strengthen communities through arts- and culture-based community planning and development. Ms. Holmes thought the \$500,000, three-year ArtPlace America grant sounded like an incredible opportunity and a good fit for East Helena and contacted EPA project manager Betsy Burns with the idea. “Betsy exploded with enthusiasm and ideas when I reached out to her about the grant,” said Krys Holmes. “She has a heart as big as Montana and we have accomplished amazing things with the support of EPA – we are lucky to have her.”

To pursue the grant, The Myrna Loy partnered with the City, EHPS, EPA, local restaurant Taco Del Sol and the Helena Community Offender Re-entry Program. The team’s first grant proposal focused on the transformation of the 16 million-ton ASARCO smelter slag pile. While that application was ultimately unsuccessful, ArtPlace America representatives were intrigued by the community’s close-knit ties, rich heritage and vibrant spirit that they experienced during a visit to East Helena. They encouraged the team to apply again.

The second proposal focused on a different perspective, turning toward other community priorities. The idea for the East Helena Food and Culture Hub, a culinary training program that celebrates the town’s heritage and identity and engages local artists in community development, was born. The program seeks to engage all segments of the community, from basic skills classes for kids to apprenticeship and training programs for adults. In addition to its training programs, the team envisions community events and art projects, including the rebirth of the annual community picnic that had been hosted by ASARCO long ago. Local artists will be at the center of the efforts, to ensure that the endeavor is a creative placemaking project with community development benefits. The program’s first summer school programs started in the summer of 2018, and the first community picnic was held in October 2018.



*ArtPlace East Helena Food & Culture Hub Project community gathering.*

***“I’m excited about the next few years, and what working on the East Helena Food and Culture Hub will do to bring the community together.”***

– East Helena Mayor Jamie Schell



*View of the slag pile at the site.*

## ***Up Next***

Looking forward, cleanup and redevelopment work will continue. The large slag pile, a physical reminder of the community’s mining and smelting heritage, remains on site. Community stakeholders are discussing options for the pile, including adding an amphitheater or placing a cover system over the pile. “Making a large, visible change like a cover system on the slag pile would be a strong visual signal to people that cleanup has been taken care of,” said East Helena Mayor Jamie Schell.

While the hundreds of acres of remaining undeveloped land present redevelopment challenges – much of which lacks basic infrastructure and has remaining soil contamination that will require cleanup – METG has been able to overcome some of them and additional redevelopment plans are underway.

In May 2018, East Helena voters approved a \$29.5 million bond to fund the construction of a new high school on a 35-acre portion of the Dartman Property. Once the school is constructed, students who had previously traveled into Helena will be able to attend high school in their own neighborhood. “There is so much potential for the City to be reborn, to start over,” said EHPS Superintendent Ron Whitmoyer. “I think it will be incredible how much that will influence a change in the way the community redevelops and rebrands itself.” The

proximity to public schools has already spurred interest in new residential development on the Dartman Property.

Moving forward, four broad goals guide METG's efforts to support the development of the remaining land: to protect public health and environment, to support East Helena's goals, such as increasing the tax base, creating jobs and developing community assets, to minimize the cost of cleanup and maximize the proceeds of lands sales, and to ensure the long-term stewardship of the land.

Project partners face challenges as well as opportunities. Proceeds from the sale of Custodial Trust lands are used to help pay for cleanup of the East Helena RCRA and Superfund site. Once the active cleanup is complete and EPA has enough data to confirm that the remedies (a combination of physical work and institutional controls) are working as planned and will continue to be protective over the long term, the federal and state governments can transfer unneeded funds to help pay for cleanup of the three other former ASARCO cleanup sites in Montana, if there are funds in the East Helena cleanup account that are not needed in East Helena. The community has expressed concern about this plan and some feel that the funds should stay in the East Helena community in case additional



New residential development near the site.

