

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

HAROLD MITCHELL

Community Member—
Spartanburg, SC

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EPA Interviewer: Today's February 23 and we're in the state capital of Columbia, South Carolina, interviewing Representative Harold Mitchell. Thanks for joining us.

Mitchell: Thank you.

EPA Interviewer: We're talking about the Superfund 25th anniversary and I was wondering if you could start at the beginning and tell me how you first became aware of Superfund and hazardous contamination issues.

Mitchell: First, I got involved back in the early '90s, not having any idea about any environmental issues or Superfund, for that matter. I grew up right across the street from an abandoned fertilizer facility, which we thought was something that was safe, but came to find out later by pure accident [was not safe]—I was sick for almost about eight or nine months when the doctors couldn't diagnose the symptoms. I was passing blood and my entire left side was swollen. I lost about 37 pounds. So within that time frame, it was just racing through the mind as to what could have caused the problems. And then it just went away. And during that time, looking at the facility, there was a lot of drug activity and transactions taking place there. So we were, as far as my family, on a dead end street, trying to get the county to resolve the issues there. And I was led to the Environmental Quality Control Office because of the nuisance with the rodents and things there. We ended up finding out by mistake—a receptionist gave me the files, which I didn't know anything about freedom of information, but the files on this fertilizer facility—and that's how everything started with that site. I began looking at the files and the air, groundwater issues and complaints and just kind of racing in my mind—during that almost a year's time—trying to figure out what was the problem and where could this have come from, as far as what I had been battling through. It was almost like peeling back an onion; every time you peel back, you find more and more with the site itself. So that was how I was introduced to these environmental issues and the impact that they would have on a community.

EPA Interviewer: What was the first major thing that made you realize there was something really wrong with this site. You talked about a receptionist giving you some papers. What happened?

Mitchell: Well, when I received those files on the site itself, it was one that I saw that for years we had been told that there was not a problem and that that was a site that everyone in the community worked at. But then when you began to look at the conditions and what they were actually dealing with and basically the cover-up—because this site was listed as a clean bill

of health—so some of the actual photos that were in the file and what I had taken, I knew the discrepancies.

Looking at the closure plan it was not accurate because I grew up walking with the night watchmen through the facility and knew everybody there. So a lot of what I saw in the files was just totally inaccurate for the site itself and what was buried in and around the site. So that's when the red flags began to go up. And when you see something says toxic and hazardous wastes, you say, "Wait a minute." And then remembering how the company took responsibility for replacing my parents' car because it had eroded the body—as far as the metal body. Then we found out that there were others in the community that had received compensation for payment for painting their cars and other metal products. With that, I didn't really put all that together at first because I was just trying to see if this was what was causing my problem. And low and behold, that's when I began to look at their Toxic Release Inventory [report] at the site and began to just kind of compile some things on the site itself. It just started to open more and more as far as the hazardous wastes. It was sent in from Georgia as filler to be disposed of in the fertilizer there. And then I began to see they never passed their SPAC emissions tests at the facility. But then when you began to see the problems within the neighborhood itself—everybody basically died of the exact same type of respiratory problems or lung cancer, lymphoma.

So it was at that point, I saw my... I never really swallowed what my parents told me about my sister's death. She died of this sepsis on philitis, which is a germ poisoning. That was something that I took to a coroner in Greenville—that's adjacent to Spartanburg—and looking at the Toxic Release Inventory data and looking at long-term, short-term exposure, without saying anything about the site, the coroner basically confirmed what I was feeling and thinking. So from there, I saw my mother's sister's daughter died the exact same way. And two doors down there was another kid. So on the street, it ended up with about 14 or 16 infants in the same manner and it was at that point that I began to see that maybe this facility had more than just an impact on just me, but those around [me]. But, not wanting to point a finger and cause any alarm that I couldn't prove, I just kept looking and digging through the paperwork. I began to see that there were a lot more problems at that site with groundwater issues, the pond itself—how it was closed out. Then you could see that somehow mysteriously over, as they estimated, about 1.2 million gallons of the acid material in the pond was released into Fairforest Creek.

EPA Interviewer: Was this a lagoon pond attached to the plant?

Mitchell: Yes. When it was closed out and what was said in the report was one thing, but you go out there and you see something totally opposite. That's where a lot of this started with all the misconceptions there at the plant itself and what was in the report. It was just the way everything happened at this site.

EPA Interviewer: Do you remember what year that was?

Mitchell: This was in the early '90s—around '93, around that time when this took place.

EPA Interviewer: You got this information. What did you do next?

Mitchell: It seemed like within about two weeks—it seemed like almost a year. It was almost like an obsession because as I stated, the doctors... I went to two different hospitals there in Spartanburg and even the Augusta Medical Center and all of my doctors basically said, “He’s too young for this.” And you could never figure out, too young for what? It was always a question with the health. So it became an obsession, when you finally see that, “Hey, there’s something here that’s not right that maybe could have attributed...”

