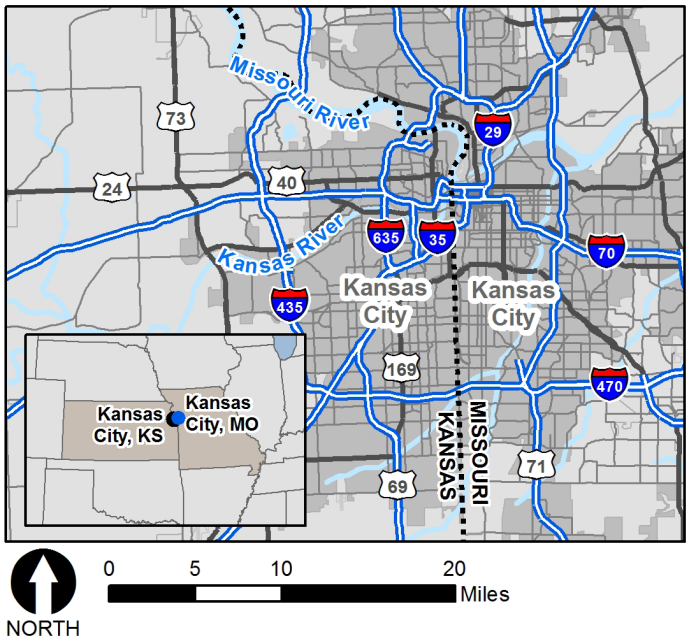
Introduction

Each year, thousands of emergencies involving oil spills or the release (or threatened release) of hazardous substances are reported in the United States. Emergencies range from small-scale spills to large incidents requiring prompt action and evacuation of nearby populations.

EPA's emergency response program responds to oil spills, chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear incidents and large-scale national emergencies, including homeland security incidents. EPA provides support when requested or when state and local first-responder capabilities have been exceeded. Through coordinating and implementing a wide range of activities, EPA conducts short-term cleanups – called removal actions – to protect human health and the environment. This is done by funding response actions directly or overseeing and enforcing actions led by potentially responsible parties.

The Kansas City metropolitan area – which includes Kansas City, Missouri as well as Kansas City, Kansas – has played an important role in American history as a vibrant cultural and economic hub and as a gateway to the west. As with many cities in the United States, industrialization brought environmental challenges as well as economic and community benefits.

This case study looks at sites in the Kansas City metropolitan area where removal actions have tackled environmental hazards and protected public health. It shows how these sites can continue to be important assets in communities across the country – and that consideration of reuse and continued use is an important part of cleanup planning and implementation. The case study provides information and lessons learned for parties interested in Superfund site reuse and commercial, residential, agricultural and industrial redevelopment.



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

The Kansas City metropolitan area.

Kansas City, Missouri skyline near the downtown area (left); Missouri River in northern Kansas City, Missouri (right).

Overview

This case study focuses on 24 removal action sites in the Kansas City metropolitan area (see Figure 1). These cleanups took place from 1984 to 2012. Of the 24 sites, more than half of them are currently in use; several host multiple uses. Reuses include a residential and commercial high-rise building, commercial and industrial facilities, parking lots, a home and a community garden. Businesses and organizations at four of the sites employ over 200 people and generate over $30 million in annual sales.

EPA's Removal Program: Protecting Public Health and Supporting Safe Reuse

Incidents involving the release or threatened release of hazardous substances that endanger human health or the environment may occur anywhere at any time. Under Superfund, EPA may respond to releases or threats of releases of hazardous substances by starting a removal action. Although there are exceptions, removal actions generally last no longer than 12 months and cost no more than $12 million. Long-term corrective actions are referred to EPA's remedial response program for further investigation and assessment.

EPA has 10 regional offices across the country. Each office is responsible for several states and, in some cases, territories or special environmental programs. Each Region has a removal program. EPA Region 7's regional office is in Lenexa, Kansas. EPA Region 7 serves Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and nine tribal nations. The states in Region 7 include small towns as well as large cities and urban areas, including the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Kansas City Structural Steel removal site showing construction of retail space in 2014 following cleanup.

What types of incidents or observations result in a removal action?

