

FEDERAL FACILITIES RESTORATION AND REUSE OFFICE

Closed Defense Depot Transformed into Major Industrial Park; Provides Jobs and Services for Area Community

Memphis Defense Depot, Memphis, TN



Entrance to Memphis Depot Business Park

For decades the Former Memphis Defense Depot was an integral part of the US military's logistics network as well as a source of jobs for the greater southeast Memphis community. Today, the former depot is a model of base closure and redevelopment as it has been redeveloped into an active and successful industrial business park serving the surrounding community.



Building at the Memphis Depot Business Park

The Memphis Defense Depot (the Depot) is a 642-acre property just inside the Memphis City limits in Shelby County, Tennessee. Constructed in 1942, the Depot was an integral part of the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) whose job was to provide material support to U.S. military services. Logistics Depots support the military by procuring, managing, storing, and distributing almost every consumable item the military needs to operate. In addition to providing material support, the Depot collected and stored a number of hazardous substances. Many hazardous substances were stored at Dunn

Field so that they would remain in a controlled environment and under the supervision of the DLA.

In 1989, local utility companies closed three drinking wells due to contamination. This led to a larger facility investigation in 1990 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the auspices of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). Subsequently the Depot was placed on the National Priorities List (NPL) in 1992 and scheduled for cleanup under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). In the initial testing, a number of contaminants

were found in soil on the property including, pentachlorophenol, PCB's, heavy metals, and disposed chemical warfare materials.

The Depot entered into a Federal Facilities Agreement (FFA) with the Department of Defense, EPA, and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) in March 1995. The three agencies worked together to comply with CERCLA standards and ensure a swift clean up process. By July of the same year, the Depot was scheduled to be closed under the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Act. BRAC is a process by which former military installations are closed and the property is then transferred to the local municipality or private enterprise. To oversee this process, the BRAC Cleanup Team (BCT) was formed and included representatives from the DLA, EPA, and TDEC.



Environmental remediation activities at the former Memphis Defense Depot facility

At the beginning of the remediation process, the Depot was divided into two work areas, the Main Installation and Dunn Field. Dunn Field was a 60-acre disposal site on the property while the Main Installation included all other buildings and property. Between 1998 and 2001, work was done on the Main Installation to remove contaminated soil. As a result, the Main Installation now only requires ground water treatment for chlorinated volatile organic compounds (CVOCs), monitored natural attenuation (MNA) for low-concentration plume areas, and land use controls. Dunn Field, while much smaller, had higher levels of contamination. To remediate the area, contents of pits and burial trenches used to store chemical warfare agents were disposed of off-site, soil vapor extraction (SVE) was conducted in unsaturated subsurface soils, and ground water was treated with zero-valent iron (ZVI) to address CVOC contamination. Throughout the cleanup process, over 1,300 pounds of VOCs were removed from Dunn Field. Like the Main Installation, there will be ongoing monitoring of ground water contamination at Dunn Field.

To engage the community and ensure involvement with the remediation of the Depot, a Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) made up by members of the community was created. Twice a year the RAB would meet to review the progress and plans for redevelopment. In addition, the remediation team published a semiannual newsletter called EnviroNews to share cleanup status and project progress with the community. The RAB worked with the City of Memphis and the Shelby County Government to encourage economic growth and jobs.

The Depot is now home to distribution centers for large international companies like FedEx and United Parcel Service (UPS), providing over 1,300 jobs for local residents. Turpin Ballard from EPA



New buildings at the Memphis Depot Business Park

Region 4 was the Remedial Project Manager for the site and states, “The strategic location near the interstate and airport make it a highly desirable place to be. We are glad that the combined environmental efforts of the State, DoD, and EPA, along with the highly effective way in which the Depot Redevelopment Corporation upgraded the infrastructure and marketed the Memphis Depot Business Park, have ultimately replaced the jobs lost at the time the facility closed.” Over 400 acres of the property were transferred to the Depot Redevelopment Corporation (MDRC) who now oversees the industrial park, the Memphis Depot Business Park. The MDRC’s mission is to attract businesses to the Depot and create economic growth in the area.

The Depot has attracted a great deal of business due to economic incentives, over 5.5 million square feet of warehouse space, and its proximity to interstates 240 and 55, rail yards, and the Memphis International Airport. To encourage

economic development, Shelby County, the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, the City of Memphis, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division all offer incentives to bring business to the former Depot. Some of these programs include; franchise jobs tax credits, gas and electric use discounts, and Payment-In-Lieu-Of-Tax (PILOT) programs.

The property has also been put to use by the City of Memphis, who built a light rail maintenance facility that will also help link the transit system to the airport. The City of Memphis transferred property and houses to Alpha Omega, a not for profit organization that helps physically disabled, mentally ill, and homeless veterans. The new property provides housing to over 25 veterans and greatly increases the ability for Alpha Omega to serve veterans. Before its close, the Depot had a golf course that has now been restored and is run by Memphis Athletic Ministries and The First Tee of Memphis Organization. The First Tee of Memphis is an organization run by the Mid-South Junior Golf Association and strives to

teach young people the game of golf and the importance of hard work, character, community involvement, and self-esteem.

By uniting government organizations like the DoD and EPA with smaller state and local organizations like the City of Memphis and Alpha Omega, the remediated Memphis Defense Depot was able to provide jobs and services to the citizens of Memphis. The Depot is still developing and will serve the City of Memphis for years to come.



Ongoing groundwater monitoring

For more information, call or write:

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