

History of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) Involvement with East Palo Alto

The EPA has been working to improve the human health and environment of the East Palo Alto community for the past decade through different agency programs.

Listed below are highlights of our work.

EPA Brownfields Program

Brownfields are abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial and commercial facilities previously used for industrial or commercial purposes commonly contaminated by hazardous waste or pollution. Brownfields have the potential to be reused once cleaned up.

How EPA has helped:

- Over \$1M in grants to investigate contamination on Brownfields sites throughout East Palo Alto
 - ◆ Includes EPA-funded area wide assessment of the Ravenswood Industrial Area where 240 soil samples were taken
 - ◆ Prepared the Ravenswood and Weeks neighborhoods for redevelopment for industrial use or housing through funding extensive soil sampling
 - ◆ Cummings Lofts (a former plant nursery to be redeveloped as housing and ground-level retail), Iwasaki Nursery (a former plant nursery to be redeveloped as housing on Weeks St) and former gas station recently acquired from San Mateo County to be a part of a future super-market site are examples of how EPA funding has created redevelopment opportunities
- Provided \$200,000 grant to conduct soil sampling and related studies to redevelop Cooley Landing into a park and nature center
- More than 200 local workers have been trained and employed on cleanup and redevelopment projects throughout East Palo Alto through the nation's first Brownfields job training program at Opportunities Industrialization Center West, Inc. (OICW) in Menlo Park.



Using a \$200,000 brownfields grant from US EPA, the city is conducting environmental and predevelopment studies in order to convert this former county landfill into a park and nature center for East Palo Alto residents.

EPA Air Quality Programs

Air Quality can be affected in many ways by the pollution emitted from different sources: factories, power plants, dry cleaners, cars, buses, planes, trucks, trains, and naturally occurring sources such as windblown dust and volcanic eruptions. All these sources can contribute to air pollution.

Studies show a link between air quality and health issues such as asthma. East Palo Alto has a higher rate of childhood asthma than the rest of San Mateo County. The causes of this higher asthma rate are unknown, though it is speculated that it may be related to higher levels of air pollution. EPA has partnered with the City of Palo Alto, El Concilio of San Mateo County, East Palo Alto Asthma Task Force, Community Development Institute, and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to address this health issue.

How EPA has helped:

- Assessed and trained school district teachers, staff and students to identify and remove asthma triggers in classrooms and homes and alter behaviors through two grants equaling \$34,000 awarded to the Ravenswood City School District



US EPA funded indoor air quality assessments at seven schools in the Ravenswood City School District. Blocked vents were one of several problems detected that can contribute to poor air quality and can worsen asthma.

- Funded a local air monitoring program to determine if ozone and particulate matter levels are higher in East Palo Alto than in other parts of the county. Results to date show that East Palo Alto levels are comparable those recorded at the Bay Area Air Quality Management District's monitors in Redwood City. A second monitoring station in the Ravenswood Area is planned.



As part of an effort to prevent lead poisoning, US EPA worked with the City to place this billboard along Highway 101 southbound in East Palo Alto.

Lead Poisoning Prevention Outreach

Lead is a highly toxic metal that was used for many years in products found in and around homes. Lead may cause a range of health effects, from behavioral problems and learning disabilities to seizures and death. Children six years old and under are most at risk because their bodies are growing quickly. Research suggests that the primary sources of lead exposure for most children are deteriorating lead-based paint, lead-contaminated dust, and lead-contaminated residential soil.

How EPA has helped:

- Outreach and poisoning prevention information disseminated to community organizations

- Educated the East Palo Alto and greater community about lead poisoning through a billboard in East Palo Alto along Highway 101
- Inspected property management firms, real estate offices, and apartment complexes to ensure tenants received lead hazards disclosures
- Screened children for lead and educated their families about lead poisoning through an outreach grant awarded to the Family Support Center



US EPA funded OICW's Project Build, which trains East Palo Alto residents in environmental cleanup and construction.

Water

Water is essential for life and plays a vital role in the proper functioning of the Earth's ecosystems. The pollution of water has a serious impact on all living creatures, and can negatively affect the use of water for drinking, household needs, recreation, fishing, transportation and commerce. EPA enforces federal clean water and safe drinking water laws, provides support for municipal wastewater treatment plants, and takes part in pollution prevention efforts aimed at protecting watersheds and sources of drinking water.

Highlights of our water program include:

- Ensured that the City of East Palo Alto has sufficient water supply and distribution facilities to accommodate planned redevelopment through a \$106,100 grant. A water master plan is currently underway.
- Improved stormwater infrastructure to meet current City needs and planned redevelopment through a \$192,500 grant scheduled to be awarded to the city in 2008.