

Groundbreaking for Urban Farm, Montgomery, Alabama

In November 2010, ground was broken on the construction of an urban farm on a 2.7-acre former rail yard in downtown Montgomery, along the Alabama Riverfront. The urban farm will be a community gathering place that features an old train caboose that will be restored and used as an office, plots for local commercial growing, community planting beds, a wildflower area, and “pick your own” orchards. A windmill will provide irrigation water for the farm and a children’s garden will show the different stages of the growing process.

Under EPA’s Petroleum Brownfields Action Plan and with funding from EPA’s Land Revitalization Program, the Agency supports targeted projects to redevelop petroleum brownfields in defined corridors and highways and provides technical assistance to help with site identification, assessment, cleanup, redevelopment planning, community outreach, and other needs identified by communities. Since 2009, EPA and Alabama’s Department of Environmental Management have engaged local communities in planning for revitalization of former gas stations and petroleum-contaminated brownfields along the historic Selma to Montgomery National Voting Rights Trail. The urban farm is part of this larger corridor project and is one of Region 4’s efforts to help communities inventory and redevelop former gas stations, underground storage tanks, and other brownfields in historic corridors and highways. In many communities, these properties represent untapped resources for economic and community revitalization.

The Hampstead Institute, a nonprofit organization located in the Hampstead community on Montgomery’s east side, is organizing and developing the project. It intends the farm to be a vibrant gathering place that fosters education and workshops, sustainability, and economic development for Montgomery. Goals for the urban farm project include providing educational opportunities for children and the public, encouraging healthier living, and serving as a tourist attraction. The Institute currently operates Hampstead Farms in East Montgomery.