This former zinc smelter in east-central Oklahoma illustrates how cleaned-up Superfund sites can support multiple reuses and address communities’ economic, environmental and public health priorities. The Eagle-Picher Henryetta Superfund site has been home to the award-winning Shurden Leist Industrial Park for more than a decade. In 2015, EPA and ODEQ worked with the city of Henryetta on a Ready for Reuse (RfR) Determination to support community interest in an additional facility, a rural health care clinic, at the site. The environmental status report for the site helped make possible a $1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the clinic’s construction.

From 1916 to 1968, the Eagle-Picher Mining and Smelting company operated a smelter that produced zinc, cadmium and germanium on the 70-acre property. Company operations left behind large piles of waste contaminated with heavy metals. The company donated the smelter property to the city of Henryetta in 1974. Unaware of the contamination in the waste piles, the city used soil from the site as fill material at locations throughout the community, including neighborhoods, schools and parks. Downwind residential properties were also impacted by air dispersion of heavy metals from stack emissions and windblown dust from the smelter facility. Site investigations in the mid-1990s found significant lead and arsenic contamination at the site and across Henryetta.

Working in partnership with ODEQ, EPA’s cleanup focused on removing contaminated soils and wastes and addressing residential areas affected by the site. Contaminated materials were consolidated on site. The remedy also included the placement of a clay cap, cover soil and vegetation over the contaminated material to protect public health.
During cleanup, EPA and ODEQ made sure the remedy would be compatible with community reuse goals, grading the central 26-acre Central Plateau portion of the site so that it could be developed for commercial and industrial uses. For its part, the community worked hard to make Shurden Leist Industrial Park a reality. The city secured $465,000 in state transportation and environmental grants as well as federal economic development grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The city also worked with ODEQ on clean utility corridors, facilitating installation of roads and utilities at the site. The first industrial tenant, a motorcycle manufacturing company, opened for business on site in 2006. In 2007, in recognition of the project’s excellence and success, the Shurden Leist Industrial Park Project received the Phoenix Award for EPA’s South-Central Region.

In 2015, the community sought to locate an additional use – new health care facilities – at the site. The East Oklahoma Family Health Center would be a rural health care clinic that could provide primary health, dental health and behavioral health care services in one location. To help clarify the site’s suitability for such reuse, EPA and ODEQ staff hosted public forums at Henryetta City Hall. To support community efforts to leverage resources for the clinic, EPA issued an RfR Determination stating that “EPA has determined that the unacceptable levels of risk to current and future users of the Central Plateau area of the Eagle-Picher Henryetta Superfund site have been abated for industrial and commercial users, which would include use as a health care clinic.”

In May 2016, the East Oklahoma Family Health Center’s fundraising efforts paid off. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources awarded the organization a $1 million grant for the health care facility project. “This is an exciting time for the East Oklahoma Family Health Center and Henryetta,” noted Donna Dyer, the organization’s CEO. “Our mission is to provide affordable, high-quality, patient-centered health care for east-central Oklahoma.” The organization is currently working on plans for the new health care clinic. EPA and ODEQ are reviewing draft clinic plans to ensure their compatibility with the site’s remedy. Construction will take about three years.

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