



Community Relations Plan

**Judge Robert Johnson Park
723 Carl Miller Boulevard
(Block 520, Lot 26; Block 522, Lot 9 (partial); Block 523, Lot 13)
Camden, New Jersey**

US Environmental Protection Agency
RLF Grant Cooperative Agreement No. 4B96236900
Cleanup Grant Cooperative Agreement No. 4B9618700

Submitted by:

The Camden Redevelopment Agency
520 Market Street
City Hall
Camden, New Jersey

Prepared by:

BRS, Inc.
P.O. Box 2293, Medford Lakes, NJ 08055
856-964-6456



February 2023
(Updated April 2026)

Overview

The purpose of this Community Relations Plan (CRP) is to present the strategies that the Camden Redevelopment Agency (CRA) / City of Camden in Camden, New Jersey has employed to date and will employ going forward to facilitate communications with, and involvement of, the residents of Camden, City officials, local organizations, and other stakeholders during the process of environmental cleanup at Judge Robert Johnson Park, located at 723 Carl Miller Boulevard, in Camden (Site). The CRP is particularly aimed at the informational needs of City residents who are potentially directly affected by the proposed cleanup action and redevelopment of the property.

The CRP and the activities described herein are intended to comply with:

1. The Public Notification and Outreach regulations and guidance of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), which provides regulatory oversight to the project, as found in N.J.A.C. 7:26E.
2. The Community Relations and Public Involvement requirements of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which provides funding for the project via a brownfields cleanup grant.

The CRP is prepared in accordance with EPA guidance and the governing EPA Cooperative Agreements Nos 4B96236900 and 4B9618700.

The CRA is primarily responsible for implementing community relations pertaining to the site.

Spokesperson and Information Repository

The spokesperson for this project is:

Olivette Simpson, Executive Director
Camden Redevelopment Agency
City Hall
520 Market Street, Suite 1300
Camden, NJ 08102
(856) 757-7600
olivette.simpson@camdennj.gov

The administrative record file/information repository is located on the CRA website at <http://camdenredevelopment.org>. The information repository will include the following documents related to environmental assessment and remediation of the project site:

- Community Relations Plan (CRP)
- Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives/Documentation of Public Outreach
- Decision Document
- Environmental Assessment Reports
- Remedial Action Workplan

Site Description and History

The target area for cleanup is Judge Robert Johnson Park, a 14.7-acre site located at 723 Carl Miller Boulevard in Census tract 6016 and bordering Census tract 6017. The site is located in the Liberty Park neighborhood. It is bounded by Liberty Park townhomes to the north, Rt 676 to the west, Carl Miller Blvd and the Hope VI homes to the south, South 8th Street and KIPP middle and elementary schools to the East, along with a row of homes and the First Nazarene Baptist Church. The Isabel Miller Community center and pool is located on the SE corner of the site.

According to review of historic aerial photographs and Sanborn® Fire Insurance Maps, the majority of the Subject Property has remained undeveloped since the late 1800's with the exception of the far southern end of the property fronting Carl Miller Boulevard. The southern end of the Subject Property was improved with primarily residential dwellings beginning around 1906. As the years progressed, some commercial and light industrial use structures were erected along Carl Miller Boulevard. In the late 1960's, all Site structures were razed to support the development of the existing Robert B. Johnson Park. The park was promptly closed upon discovery of environmental contamination, leaving the community with no accessible open space.

Prior to its closure, the park contained a football field, baseball field, two basketball courts, a playground, and multiuse path. The park had been widely used by the community, including as the home to the Centerville Simbas Youth Football League for the past fifty years and by the KIPP Sumner Elementary School and KIPP Hatch Middle School. Now a vacant brownfield site, the park sits as a reminder to residents of the legacy of contamination that they face on a daily basis, as well as a reminder of the dormant potential in their neighborhood.

Nature and Threats to Public Health and the Environment

The site is currently an active case with NJDEP. A Preliminary Assessment (PA) was completed in September 2021 for the Camden County Department of Parks (CCDP). Subsequent assessment activities conducted on the site in 2022 identified 4 "Areas of Concern" or AOCs with potential to adversely impact soil and groundwater at the site.

- AOC-1 Historic Fill Material
- AOC-2 Historic Dumping
- AOC-3 Former Scrap Yard
- AOC-4 Potential Residential USTs

Based on a review of the historic aerial photographs and other research, it appears that dumping and/or or filling activities have occurred at the Subject Property since at least 1940 to approximately the mid 1950's, specifically in the rear two-thirds of the Site. The New Jersey Geologic Survey Historic Fill of the Camden Quadrangle shows the northern two-thirds of the Subject Property is mapped as containing historic fill. Further, prior reports note that the rear two-thirds of the property (where the filling is shown to have occurred) is situated at an elevation approximately 10 feet higher compared to the front portion of the property.

Based on these findings a Site Investigation performed in February 2022 for CCPD was focused on the historic filling and/or dumping activities, the presence of a former junkyard at the southern end of the

Subject Property and the potential for heating oil underground storage tanks (USTs) associated with the structures formerly present along Carl Miller Boulevard.