**DEVELOPMENT AREA**

Helena Regional Airport  
City of Helena  
City of East Helena  
FUTURE PHASES  
PHASE 2-3  
PHASE 1  
to HELENA & BUTTE  
to BOZEMAN & LIVINGSTON

**THE CAPITOL REGION'S newest commercial center**

**LAMPING FIELD COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**  
EAST HELENA | MONTANA

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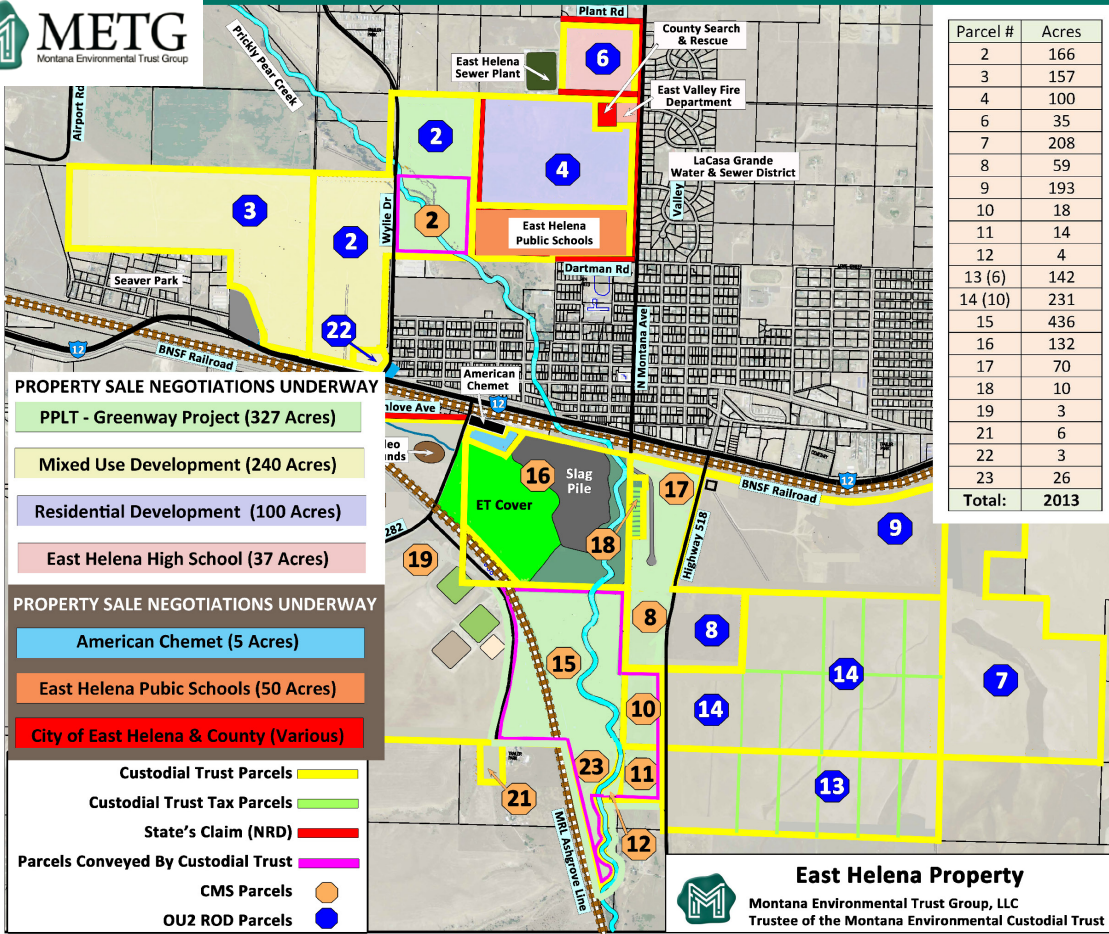
LAMPING FIELD COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

US Highway 12/287

**METG**  
Montana Environmental Trust Group

Marketing materials created for the Lamping Field property. Image used with permission of the Montana Environmental Trust Group, LLC.

# Redevelopment of Former Asarco Lands in East Helena



Map of redevelopment activities (spring 2018). Image used with permission of the Montana Environmental Trust Group, LLC.

cleanup resources are needed in the future. “The challenge is how we protect the future with so many unknowns – we need to keep the money here,” explained East Helena Mayor Jamie Schell.

Second, in addition to the METG-controlled land, privately owned, undeveloped land remains to be cleaned up. The site’s cleanup plan, or Record of Decision, states that future landowners will need to ensure that any future use of these lands is consistent with the cleanup requirements. Financial support for sampling and remediation of soils could potentially be a challenge for those landowners.



Downtown East Helena.

