

Texas Community Develops Vision for Revitalization of Abandoned Auto Dealerships, Leon Valley, Texas

Once a sign of a thriving economy, local automobile dealerships in many communities closed following the General Motors and Chrysler bankruptcies. As a result, many highly visible and centrally located properties are left vacant. Many of these properties may pose environmental, as well as economic, challenges for the communities where they are located.

With funding from EPA's Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization, EPA Region 6 is implementing a pilot program to help the City of Leon Valley, Texas, plan for the sustainable redevelopment of several abandoned automobile dealerships. Most of the former dealerships have underground storage tanks on-site and may be contaminated. Likely contaminants include solvents, heavy metals, petroleum, or asbestos-containing materials. These properties will require assessment and may need remediation before they can be reused for other purposes.



Abandoned auto dealership in Leon Valley, TX

Working together with the local governments, regional councils of governments, and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Region 6 is helping the residents of Leon Valley identify and develop sustainable redevelopment models for these abandoned auto dealership properties. EPA is providing logistics support, outreach materials, and moderators for a series of community planning charrettes. A community planning charrette is a collaborative design workshop that actively involves stakeholders groups—including residents, government officials, developers, and businesses—in developing a vision for future use of a property or area. Region 6 is continuing its search for two additional motivated and engaged Texas communities interested in sustainable redevelopment of abandoned auto dealerships within their communities.

This pilot program enables the community to be an active partner and work with economic developers, former dealership owners, real estate professionals, planners, environmental groups, and others to develop sustainable redevelopment models for each former dealership.

EPA also will help the community leverage resources to assist with assessment and cleanup of the abandoned auto dealership sites. Once the auto dealership properties are assessed and cleaned up, these communities can move forward with the implementation of a community revitalization vision and economic recovery.