



## Pioneer Valley Planning Commission secures \$500K for polluted parcels cleanup and revitalization

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A flag with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) logo flies at the agency's headquarters in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Robert Alexander/Getty Images)

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SPRINGFIELD, Mass. (WWLP) – The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), designated as the regional planning agency for 43 cities and towns in Hampden and Hampshire Counties, has been awarded a \$500,000 grant by the U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA).

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The grant aims to support the assessment and remediation planning of potentially polluted properties in Ware and South Hadley.

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PVPC's Executive Director, Kimberly H. Robinson, highlights the importance of these efforts for the region's growth and sustainability. The initiative seeks to attract private investment in parcels previously impacted by contamination, which have remained dormant due to the legacy of the Valley's industrial activities. With strategic taxpayer dollar investments, these sites can be transformed to host the enterprises of the future, contributing to the region's economic progress.

The EPA has provided PVPC with a four-year timeline to complete the program, allowing ample time for thorough environmental assessments and remediation planning.

The targeted sites for assessment and cleanup, commonly known as brownfields, are often located at former industrial activity locations. The Pioneer Valley harbors over 4,000 such sites, housing various chemicals like heavy metals (lead, arsenic, etc.), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), petroleum, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).



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The specific sites in focus for this round of EPA funding include the Downtown Historic District in Ware, with priority sites at 16 E. Main Street (Formerly Boiler House) and Millyard Bldg. #12 E. Main Street. In South Hadley, the priority sites are Gaylord Street (Gaylord Mill) and 85 Main Street (S. Hadley Electric Light Dept.).

Additionally, PVPC will address hazardous building materials (HBM) in commercial and industrial buildings, often containing asbestos, and lead-based paint in urban residences.

The cleanup and revitalization of brownfields offer both economic and non-economic benefits to Pioneer Valley communities. The efforts will stimulate private business investment, create job opportunities, enhance the local tax base, drive economic growth, eliminate blight, foster community pride, provide open spaces, and recreational opportunities, and improve public access to waterfront areas.

Additionally, these efforts will reduce the potential health risks and exposures of residents to contamination.

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