- Discovery of landfill or improper waste disposal.
- Explosion involving hazardous waste.
- Fire reaching waste.
- Drums that are leaking or compromised.
- Train derailment resulting in a spill.
- Observation of broken batteries or discolored soils.
- Observation of contamination in surface water.
- Odor or color change in drinking water.

EPA Region 7 has divisions with specific responsibilities. The Superfund and Emergency Management Division (SEMD) is responsible for cleaning up and restoring contaminated lands and natural resources to safeguard and revitalize communities. This is accomplished by managing and implementing a broad spectrum of emergency response, cleanup and land revitalization programs.

EPA's Superfund Redevelopment has helped communities reclaim and reuse thousands of acres of formerly contaminated land. Through an array of tools, partnerships and activities, Superfund Redevelopment continues to provide local communities with new opportunities to grow and prosper. Through programs like the Superfund Redevelopment Initiative, EPA Region 7 helps communities reclaim cleaned-up Superfund sites. Integrating remedy and reuse considerations during cleanup helps ensure long-term protectiveness and enables compatible redevelopment opportunities. EPA Region 7 also works closely with state and local officials to remove barriers that have kept many Superfund sites vacant or underused. Finally, EPA Region 7 works to ensure that companies operating on properties being cleaned up under Superfund can remain open for business – and providing jobs and services in communities – during cleanup.

Removal Actions in the Kansas City Area

The Kansas City metropolitan area is representative of many industrial areas across the United States where contamination of buildings, soil or groundwater has occurred from manufacturing operations, improper disposal of contaminants or other spills or explosions. Removal action activities at the 24 sites in the Kansas City metropolitan area included:

- Cleaning of the interior of buildings.
- Decontamination, demolition and removal of buildings.
- Drum and container removal.
- Excavation and disposal of contaminated soils.
- Groundwater testing.
- Removal and recycling of an underground storage tank.
- Removal of glass fire extinguishers.
- Removal of radiological material.
- Removal of waste or hazardous substances.

The sites are listed and numbered below and shown on a map on the following page.

Photographs taken during the removal action at the Studer Container Service site.