Analytical results for the 2021 and 2022 soil samples reported the following classifications of compounds above a Non-Residential (ingestion-dermal or inhalation pathway) Soil Remediation Standards (SRS) in multiple samples: semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and metals. These classes of compounds were detected throughout the Site, including in samples collected to investigate non-Historic Fill AOCs (AOC 2, 3, and 4).

Impacted soil was identified at depths ranging from 0.0-0.5 feet bgs to 19.5-20.0 feet bgs. 16 of the 26 samples collected in the top 1.0 foot of soil reported at least one compound concentration above a Non-Residential SRS. 11 of the 29 samples collected deeper than 1.0-foot bgs reported at least one compound concentration above a Non-Residential SRS. The distribution of the compounds of concern, including detections in samples collected to investigate other AOCs, is reflective of the presence of Historic Fill throughout the Site.

The soil investigative work completed to date, specifically the number, location, depth, and laboratory analysis requested, provides sufficient data and information to develop a Remedial Action Workplan and associated cost estimate. Remedial action will be required for only AOC-1: Historic Fill Material.

Community Profile

According to the 2016-2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates (the most recent Census data available for Census Tracts), Camden is the poorest municipality in the State. The city has a 13.9% unemployment rate, more than double that of the rest of the nation. And of the city's nearly 74,000 residents, 33.6% are living below the poverty line, with 16% living in deep poverty; earning less than half of the federal poverty level. These poverty rates are nearly 3 times the rate of Camden County (12.3% poverty rate for individuals) and the United States (12.8% poverty rate for individuals). For the city's families, these comparisons are even starker, with 30.6% of families in poverty; 4.4 times higher than the 7% of families in the state of New Jersey.

Camden's disproportionate rates of sensitive, economically disadvantaged populations, results in a higher demand for a wider range of social and economic services that is not commensurate with the City's available financial resources. This is further exacerbated by the fact that having a concentration of non-profit social service providers means that more property is occupied by those that do not pay local property taxes. Today, almost half of the assessed property value in Camden is exempt from taxation. According to information published by the state's Multi-Year Recovery Plan for Camden, Camden's tax ratable base is the smallest in NJ on a per capita basis - at approximately one-half that of other cities and one-quarter of Camden County. Given the fiscal state of the city and competing needs for basic services, the City is unable to address the hundreds of brownfields and relies on federal and state funding sources.

The brownfield site targeted by this grant is in the Liberty Park neighborhood on the border of the Centerville neighborhood. Liberty Park is a community of nearly 2,400 people, right in the heart of Camden. The neighborhood is bounded by Atlantic Avenue to the north, Mt. Ephraim Avenue to the east, Interstate 676 to the west and Carl Miller Boulevard to the south. Immediately across the site on Carl Miller Blvd is the Carl Miller Hope VI development with 122 new affordable units.

Action Plan

The USEPA funded work will address contamination and facilitate safe access to a neighborhood recreational amenity.

The top priority of the community involvement plan is to maintain ongoing communication and active engagement with community stakeholders about the project. This involves creating opportunities for dialogue and ensuring that the community is informed. To achieve this, the City and the CRA, along with project partners Camden County and the Camden Community Partnership (CCP), have and will continue to conduct public meetings and information sessions. Such meetings provide updates on project developments, answer questions, and gather input from community members.

Addressing environmental concerns is a critical component of this CRP. By engaging the community, addressing environmental concerns, and promoting active involvement, we aim to create a transparent, inclusive, and collaborative process that leads to the successful revitalization of the City of Camden. Our commitment to these principles will foster trust, build strong partnerships, and ensure that the project meets the needs and aspirations of the community it serves. Written responses to significant and appropriate comments, documentation of any changes to the cleanup plans will be included and/or incorporated into the final ABCA.

The City of Camden and the CRA have committed to providing meaningful community engagement throughout the duration of the assessment and cleanup of the Site. The CRA, City, Camden County, and CCP continue to respond to direct community inquiries for the project as well as schedule community meetings. To date the following community involvement activities are planned or have been completed:

- On site meeting with Camden County, CCP, and users of the football field to discuss site and issues.
- A community meeting, hosted by the City and the CRA was held on 11/15/2022 to discuss the draft Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives as well as the USEPA cleanup grant application.
- A community meeting with the City, CRA, Camden County, CCP was held on 4/7/2025 to provide a project update.
- Meetings will be held once remediation contractor mobilizes to the site.

Further, prior to remediation construction, specific community notification is required. The LSRP of record (TRC Companies) will ensure compliance with NJDEP public notification requirements. Signs were erected at the site to notify the public of the environmental work in progress on the site and provide contact information for responsible agencies in the event that any issues or questions arise regarding the work.

Contact Lists

EPA Project Officer:

Patrick Peck
Brownfields Project Officer
Land Chemicals and Redevelopment Division
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2
290 Broadway, 25th Floor
New York, New York 10007-1866
(212) 637-4421
peck.patrick@epa.gov

CRA:

Olivette Simpson, Executive Director
Camden Redevelopment Agency
City Hall
520 Market Street, Suite 1300
Camden, NJ 08102
(856) 757-7600
olivette.simpson@camdennj.gov