



## EPA Region 9 Brownfields Program Success Stories Proposed Civic Center • Visalia, CA



# City Cleans Railroad Site for Future Civic Center and Park

### Project Description

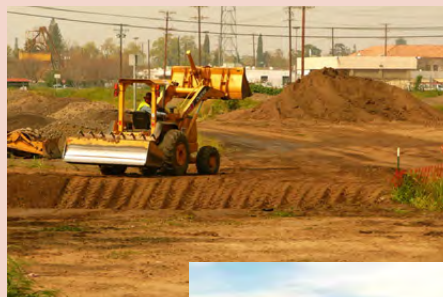
<b>Property Address:</b>	Burke Street north of Center Avenue, Visalia, CA
<b>Property Size:</b>	11.2 acres
<b>Former Use:</b>	Railroad, residential, auto repair shop, warehouses, cannery, packing house, auto wrecking
<b>Contaminants Found:</b>	Lead and cadmium
<b>Current Use:</b>	Vacant with railroad transversing site
<b>Planned Use:</b>	New Civic Center and Park
<b>Current Owner:</b>	City of Visalia

### Project Partners

- City of Visalia
- California Department of Toxic Substances Control
- U.S. EPA

### Property History

The 11.2-acre brownfield property, comprising two parcels, is located in the eastern downtown area of the City of Visalia, California. Visalia is located in California's fertile agricultural basin known as the San Joaquin Valley. Primarily, Visalia's eastern downtown area was agricultural land until the 1900s when land was developed to support agricultural and food processing activities and later an industrial district. From the early 1900s until the city purchased the site in 2004, the site was owned by the Union Pacific Railroad. Prior activities at the site include small dwellings; an auto repair shop; warehouses; a cannery, packing house, paper product storage and glass and paint warehouses, and a packing shed; a steering shop and a cooling shop; two auto wrecking yards; and a rail house. After conducting Phase I and II assessments during 2002-2003, the city acquired the properties in 2004 with plans to build a proposed civic center. The city was awarded \$400,000 in EPA Brownfields Assessment grants in 2004 to conduct



*Removing contaminated soil from site (above)  
Site ready for Civic Center and Park redevelopment (below)*

### Highlights

- The cleanup and redevelopment plans help to realize the community's long-standing smart growth goals for its downtown area
- Project partners were able to overcome the challenge of conducting assessments on a site that was composed of multiple parcels that have undergone many different uses in the past

additional assessments. These assessments indicated areas of shallow soil contaminated principally with lead and also some cadmium at four potential areas of concern. The brownfield site had lain fallow for many years, attracting illegal dumping, and loss of use and aesthetic qualities of Mill Creek, which runs through the site.

### Drivers for Redevelopment

Visalia—one of the fastest growing cities in the state—has made it a priority to keep its small town feel, while the community has grown to nearly 126,000 people. The Visalia community is unique

in its commitment to smart growth principles. In 2004, Visalia embarked on an ambitious community planning process for the downtown. Citizens and community leaders focused on developing a vision for reuse of the eastern downtown area, including the brownfield site. Residents rallied around a plan to reclaim the site as a natural resource and to develop a walkable mall and civic center.

The two brownfield parcels, comprising 11.2 acres, are part of a larger site consisting of five parcels for a total of 28.1 acres. During the EPA assessments of all the parcels, contaminants were only detected on the two subject parcels.

## **Project Results**

In 2006, the Visalia Community Development Department and the Redevelopment Agency were awarded two EPA Brownfields Cleanup grants totaling \$236,000 to properly plan and implement cleanup of the two former railroad properties prior to redevelopment. The property has been identified as the future site of the city's new civic center. Ultimately, the proposed civic center site is envisioned to be a mixed-use campus, which includes city offices, private office space, retail space and park facilities. Landscaping and trails would enhance the riparian area around Mill Creek which flows across the property.

Following receipt of the Brownfields Cleanup grants, the city entered into a Voluntary Cleanup Agreement with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). The city conducted a human health risk evaluation and worked with DTSC to establish remedial action objectives. In 2010, approximately 420 cubic yards of contaminated soil were removed and properly disposed. Confirmation soil sampling verified that all soil exceeding the remedial action objectives was removed from the site. The city received a \$50,000 sub-grant from DTSC to help with the cleanup; the city provided a 20% cost share.

Due to the economic downturn, the construction of the new civic center has been deferred until the economy improves. The city is currently working to develop a park that would be 2.8 acres, the majority of which would be on the brownfield site. The park would include an event stage, picnic areas, water features, trails and bicycle paths; however, there is no funding at this time to begin construction on the park. The city continues to seek grant opportunities to fund park construction. Community support to develop the civic center once economic conditions improve remains high.

## **Funding Information**

<b>\$150,000</b>	Phase I and II assessments
<b>\$400,000</b>	Brownfield Assessment grants for additional assessment
<b>\$236,000</b>	Brownfield Cleanup grants for site cleanup
<b>\$50,000</b>	Sub-grant from DTSC for cleanup
<b>\$60,000</b>	Approximate cost share provided by the city for cleanup activities

## **Project Timeline**

<b>2002-2003</b>	City conducted Phase I and II assessments of the property
<b>2004-2006</b>	City purchased property; additional site assessment conducted
<b>2007</b>	City issued RFP and entered into a contract with a cleanup contractor
<b>2008</b>	City entered into Voluntary Cleanup Agreement with DTSC; additional assessment conducted at DTSC's request
<b>2009</b>	Risk assessment conducted; remedial action objectives established; removal action workplan developed
<b>2010</b>	Cleanup completed
<b>2011</b>	City seeking funding to develop parkland portion of project

For additional information, please contact:

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