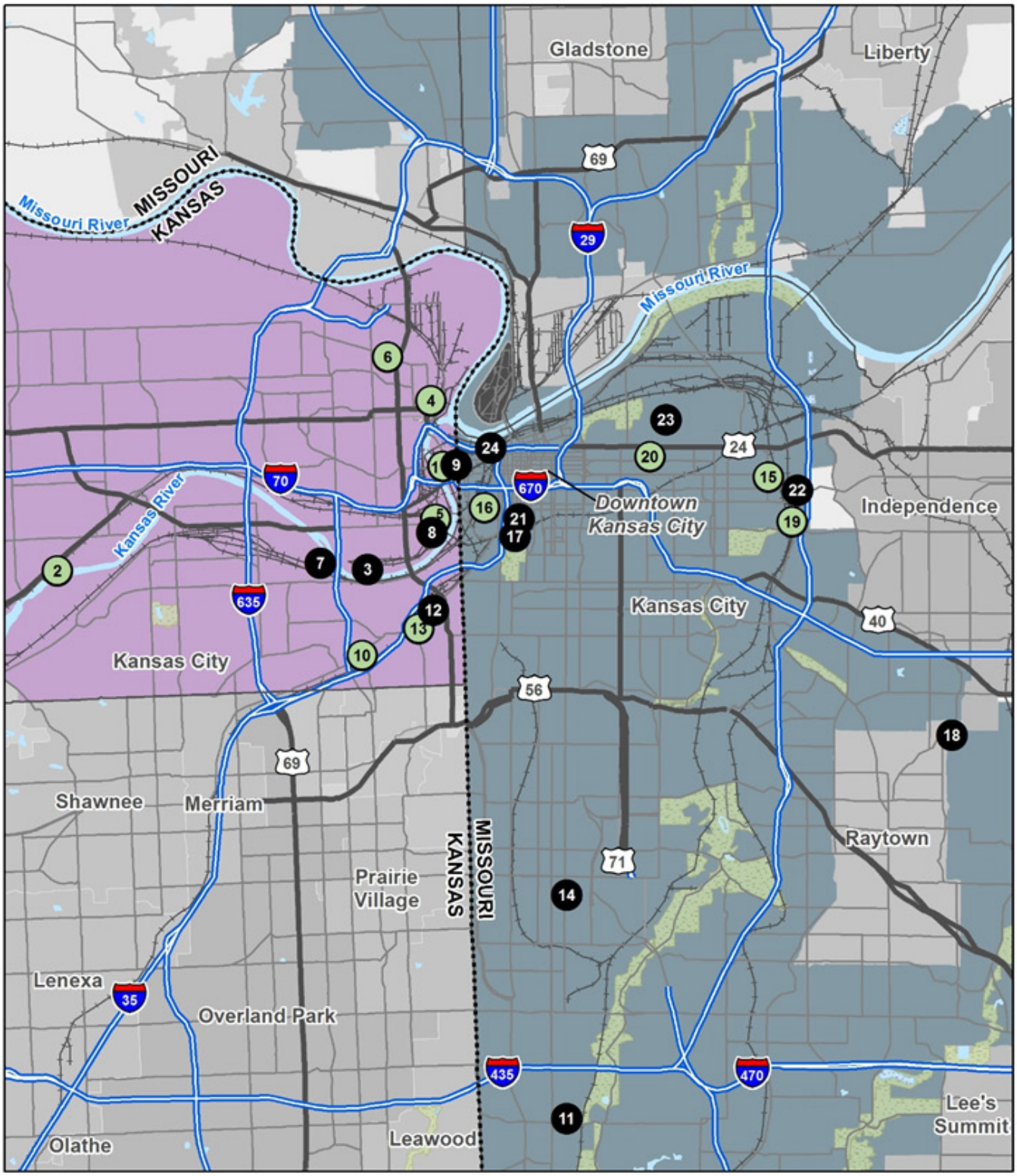
Kansas City, Kansas	*Kansas City, Missouri*
1. 100 South 1st Street Drums	14. 77th and Troost Fireworks
2. 7259 Kaw Drive Drum	15. A-1 Plating
3. Container Recycling, Inc.	16. Holly Street Drum
4. Beauty Rose Cosmetics	17. Kantex – KCMO
5. CCI – Kansas Avenue	18. KCMO Fire Grenades
6. Economy Chrome	19. North End
7. Kansas City Structural Steel	20. Northeast Drums
8. Osage Metal Company	21. PCB Inc. – Missouri
9. PCB Inc. – Kansas	22. Prier Brass MFG Co.
10. Roe Lane Tank	23. St. John Drum
11. South KC Radium	24. Studer Container
12. Southwest Plating Co., Inc.	
13. SW Boulevard Drum	

Removal Sites in "Reuse" and "Continued Use"

In Reuse There is a new land use or uses on all or part of a site. This is because either the land use has changed (e.g., from industrial use to commercial use) or the site is now in use after being vacant.

In Continued Use Historical uses at a site remain active; these uses were in place when the Superfund process started at the site.

Locations of Removal Action Sites in the Kansas City Metropolitan Area



NORTH

0 1 2 4 Miles

Sources: Esri, DeLorme, AND, Tele Atlas, First American, UNEP-WCMC, USGS and EPA Region 7.

Legend

- Sites in reuse and continued use
- Sites not in use or use not determined
- Kansas City, KS
- Kansas City, MO

As cleanups occur, communities may reuse Superfund sites in many ways – new parks, shopping centers, athletic fields, wildlife sanctuaries, manufacturing facilities, residences, and new roads and infrastructure centers, are just a few examples. Reuse of Superfund sites can revitalize a local economy with jobs, new businesses, tax revenues and local spending and provide a range of other benefits not easily quantified. Businesses at Superfund sites may also continue to operate. The types of current land use for the 24 sites reviewed as part of this case study are shown in the table below.

Types of Land Uses at Removal Action Sites in the Kansas City Metropolitan Area	Number of Sites
Commercial/industrial	7
Agricultural	1
Public service	1
Residential	4
Parking lot	2
Vacant	8
Undetermined	3
Note: Sites may have more than one type of land use.	

