“Park Lake/Highland is a safe and beautiful neighborhood where residents enjoy scenic lakes, parks, and close proximity to the shops, restaurants and activity of downtown Orlando.” – Park Lake/Highland Neighborhood Association

EPA’s partnership with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), the City of Orlando, the Orlando Utilities Commission (OUC), and the Lake Highland Preparatory School at the Former Spellman Engineering site in Orlando, Florida has resulted in a cleanup plan that will remove a community “eyesore,” allow for new and expanded school facilities, and serve as a catalyst for new infill development opportunities.

The Former Spellman Engineering site is located near Lake Highland, an area that is considered the northern gateway to downtown Orlando and is one of the most important pieces of undeveloped land in the vicinity of the Central Business District. Spellman Engineering was a former parts cleaning facility that operated at the site from 1963 to 1969. In 1992, chemicals associated with the parts cleaning business were detected in a contaminant plume extending off the property. Prior to discovery of the plume, much of the impacted property had been acquired by the City of Orlando and OUC and a portion of that land had been developed into a sports and recreational complex by the Lake Highland Preparatory School (LHPS) under a lease agreement with an option to purchase.

Due to community concerns, the anticipated duration of cleanup and the lack of a responsible party, the City of Orlando, FDEP and EPA agreed to pursue an alternative approach to listing the site on the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL). As a result, in 2008, EPA issued the first ever Contiguous Property Owner (CPO) agreement, in which the City of Orlando agreed to implement the estimated $12.9 million remedy. The selected remedy consists of a combination of soil and ground water treatments, including electrical resistance heating, in-situ chemical oxidation, in-situ enhanced bioremediation and monitored natural attenuation. The CPO stated the City would not be held liable for existing contamination, included a covenant not to sue and also provided a release and waiver of any potential Superfund lien.

In 2006, LHPS exercised their purchase option and is currently redeveloping the property for additional sports and school facilities. Working together with EPA and FDEP, LHPS received a bona fide prospective purchaser’s agreement that would enable the school to obtain protection from Superfund liability when acquiring the property, provided they meet certain criteria such as exercising appropriate care at the Site. The sale and purchase agreement were finalized in 2007 and implementation of the Site’s cleanup is currently underway. Selected remediation methods, such as the use of below ground water treatment injection points connected to a single delivery line will allow for remediation of the Site without disrupting current athletic field use. The City and OUC intend to sell remaining portions of the property to help fund the cleanup effort and to encourage redevelopment opportunities near new transit facilities. As a result of these innovative partnerships, the Site is being redeveloped in a manner consistent with community goals and priorities.