



# Creating Greenspace at EPA's Brownfields Pilots



## GREENSPACE

**E**conomic development is a critical component of brownfields redevelopment. However, EPA recognizes that establishing and restoring greenspace is also important and can be a viable end use for brownfields. Greenspace uses include parks, playgrounds, trails, gardens, habitat restoration, open space, and/or greenspace preservation. While many brownfields become necessary tools for a community's economic revitalization, greenspace use can provide an asset to a community that surpasses economic benefits.

EPA recently awarded 56 supplemental assistance awards, of up to \$150,000, to existing Assessment Pilots in 28 states. Twenty-one of those Pilots were also awarded an additional \$50,000 for assessment activities relating specifically to greenspace, such as site investigation, site characterization, reuse planning, cleanup decision facilitation, and community involvement related to the site. This award is applicable to Pilots where greenspace reuse is included in their redevelopment plans. Several of EPA's Assessment Pilots are already addressing greenspace issues and are working to include greenspace components in their long-range goals. These sites can serve as models to other Pilots interested in incorporating greenspace into their own redevelopment plans.

One example is the Oregon Mills Site Conversion Project Brownfields Pilot, which has addressed 12 abandoned mill sites across the state. The Astoria Mill property, along the Columbia River, is one of the Pilot sites leading the way in the transformation of abandoned mills into more productive uses. In addition to the economic potential of this particular site (a success previously highlighted by EPA), the Astoria site has a greenspace component; it has received a technical grant from the National Park Service (NPS) to assist in developing a 5.1-acre recreational trail along the property that will be added to an existing riverfront walk. There are potential greenspace reuses at two other mill sites covered by the Oregon Mills Site Brownfields Pilot, Molalla and Philometh. A walking path was included in a preliminary plan at the Molalla site, and due to its high-grade wetlands, a portion of the Philometh site—often used for field trips by area students—may be used as open space in the final development plan.

NPS is also working with EPA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other federal, state, and local agencies as part of the Kansas City Assess-

## JUST THE FACTS:

- Used vegetation in Hartford, CT, to absorb lead at former paint store site.
- Assessed a town dump in Cape Charles, VA, which is being redeveloped as an eco-park where natural habitat makes up one-half of the park's land.
- Began planning and construction of over 18 miles of trails linking the cities of Kansas City, KS and MO together.

*The City of Worcester's redeveloped site will contain 40 miles of bike paths and walkways that will crisscross 30 acres of restored greenspace.*

*—Central Massachusetts Economic Development Authority Pilot*

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ment Pilot and Showcase Community. One of the 21 Pilots to receive additional greenspace funding from EPA, Kansas City's "Riverfront Heritage Trail," will accommodate both pedestrians and bicycles, and will connect recreational open space and parks with employment, commercial, and retail centers along the urban riverfront area. The trail will eventually link up with other existing and planned trails in surrounding communities, making it an alternative transportation system for the entire metropolitan area. Kansas City's Pilot and Showcase have over 18 miles of trails planned or under construction that will link the two cities together, provide access to the Kansas and Missouri Rivers, and wind past nine brownfields sites within the Pilot area. The Showcase Community is also working with developers who are interested in constructing on those brownfields sites—due in part to the development of the trail—and is encouraging them to include greenspace components in their redevelopment plans.

Another example is the Hartford, Connecticut, Brownfields Pilot, which recently teamed up with the state, city, community groups, and a local college to assess and cleanup a 1.2-acre contaminated former paint store site. After the bulk of contaminated soil was removed by the city, students at Trinity College planted vegetation to absorb remaining lead, eventually cutting onsite lead levels in half. Once safe levels have been reached, a vegetable garden will be planted onsite by an adjacent soup kitchen that will feed local homeless people. A community garden is also in the works.

The Central Massachusetts Economic Development Authority (CMEDA) Pilot is also working to create greenspace at an abandoned mill site in the City of Worcester. The project will convert a 70,000-square-foot building and its surrounding property into a visitors' center and environmental training center. While being hailed as a partnership success (a success previously highlighted by EPA), the Pilot is also incorporating recreational greenspace uses in its final redevelopment plan. When completed, the site will contain 40 miles of bike paths and walkways that will crisscross 30 acres of restored greenspace.

The Cape Charles, Virginia, Brownfields Pilot has included greenspace plans in its project since the beginning. Cape Charles is located on a narrow strip of land between the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Preserving and restoring natural resources in the surrounding area is important to the Pilot and to the community. In 1994, before the Pilot award, the site was chosen as one of four national eco-industrial park demonstration projects by the President's Council on Sustainable Development. Cleaning up the 25-acre town dump at the heart of proposed park was vital to the overall development of the eco-park. The Pilot funded the assessment of the dump and paved the way for park construction and greenspace restoration plans. The eco-park combines development, such as a new conference and training facility, with natural habitat, walkways, and trails. The natural habitat comprises approximately one-half of the land in the park, including a 30-acre Coastal Dune Natural Area Preserve and 60 additional acres of open space.

These examples indicate that including greenspace in a brownfields redevelopment plan can be a viable option at a variety of Pilot sites, both rural and urban. While economic development is essential to redeveloping brownfields, including a greenspace component can provide trails, gardens, or simple open space that many communities need to enhance the quality of life around re-developing brownfields. For more information about these Pilot sites and greenspace issues visit EPA's web site at: [www.epa.gov/brownfields/](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/).

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<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>