A Closer Look

Commercial, Industrial and Public Service Uses

From Drum Recycling to Pallet Manufacturer

The Container Recycling, Inc. site (Site #3) is located in the Armourdale neighborhood in Kansas City, Kansas. A drum-recycling facility was originally located on site. EPA removed 60,000 drums and placed a limestone cover over most of the site. Because of the attractive location, in 1997, Midwest Pallet redeveloped the area. This local, family-owned business manufactures new, custom pallets and remanufactures/recycles old pallets. The business generates $2 million in annual sales and employs 16 people.

The Container Recycling, Inc. site prior to cleanup (upper right), after cleanup (lower left) and redeveloped by Midwest Pallet (lower right).

From Lead Smelter to a Retail Center and Police Station

The Kansas City Structural Steel site (#7) is in the Argentine neighborhood in Kansas City, Kansas. In the early 1900s, the site was the largest silver and lead smelter in the world. It closed in the 1980s. In 1993, the potentially responsible party decontaminated, demolished and removed site buildings contaminated with heavy metals. Drums and contaminated soils were also removed and backfilled with clean soil. The site's location near transportation infrastructure, including a railroad and a highway as well as commercial, industrial and residential properties made it a good candidate for redevelopment. Cleanup included demolition of vacant structures and consolidation of contamination under a soil cap. A local nonprofit worked with EPA to acquire the property and seek out reuse opportunities. Obstacles addressed included site development restrictions. Extensive outreach helped build community support for the project. In 2014, part of the site was redeveloped as a Walmart Neighborhood Market, an area that was previously a food desert. In 2014, EPA Region 7 presented the Leading Environmentalism and Forwarding Sustainability (L.E.A.F.S.) award to Walmart and the Argentine Neighborhood Development Association for their reuse efforts. In 2017, the Kansas City South Patrol Police Substation was built on another part of the site. Today, the area includes La Plaza Argentine, a shopping center, and other property ready for redevelopment. The Walmart business employs 65 people and generates nearly $13 million in annual sales revenue. The Kansas City South Patrol Police Substation employs 50 people.

Land uses at the Kansas City Structural Steel site.

From Circuit Board Manufacturing to Electrical Business

The Kantex – KCMO site (#17) is in the Westside North area of Kansas City, Missouri. Kantex was a circuit board manufacturing company. The building at the site was leased to a painting company, but the rest of the lot was used for the abandonment/storage of 59 drums, which contained waste material remaining from the Kantex electroplating process. The removal action addressed the abandoned drums. An electric repair company currently operates on site. The business currently generates nearly $450,000 in annual sales revenue and employs three people.

The electric repair company operating at the Kantex-KCMO site.

From Metals Salvage Business to Textile Manufacturer

The Osage Metal Company site (#8) is in the Armourdale neighborhood in Kansas City, Kansas. A metals salvage and reclamation facility was located on site. Transformers and batteries emptied onto the ground, resulting in polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)- and lead-contaminated soils. The removal action dug up almost 12,000 tons of contaminated soils, treated them and disposed of them off site. In 1999, the property was sold to Knit Rite, Inc. The company is a designer, marketer and manufacturer of textiles for medical and consumer markets. The business employs 80 people and generates over $15 million in annual sales revenue.

The main entrance to Knit-Rite Inc.'s facilities at the Osage Metal Company site.

From Electrical Equipment Processor to Mixed-Use Residential Tower

The PCB Inc. – Missouri site (#21) is in the Crossroads Arts District in Kansas City, Missouri. From 1982 to 1987, PCB Treatment Inc. (PTI) managed and processed electrical equipment on the property. In total, over 25 million pounds of PCB-contaminated materials were sent to PTI for treatment and disposal. The process contaminated the building's floors and walls with PCBs. Cleanup took place in 2004 and 2005. The 7-story building was dismantled floor by floor. More than 19,000 tons of debris and soil were removed. Developers quickly noticed the site property's potential; real estate development company Copaken Brooks acquired the property in 2007. Initial plans for a condominium project did not move forward because of the economic downturn. Following development of an updated plan and improved economic conditions, work began on a new residential development in 2017. In 2019, the Arterra 12-story luxury residential tower, the first high-rise apartment project built in the Crossroads Arts District area of downtown Kansas City, opened on site. Arterra offers 126 state-of-the-art residential units, first-floor retail, an integrated parking garage, and an infinity pool overlooking Liberty Memorial, Penn Valley Park and the Crossroads Arts District. Copaken Brooks and Altus Properties jointly developed the project.