# Lessons Learned

Stakeholders involved in the cleanup and redevelopment process emphasized several key factors that have been vital to the project's success:

- The strong sense of community and heritage in East Helena has strengthened collaboration efforts, guided planning, and inspired organizations such as the Myra Loy Center and ArtPlace America to invest in the community.
- Full, dedicated cleanup funding provided via the bankruptcy settlement and the administration by METG in its unique role as custodian and trustee of the site has allowed for flexibility in cleanup plans and facilitated efficient and creative approaches.
- Thinking outside the box and taking a creative approach to potential partnerships and future use potential has created unique opportunities, including the ArtPlace America grant. “Keep your eyes and ears open – the answers don’t necessarily come from the places you’re looking for them,” said The Myrna Loy Executive Director Krys Holmes.
- Working closely with community members and proactively reaching out to stakeholder groups helped LEAP establish a strong relationship with the community and ensure compliance with the soil ordinance, which is an important institutional control at the site.
- EPA and the State of Montana are active partners and the sole beneficiaries of the Custodial Trust. They understand the priorities for the site’s redevelopment in the context of the ongoing cleanup. “We have had excellent support from EPA and the State of Montana,” said Greenfield Environmental Trust Group President Cindy Brooks. Having a Trustee who is responsible for both cleanup and redevelopment has been a critical success factor in East Helena.
- A robust and creative collaborative partnership among multiple stakeholder groups has been vitally important. Regular meetings ensure good communication among everyone involved. “If someone had asked me what to do 12 years ago, I would have said don’t annex the land and try to get along with everyone. Collaboration is so important,” said East Helena Mayor Jamie Schell.

## EPA and Reuse: Lessons Learned

Since the inception of the Superfund program, EPA has been building on its expertise in conducting site characterization and remediation to ensure that contamination is not a barrier to the reuse of property. Today, consideration of future use is an integral part of EPA’s cleanup programs from initial site investigations and remedy selection through to the design, implementation, and operation and maintenance of a site’s remedy.

Throughout the cleanup process, remedial activities in East Helena have been undertaken with an eye toward facilitating continued use and reuse of the site. Cleanup of soil on hundreds of parcels throughout East Helena was coordinated in a way to minimize disruption to ongoing business and community activities. The 2011 EPA-supported planning charrette process identified potential future uses to help inform remedial and development opportunities, including rail-accessible industrial development and mixed-use commercial development.

EPA works with site stakeholders to consider how future land use considerations can inform the implementation and long-term stewardship of site remedies as well as cleanup planning. At some sites, for example, reuse considerations can inform the future location of groundwater monitoring wells and other operation and maintenance equipment that might inadvertently hinder redevelopment efforts. At other sites, detailed site reuse plans have provided additional benefits that save time and reduce redevelopment costs. For example, future infrastructure corridors or building footers can be installed in coordination with site cleanup activities.

***“Keep an open mind and look forward, instead of getting stuck in thinking about how things used to be.”***

– EHPS Superintendent Ron Whitmoyer

# Bigger Picture

While these factors created a climate for the successful reuse of the East Helena site, a range of broader lessons learned can also help guide similar projects at contaminated lands across the country:

## **EPA's work with communities and stakeholders supports reuse outcomes that are compatible with site cleanups.**

The Agency places a priority on supporting the return of contaminated sites to productive and beneficial uses. As part of its ongoing effort to coordinate with the community to integrate cleanup and reuse considerations, EPA supported a reuse planning charrette to gather feedback and ideas from stakeholders that would inform cleanup efforts and future planning. The charrette also provided an opportunity to educate stakeholders about the cleanup process and allowable uses of trust fund resources. EPA continues to collaborate with stakeholder agencies and organizations to share information and ensure that future uses are considered during the cleanup process.

## **While EPA provides tools and resources to support Superfund reuse, communities and public- and private-sector organizations make it happen.**

EPA relies on engaged community stakeholders to bring their future land use goals and priorities to the table so they can be incorporated into the remedial process, linking cleanup and redevelopment. Community partners such as The Myrna Loy, PPLT and the Montana Business Assistance Connection have brought expertise, ideas and resources to bear on site reuse challenges in East Helena. The collaborative partnership that landed the ArtPlace America grant is an example of how public-private partnerships can yield significant benefits for communities.

## **Local governments can play a unique leadership role in reuse planning projects.**

As the organizations responsible for their communities' general welfare, local governments are particularly well-positioned to bring together diverse stakeholders and use planning tools and incentives to foster positive outcomes. The City and Lewis and Clark County have collaborated closely with project partners and helped bring community voices into the cleanup discussion. Staff participate in frequent meetings regarding cleanup. LEAP has also been an important resource for community members.

