

brownfields

Success Story

A LONG-IDLE SCHOOL BUILDING WILL ONCE AGAIN BENEFIT LOCAL RESIDENTS

Shelby, MT

The City of Shelby applied assessment, cleanup and redevelopment funding from multiple federal and state sources—as well as its own resources—to reuse a cherished, historic school building in ways that will continue to benefit local residents.

HIGHLIGHTS

Environmental assessments on the historic school site were financed through a combination of the city's Housing and Community Development fund and Targeted Brownfields Assessment funding from EPA.

Cleanup of asbestos and lead-based paint was funded through an EPA Brownfields Cleanup grant, matching funds from the City of Shelby, and nearly \$60,000 of in-kind services that included waived landfill disposal fees for hazardous materials.

With an estimated completion date of 2013, this project will allow Shelby's community to retain the cherished memories associated with this building, and at the same time provide a multi-faceted community center and greenspace that will be invaluable to local residents.



The exterior of Shelby's historic high school building

The City of Shelby, Montana is a small community of approximately 3,500 residents located less than 50 miles from the Canadian border. Shelby's high school building, located on 8.3 acres at the corner of Main Street and 6th Avenue, has been a fixture of the city since it was built in 1931 and is now considered a historic structure. When Shelby High School moved to another location in 1962, the original building was converted into a middle school. It served in that capacity until 2003, when a new elementary school was built. Since 2003, the historic structure was only used sporadically for the occasional adult aerobics class or athletics when the new school's facilities were overbooked.

No sooner did the main use of the historic building end than the City of Shelby began considering reuse options for the facility in ways that could best serve local residents. The city understood that the building had sentimental value for area residents who had either graduated from elementary school there, or the original high school. Through collaborations among the city, Shelby School District #14 and community representatives, it was decided that a new community center that retained the historic building's construction—with space for adult education, youth activities, and new, recreational greenspace on the land—would be the property's reuse.

Before updates to the building's interior could begin, concerns regarding the use of lead-based paint and asbestos in the three quarter-century old structure needed to be addressed. Preliminary environmental assessments began in November 2004 and were completed the next month, paid for with \$11,869 from the city's Housing and Community Development fund. More detailed assessments, paid for with \$8,678 Targeted Brownfields Assessment funding from EPA, began in July 2005 and were finished in December. These assessments confirmed the presence of asbestos and lead-based paint, but clearly defined areas of concern within the structure so that cleanup could begin.

In May 2005, an EPA Brownfields Cleanup grant was awarded to the City of Shelby, allowing this project to proceed. The city used \$153,200 of the \$200,000 EPA grant for cleanup; Shelby provided \$40,000 in matching funds and leveraged nearly \$60,000 of in-kind services (e.g., waived landfill disposal fees for hazardous materials, and administrative assistance from city personnel). The cleanup effort began in April 2007 and was completed less than three months later. Throughout the assessment and cleanup process, the City of Shelby held multiple public meetings to keep the community informed of progress and ensure that any concerns were met.

Redevelopment of the historic building's interior started in September 2007 and is being completed in stages. So far, the building's outdated boiler has been replaced with a modern, energy-efficient model;

asbestos-containing insulation has been removed and replaced with safe material; and the entire roof has been replaced—all while preserving the historic structure's interior. The majority of the building's windows on the first floor have

been updated as well, through a preservation grant awarded to surrounding Toole County. And in 2011, community groups collaborated with local businesses to fund replacement of the old gym floor, enabling youth basketball games to begin in winter of that year. Ongoing projects include the installation of elevators as well as a new steam piping system.

Gaps in funding have been alleviated through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grants as well as an Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Through these grants, the city was awarded \$298,000 for boiler replacement, wall insulation and roof repair; and \$50,000 to begin window replacement. The city itself has contributed more than \$80,000 toward redevelopment.

With an estimated completion date of 2013, this project will allow Shelby's community to retain the cherished high school and elementary school memories associated with this building, and at the same time provide a multi-faceted community center and greenspace that will be invaluable to local residents. As many as 15 new, permanent jobs are expected as a result of this project. The Center will include a new "Head Start" facility that offers adult and alternative education; a new production area for the local Toole County Community Theatre; a new after-school program; and public, recreational greenspace that will become part of the city's park system. This property's reuse will continue to benefit several generations of Shelby residents.

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*Solid Waste
and Emergency
Response (5105T)*

*EPA 560-F-12-012
March 2012
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