The Arterra residential tower serves as a visual beacon of development and growth in the area.

"EPA is always willing to work with communities, landowners, state and local agencies and governments to discuss and support future land use throughout cleanup. EPA provides resources for reuse planning to ensure future uses of a site will be compatible with cleanup, community needs and site features, respecting proximity to infrastructure and surrounding land uses."

- Mary Peterson, U.S. EPA Region 7
Superfund and Emergency Management Division (SEMD) Director

From Manufacturing Facility to Waste Transfer Station

The Prier Brass MFG Co. site (#22) is in the Blue Valley Industrial area in Kansas City, Missouri. Past site uses included manufacturing of brass plumbing supplies. A manufacturing building and warehouse were located on site. In 1995, EPA decontaminated the manufacturing building and excavated lead-contaminated soils and treated the soils on site. Structurally unsound areas were demolished. Since 2005, WCA Kansas City Transfer, LLC has operated on site. This full-service non-hazardous solid waste company provides waste collection, recycling and disposal services to commercial, industrial and residential customers.

View of WCA Kansas City Transfer, LLC's facilities at the site.

Continued Use – Scrap Metal Recycler Container

The Studer Container site (#24) is in the West Bottoms area of Kansas City, Missouri, just south of the Missouri River. A scrap-metal recycler operates on site. In 2012, abandoned drums and pallets with small storage containers were found on the property. All drums and containers were removed and disposed of properly. The business continues to operate on site.

A scrap metal recycler continues to operate on the Studer Container site.

Agricultural Use

From Drum Storage Area to Community Garden

The St. John Drum site (#23) is in the Scarritt Renaissance area of Kansas City, Missouri. In 2001, EPA removed nonhazardous and hazardous waste-filled drums from a building scheduled for demolition by the city. In 2006, the Northeast Arts KC nonprofit created the St. John Community Garden, transforming the vacant lot into a neighborhood amenity.

Residential Uses

Continued and New Residential Uses

Residential buildings are located on four of the removal action sites – PCB Inc. – Missouri (#21 – see above), 77th and Troost Fireworks (#14), KCMO Fire Grenades (#18) and South KC Radium (#11). Removal actions at these sites addressed radiological material underneath the porch of a home, removed glass fire extinguishers (also known as fire grenades) that were used in the late 1800s and early 1900s, dismantled a building contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls, and took away firework-making materials involved in an explosion at a residence where firework manufacturing and storage were taking place. Today, a redeveloped single-family residence is located at one site, single-family residences remain in place at two sites, and one site is the location of a high-end, mixed-use development, that includes a high-rise apartment complex (see #21 above).

The St. John Community Garden includes more than two dozen raised beds and several fruit trees.

Parking Lots

From Industrial Facilities to Parking Lots

The Southwest Plating Co., Inc. site (#12) is in the Rosedale community in Kansas City, Kansas. A machine shop, a refrigerant recovery and repair facility, and a plating shop were once located at the site. A fire destroyed the building and water from the fire control and heavy rainfalls mobilized stored hazardous materials on site. Removal action activities included onsite treatment of contaminated water/plating solutions, disposal of hazardous debris, drums and concentrated liquids, removal of part of the plating shop floor and soil excavation from a neighboring residential property. A parking lot is currently located on site and is used by nearby businesses. Parking is a high priority in the area.

The PCB Inc. – Kansas site (#9) is in the Central Industrial District in Kansas City, Kansas. Removal action activities included the removal of asbestos-containing building materials, sampling walls and floors, and floor-by-floor dismantling of the building. Soils were also removed. Site restoration included backfilling and grading soil removal areas within the building footprint. The site is now a gated parking lot.

Reuse Opportunities at Vacant Sites

Several of the removal action sites – 100 South 1st Street Drums (#1), Beauty Rose Cosmetics (#4), CCI – Kansas Avenue (#5), Holly Street Drum (#16), SW Blvd Drum (#13), A-1 Plating (#15), and Northeast Drums (#20) are vacant and awaiting reuse. Many are prime real estate that is ready to become an asset to the community. Some unused sites also have vacant buildings that are suitable for reuse.