## **Community engagement and capacity building are vitally important.**

A well-designed community engagement process ensures transparency and allows information to flow in both directions. Providing detailed information helps dispel rumors, address concerns and establish trust. Cleanup and redevelopment work in East Helena has involved extensive community engagement, from regular meetings to share information about cleanup activities, to the reuse planning visioning session, to activities organized by PPLT to solicit feedback and ideas for the Prickly Pear Creek Greenway. Community members can provide valuable information and ideas throughout the planning process, making sure that the remedy and reuse plans reflect local conditions and priorities.

## **Think long term.**

It can take many years to clean up contamination that has accumulated over a century, providing a time window for stakeholders to build partnerships and identify resources, coordinate with partners, and develop a strategy for returning a site to use while protecting future users. Now that most of the active cleanup in East Helena is complete, future uses envisioned during the 2011 planning charrette are starting to take shape.

Even after a site is cleaned up, it can take time and the right economic climate to attract parties interested in reusing the area. Persistent outreach and long-term community support are both vitally important. While economic conditions and constraints, including contamination and lack of infrastructure, make development of the former ASARCO properties a challenge, the efforts made to build partnerships, create a vision for community development, and attract interest have already paid off. The benefits include expanded operations of American Chemet, siting of two new public school facilities, a 254-acre mixed use development, a 300-unit single family residential development and the possibility of the Greenway Project. There is much more to come.

# Conclusion

As active cleanup at the East Helena site winds down, the community is looking forward to the next chapter in its story. Prickly Pear Elementary School opened its doors to its first class of students and EHPS is moving on to its next project, establishing the town's first local public high school. Classrooms will be filled with participants young and old as East Helena Food and Culture Hub programs get underway, generating a new focus for economic vitality in the community. Families will move into the new Highland residential subdivision and shop at the Town Pump development.

Looking forward, East Helena stakeholders will work together to increase education and employment opportunities, complete remaining cleanup work and transform the town's slag pile, attract developers to residential, commercial and industrial opportunities afforded by vacant lands, and realize the vision of an interconnected trail system that celebrates the restored Prickly Pear Creek.

This bright, mixed-use future at one of the country's most toxic sites illustrates how creativity, collaboration and dedication to community heritage, culture and the arts, education, recreation and economic development can create new opportunities for communities working with EPA and other project partners on Superfund cleanups.

***“Engaging the community through local governments is helpful, as was done in East Helena.”***

– Jenny Chambers,  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
Waste Management & Remediation Division  
Administrator



Participants in the 2011 charrette shared ideas for community revitalization and redevelopment in East Helena.

# Coming to the Table: Community Revitalization in Eastern Montana

THE EAST HELENA SUPERFUND SITE IN EAST HELENA, MONTANA

## Sources and Resources

### Sources

Images and maps for this case study are from EPA Region 8, the Prickly Pear Land Trust and METG.

### Resources

EPA site profile page:

[www.epa.gov/superfund/east-helena](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/east-helena)

EPA Superfund Redevelopment Initiative:

[www.epa.gov/superfund-redevelopment-initiative](http://www.epa.gov/superfund-redevelopment-initiative)

Defining Our Future: East Helena Redevelopment Initiative  
(2011 reuse planning report):

[semspub.epa.gov/src/document/08/1570697](http://semspub.epa.gov/src/document/08/1570697)

Montana Environmental Trust Group (METG):

[www.mtenvironmentaltrust.org/east-helena](http://www.mtenvironmentaltrust.org/east-helena)

Montana Department of Justice, Natural Resource Damage  
Program:

[dojmt.gov/lands/east-helena](http://dojmt.gov/lands/east-helena)

Montana Department of Environmental Quality:

[deq.mt.gov/land/fedsuperfund](http://deq.mt.gov/land/fedsuperfund)

City of East Helena:

[www.easthelenamt.us](http://www.easthelenamt.us)

East Helena Public Schools:

[www.ehps.k12.mt.us](http://www.ehps.k12.mt.us)

Lewis and Clark County Lead Education & Assistance  
Program:

[www.lccountymt.gov/health/environmental-services/lead-education.html](http://www.lccountymt.gov/health/environmental-services/lead-education.html)

The Myrna Loy:

[myrnaloycenter.com](http://myrnaloycenter.com)

ArtPlace America:

[www.artplaceamerica.org](http://www.artplaceamerica.org)

Prickly Pear Land Trust:

[pricklypearlt.org](http://pricklypearlt.org)



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In May 2017, EPA established a task force to restore the Superfund program to its rightful place at the center of the Agency's core mission to protect health and the environment.

[epa.gov/superfund/superfund-task-force](http://epa.gov/superfund/superfund-task-force)