

REVITALIZATION IN AUTO SECTOR COMMUNITIES

In response to the severe economic impacts of the General Motors (GM) Corporation and Chrysler Corporation bankruptcies, the White House established an Auto Sector Community Recovery Initiative to bring targeted government resources to the industries, communities, and states impacted. EPA, the Departments of Labor, Energy, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and other federal agencies are investing resources in the recovery effort. EPA is working with its federal partners, states, local governments, and the bankrupt corporations to assess and quantify environmental conditions, define liabilities, and identify potential cleanup and reuse options for former auto industry properties.

With nearly 80 percent of the former GM and Chrysler sites located in the states of Indiana, Michigan and Ohio, EPA Region 5 is leading the way in planning for the cleanup and revitalization of these properties. EPA also is assisting communities in other parts of the country where abandoned auto dealerships and other properties are left vacant in the wake of the auto sector bankruptcies. In the case of many of the former GM properties, the federal government provided

NEW ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS

EPA's land revitalization initiatives are producing significant environmental benefits and helping to transform communities into more sustainable and livable places. The strategy of encouraging market-driven redevelopment of brownfields and other contaminated sites for economic reuse is proving to be a successful approach at many sites. However, challenging real estate markets and economic realities can leave some formerly contaminated properties unused, possibly for a long time. New approaches are needed to revitalize these sites and protect human health and the environment.

EPA's Land Revitalization Team is working with communities, states, other EPA programs, academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector to develop and test new approaches that recognize valuable reuses of properties. The 2009 GM and Chrysler bankruptcies added more than 8,700 acres and 60 million square feet of vacant commercial/industrial property to the nation's brownfield and vacant property inventories. EPA is working closely with communities impacted by the downturn in the auto manufacturing sector to address the economic and environmental challenges these properties represent to these communities.

Unlocking the potential value of these underused properties often requires creativity and close collaboration with many public and private partners. The revitalization of former manufacturing facilities can help stabilize communities and spur economic development.

for the ownership of the properties to be transferred to an Environmental Response Trust. The Trust will receive some federal funding to address environmental conditions at these former GM properties. EPA

will work closely with the Trustee in charge of the trust and with the affected communities to clean up these properties and plan for their reuse.

DAYTON TRANSFORMS FORMER GM PLANT INTO NEW TECH TOWN AEROSPACE HUB

EPA Region 5 is working with the City of Dayton and the State of Ohio to address environmental challenges and regulatory barriers to the cleanup and reuse of the former GM Harrison Plant. The property is located just east of downtown Dayton. With EPA's assistance, and funding and assistance from the State of Ohio, the City of Dayton is well on its way to realizing its vision for the site—turning the 30-acre former auto radiator plant into Tech Town, an urban technology campus.

Tech Town is the centerpiece of Dayton's new Aerospace Hub of Innovation & Opportunity—a state designation that targets aerospace and advanced materials technologies companies within the hub for state regulatory, funding, and technical assistance. The Tech Town business park is expected to with more than a dozen buildings encompassing up to 400,000 square feet of office and manufacturing space and support 2,500 jobs.

The cleanup and redevelopment of this property presents environmental

challenges, in part because of complicated regulatory issues related to the cleanup of contamination at the site. Old GM, the primary party responsible for contamination at the property, ceased all remedial activity at the property when it filed for bankruptcy. GM was conducting corrective action and closure activities under the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) at the time of its bankruptcy.

To ensure the availability of state funding for the property and facilitate state oversight of the cleanup of the

property, EPA Region 5 deferred its regulatory oversight of the Tech Town property to Ohio's Voluntary Action Program. One important result of this action is that the City of Dayton now can use Clean Ohio Fund monies to address contamination at the property. This action also facilitated the growing partnership between the state regulatory program and the City of Dayton as they work in tandem to revitalize this important property.

In addition to the regulatory flexibility provided to the City of Dayton, EPA's Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization provided Dayton with \$200,000 of Targeted Brownfields Assessment (TBA) assistance to conduct environmental assessment activities at the property. The City of Dayton used this assistance for site characterization and assessment activities,

as well as remedial planning activities at the property.

Dayton's Tech Town redevelopment got a significant boost in December 2010, when the State of Ohio and the federal government reached a settlement agreement with the former General Motors Corporation, now named Motors Liquidation Corporation, or MLC. Under the terms of the settlement agreement, MLC will provide more than \$5.3 million for cleanup efforts at the Tech Town site, which includes the land once occupied by the GM Harrison Radiator plant. These cleanup dollars will go to the State of Ohio to assist the City of Dayton in conducting cleanup activities at the site.

This money is in addition to \$39 million in cleanup funds that MLC and the federal government announced for Ohio in October 2010 under the bankruptcy reor-



Illustration of proposed Dayton Tech Town.

ganization and settlement agreements with MLC. The settlement agreements are part of a liquidation plan filed by MLC. That plan and the settlement agreements must be approved by the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York. Court approval of the liquidation plan is expected in the first half of 2011.

TEXAS COMMUNITY DEVELOPS VISION FOR REVITALIZATION OF ABANDONED AUTO DEALERSHIPS

Once a sign of a thriving economy, local automobile dealerships in many communities closed following the GM 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 assist the City of Leon Valley, Texas, plan for the sustainable redevelopment of several abandoned automobile dealerships. Most of the former dealerships may be contaminated and have underground stor-

age tanks. 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.

Working together with the local governments, regional councils of governments, and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, EPA Region 6 is helping the residents of Leon Valley identify and develop sustainable redevelopment models for these.

EPA is providing assistance 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.

This pilot program enables the community to be an active partner and work with economic developers, former dealership owners, 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.

MORE INFORMATION:

Visit EPA Region 5's Brownfields web site for information about the Regional Auto Sector Recovery Workgroup, at <http://www.epa.gov/region5brownfields/>

Visit EPA's Land Revitalization program website at <http://www.epa.gov/landrevitalization/>