

Remediation of Place:
The Role of the United States Environmental Protection Agency in
Designing Reuse at Superfund Sites

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis will explore what the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) direct and indirect roles should and could be in fostering place making for Superfund site redevelopment. The EPA manages the clean up of severely contaminated abandoned property under the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation Liability Act (CERCLA), a.k.a. the Superfund Program, in order to protect human health and the environment. These neglected places are often a blight to the surrounding communities, causing disinvestment and decay.

Redevelopment of these abandoned sites is often difficult and plagued with challenging circumstances and uncertainties. Impediments to Superfund site redevelopment include fears associated with health risks and liability, uncertainty on the length of clean up time, lack of willingness of the property owner, and stigma. The revitalization of these sites is vital to improving the quality of life of the surrounding community and the region.

The redevelopment design is a critical component of revitalization and needs to be thoughtfully constructed. Urban design goals should be geared towards enhancing the public realm, improving quality of life, and creating a sense of place. This is place making and should be inclusive and account for the needs of the occupants.

EPA's current policies and tools under the Superfund Redevelopment Initiative do not achieve place making results. Recommendation for change include the development of urban design principles and reuse planning guidance, providing education and training for both EPA staff and affected communities, shifting the expertise of the workforce, providing more funding for planning activities and changing legislative to incorporate regional environmental solutions.

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