

Community Engagement in Reuse Planning for Former Firing Range, Holyoke, Massachusetts

Located in a residential area and abutting watershed conservation lands, the 19-acre Holyoke Mountain Road Firing Range is a brownfield site that contains both endangered species and sensitive wetlands. The firing range was used by the Massachusetts National Guard for small arms practice for more than 50 years. These activities left behind concentrated areas, or “hot spots,” of contaminated soil. Environmental site assessment activities funded through an EPA Brownfields assessment grant clarified environmental concerns at the site. Contamination from lead, arsenic, and antimony was delineated, primarily in the eastern portion of the site on elevated ground surrounding three former target pits, in the surficial soils, or within the top 10 inches of soil. The City of Holyoke recently won an EPA Brownfields cleanup grant, which will be used to conduct removal of these hot spots of contaminated soils.

EPA Region 1, with support from EPA’s Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization, provided technical assistance to Holyoke to support a community-based reuse planning process for the site. Region 1 staff and EPA contractors helped the city outline several reuse scenarios and undertake a community engagement process to actively involve stakeholders in planning for the site’s reuse. This included a public workshop process facilitated by an urban planner and architect that resulted in a report describing the limitations and possibilities for the site, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the various reuse scenarios. The technical assistance provided and the resulting report will inform the city’s deliberations and decision-making for the restoration and reuse of this property.

The City of Holyoke is committed to smart growth and was recognized in 2006 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for its efforts and accomplishments in balancing economic and environmental considerations. Restoring the city’s brownfields to sustainable reuse is part of this commitment.