Planning efforts are helping make reuse and revitalization happen and could help ultimately facilitate redevelopment of these site. Efforts are underway to plan for growth, development, and quality of life in the Kansas City area through city-based comprehensive planning and regional land use and transportation planning. Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas have master plans. In 2019, Kansas City, Missouri began work to update its comprehensive plan. Kansas City, Kansas has a plan from 2008. In May 2018, an updated version of the regional plan was shared, with the goal of "balancing a thriving economy, social equity, and a healthy environment, meeting today's needs without compromising the needs of future generations." The Kansas City Transportation Authority has a strategic plan (Mobility Momentum 2021) to reinvent the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority from a bus agency into a regional Transportation Authority. They are working toward providing the Kansas City region with an "interconnected, reliable, and multi-modal transportation network that prioritizes access to opportunities."

The parking lot at the Southwest Plating Co., Inc. site.

The parking lot at the PCB Inc. – Kansas site.

Vacant buildings and open space at several of the removal action sites not in use in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Clockwise from upper left: CCI – Kansas Avenue site, Holly Street Drum site, SW Boulevard Drum site, and Beauty Rose Cosmetics site.

Soil Removal and Voluntary Response Actions Protect Public Health and Accelerate Redevelopment

of the Armour Road Superfund Site in North Kansas City

Decades of herbicide mixing and packaging previously left the Armour Road Superfund site in North Kansas City, Missouri, with arsenic and other chemical contamination in soil and groundwater. Today, cleanup has enabled the reuse of the site and opened the door to broader redevelopment opportunities that are revitalizing this former industrial area. The site formerly housed an herbicide mixing and distribution facility. Herbicidal chemicals are the source of contamination that impacted soil and remains in a contaminated groundwater plume under the property. The site property (i.e., the location of the former herbicide mixing facility) is located on the south side of Armour Road, the main east-west road through North Kansas City. Particularly for traffic approaching the city from the east, the site property is part of the community gateway to North Kansas City.

To protect public health and the environment, EPA conducted a time-critical removal action. EPA covered the site property with geofabric and crushed rock and put a perimeter fence around the property in May 1996. EPA placed the site on the Superfund Program's National Priorities List (NPL) in 1999.

Armour Road Superfund site in North Kansas City, Missouri, before soil cleanup.

EPA performed oversight of additional removal actions between 2004 and 2006 conducted by U.S. Borax, a former operator at the site. EPA then entered into a legal agreement with U.S. Borax (the settling defendant) in 2009 to perform the site's remedial investigation and feasibility study. U.S. Borax, now a wholly owned subsidiary of Rio Tinto, undertook a voluntary response action from September 2016 to January 2017. The primary goal of the voluntary response action was to excavate and dispose of contaminated soil contributing arsenic to groundwater. As a result, the city of North Kansas City could move forward with a redevelopment plan to transition the site property and areas to the west from an industrial area to retail and commercial uses that provide new amenities in a reimagined gateway to the city. By having this new, more welcoming gateway area, the city hopes people will be more inclined to visit downtown North Kansas City, instead of accessing a nearby downtown bypass. Today, soil cleanup at the site property is complete, and redevelopment of the Superfund site includes a Burger King restaurant, a medical office building and a new street serving as the main entry to the One North Redevelopment Area. Learn more about the cleanup and redevelopment of this site as well as other Superfund sites here.

Voluntary response action underway at the site property in 2016 (left). Redevelopment at the site property (right).

Lessons Learned

Based upon a review of the removal action sites featured, some factors stand out as having contributed to the cleanup and successful redevelopment or continued use in the Kansas City metro area.

- **Cooperation and coordination across multiple parties is often critical.** Involving local governments, community members and developers improves the chances a site will be reused in a productive way and will become an asset for the surrounding community.
- **Non-public service uses (e.g., commercial, retail or residential) are often dependent upon market conditions.** Even after removal sites are cleaned up, market conditions may delay these types of redevelopment projects.
- **Public service uses may be accommodated more readily than non-public service uses following cleanup.** Sites with public service uses may be less-dependent upon market conditions and may be implemented sooner than market-oriented redevelopment projects, especially when market conditions are volatile.
- **Non-profit organizations can be catalysts in spurring redevelopment.** Non-profit organizations helped energize redevelopment plans at both the Kansas City Structural Steel site and the St. John Drum site that accommodated local community interests.

