



Soil Contamination as a Legacy of the U.S. Auto Industry, Southwest Detroit, Michigan USA

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The Delray community of southwest Detroit is one of the most depressed areas in southeast Michigan. Historically, Delray was a working class, racially diverse community that depended heavily on industrial jobs provided by nearby factories. However, decades of industrial waste discharges have left Delray with extensive air and soil pollution. Although high unemployment and poverty are major challenges confronting residents in Delray today, the threat to public health from Pb, Hg, As and Cr [VI] in the soil may become an even bigger issue and a significant source of concern. Newspaper headlines cite crime, substance abuse, high school and labor force dropout, as being prevalent in Delray, but recent research suggest that soil contamination, which has resulted in elevated blood Pb levels may be an underlying factor. Recent interest in this area as a potential site for a new bridge to Canada, has offered new hope to the residents by potentially opening the door for redevelopment. The initial step in this process is an environmental assessment of the Delray community. This investigation is being conducted by the University of Michigan-Dearborn in consortium with local community groups and the Detroit Public School. Although preliminary, an analysis of soil samples from over 400 residences has indicated that significant levels of As, and Pb are present in the upper 0.1 meter of soil throughout the Delray area. The high levels of metals present in the soil suggest that further investigation and possible remedial action will be necessary prior to redevelopment.