"The reuse of a removal site ensures that communities take advantage of our work to protect human health and the environment, and puts our efforts to further beneficial use."

Andrew Gieseke, U.S. EPA Region 7,
On-Scene Coordinator

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. EPA applies these same considerations to removal action site cleanups.

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.

The Bigger Picture

In addition to some specific factors that helped facilitate the redevelopment or continued use of some removal action sites in the Kansas City area, there are also a range of broader lessons learned that can help guide or are important to consider for cleanup and redevelopment at removal action sites across the country.

Not all types of redevelopment projects are equally likely across all sites.

The possibility of reusing or continuing to use removal action sites following cleanup will vary based upon a variety of factors. These include constraints posted by the cleanup approach used, local zoning regulations affecting the site and other applicable regulations, market conditions, ownership and the availability of committed development champions.

Recognize that there may be some constraints on redevelopment.

Unless a removal action site cleanup was very limited in scope, there may be constraints posed by the cleanup that could affect redevelopment options. Important factors to consider when evaluating redevelopment projects at a removal site include the type of cleanup conducted, the extent of cleanup, whether redevelopment restrictions remain in place and, if so, what entity or entities property owners or developers need to coordinate with to ensure that any redevelopment project is compatible with the site's cleanup.

Removal action site cleanups have certain benefits that can accelerate redevelopment opportunities but can also be limiting in other ways.

Removal action site cleanups are typically completed faster than cleanups initiated under EPA's remedial program. This can make it easier for developers to plan redevelopment projects and realize benefits from completed redevelopment projects sooner. At the same time, depending upon the type of removal action, there may be a more limited window for community involvement than sites being addressed under EPA's remedial program. There may be also less opportunity for the public to comment on EPA's preferred cleanup approach before cleanup begins. Moreover, depending upon the type of removal action, the types of institutional controls that might be necessary following removal action cleanups may not be as clear as sites being addressed under EPA's remedial program that also require institutional controls.

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

EPA's mission is to protect public health and the environment. EPA relies on engaged community stakeholders to bring their land use goals and priorities to the table so that this information can be incorporated as part of the removal process, linking cleanup and redevelopment where possible. For example, at the Kansas City Structural Steel site, a local nonprofit worked with EPA to acquire the property and seek out reuse opportunities.

EPA works with communities, site owners and other stakeholders to support reuse outcomes that are compatible with site cleanups.

The Agency places a high priority on supporting the return of contaminated sites to productive and beneficial uses. Timely involvement of EPA in redevelopment planning can yield valuable insight into what constraints a site's cleanup poses for redevelopment and opportunities for overcoming them.

> ***"Redevelopment at removal action sites is always helped by close coordination with local, state and federal officials."***
>
> Kenneth Buchholz,
> U.S. EPA Region 7, Assessment Emergency Response & Removal Branch Chief

Conclusion

The cleanup and redevelopment of Superfund removal action sites in the Kansas City area illustrates how local leadership, collaboration with EPA and state and community partners, and flexible planning can result in several major outcomes: the protection of human health and the environment, productive redevelopment or continued business operations, and new community assets.

Business operating at the Osage Metal Company site.

Following removal action cleanups in the Kansas City area, several sites are in reuse supporting businesses or other uses. In addition to hosting a large-scale retailer, one site is now the location of a police station with more development anticipated. Another site now supports a textile manufacturing, marketing and design business employing 80 people. Most recently, a high-end, high rise apartment complex opened on a different site near the Kansas City's downtown area. Several cleaned up but unused sites represent opportunities to support efforts underway locally to improve the quality of life, transportation infrastructure and employment opportunities for the Kansas City area. EPA remains committed to supporting the safe use of removal sites, in coordination with state and local partners both in the Kansas City area and across the United States.

Protecting Public Health through Time-Sensitive Cleanups

CLEANUP, REDEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUED USE OF REMOVAL ACTION SITES IN THE KANSAS CITY METROPOLITAN AREA

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Images and maps for this case study are provided courtesy of EPA Region 7.

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