But then the next thing you know, you’re looking at the entire community itself. The cusp of this was when I had no idea about even EPA itself. I received a visit from this guy from the South Carolina Militia that basically came to my apartment and told me that I was trying to resurrect something that was buried. “Waste is big business. You don’t know what you’re dealing with.” He gave me all these suggestions and a lot of what he actually told me to stay away from have come to pass. But he was the one that actually gave me the 800 number to EPA. So when I used that 800 number the next day, I called Washington and then I was switched to Region 4 in Atlanta. That’s when I was told that this facility was an operational Texas Storage Warehouse. It had been abandoned since 1986—and this was ’94 when that took place. So we knew something was wrong at that point.

EPA Interviewer: So do you remember who came from EPA to talk to you?

Mitchell: I spoke with Cynthia Peurifoy, who was the community involvement coordinator at that time. And that’s who I spoke with and was conversing back and forth with her about the site and some of what I thought. At that time, I kind of stopped the communication at one point with her because that’s when my father basically complained about the same problems that I was having. And on his first test, they detected lymphoma in him. So it was the thing of trying to help my mother with him after he was diagnosed. The cancer just basically raced through him. He died on New Year’s Day and after that is when I ended up getting back with Ms. Peurifoy because she had follow-up questions concerning the site. She did a little checking herself with the state.

It was at that point [that] Ms. Peurifoy and a project officer came through Spartanburg to visit another site in that area and they wanted to stop by since we had talked on the phone for so long and just put a face with the voice. They pulled up and saw the site and it was like, “Oh my gosh. What the heck is this?” And it was like, “That’s your operational Texas Warehouse.” They went in and saw that the place was not secured. You could see the tanks that had the sludge material and outside of the tanks that had sulfuric acid, but there was at least about a knee-high of sludge. And the other materials that were around the site were just too much for them. So they, at that point, asked to see if there was an imminent threat to the site and had an emergency response coordinator to come up to the site. And that’s when things got pretty interesting because the emergency response coordinator came in and took a look at the site—did a little recon—and began to tell me that he didn’t see an imminent threat, but he would come back to do some sampling and testing at the site.

That’s when he came back to the site with a representative of the company, who was no longer there at this fertilizer company. The word was within the community that they had gone out of business in 1986 but now, all [of] the sudden here’s this representative years later. They mischaracterized everything there at the site. I had a video camera and he was just walking around with an inflated ego trying to explain what he felt was there at the site.

“You shouldn’t fear or worry about anything.” Then he got to the point where he was telling me, away from the representative of the fertilizer company, that he was sick and tired of people crying about this environmental racism as far as African Americans.

EPA Interviewer: Who was saying this? The representative of the company was saying this to you?

Mitchell: No, from EPA.

EPA Interviewer: OK.

Mitchell: So that’s when I kind of realized, “Now wait a minute.” Coming into the community, there are only two houses that are African American through the Mill Village and the one—they’re elderly and it was kind of cold so I knew that they were not out. So where did this come from?

There were some problems there, but during that time I was able to go to two NEJAC [National Environmental Justice Advisory Council] conferences and began to take names of some of the regional coordinators. Connie Raines at that point was the environmental justice coordinator and I spoke with her and Quentin Pair, Jewell Harper and a number of people there at Region 4. I sent a letter back to them after that meeting that I had with the...

EPA Interviewer: Response coordinator?

Mitchell: Right, response coordinator—I was trying to get a nice name for him. They filed back up and sent a letter back to the Congressional Office, because my [football] center in high school was a Chief of Staff for Senator Fritz Hollings. [I] just sent him a short little summary memo of what took place and they wanted to go forth with EPA to do a site investigation on the site. As he [the response coordinator] had stated that he recommended no further action with the site and how he felt that it should go into a low priority for the state and just kind of downplayed the site. That’s when Region 4 went forward with the preliminary assessment/site investigation and then found out that there were 70 hazardous contaminants that were found there at the site and the problems with the ponds, which he told me that there was nothing wrong there. It was just the reverse. So that’s how things got started there on that site.

Then we found out that there was a site adjacent to it, which was the former landfill, which was in the county but it was owned and operated by the city. For years, the residents had complained about the problems and the trucks and different things that were going into the landfill from hospital wastes and all the dealerships. All the residents, which were on well water at the time, thought that it was some type of an impact on their health or the environment. That particular site didn’t exist until this IMC site got on the radar screen so that began this huge discussion and anger within the community. I think from that point of the process, I think being able to look at some of the past NEJAC meetings where I was able to look at representatives from communities that would come in and they would use the stick approach. It just seemed the lessons learned, as far as how some were able to resolve their issues... And you had some residents that were angry but never really resolved anything. Just seeing a couple of the meetings and what actually took place and what kind of progress

they were able to bring back in their communities, I just wanted to make sure we got a chance and opportunity that we could get it addressed and really check the motive.

At that time, like I stated, with the condition I had, one day you would feel pretty good, the next day you would have to lay. So it was kind of like a race against time to resolve the issue. But because of pulling that together—and that was kind of the first time that residents in the community had really joined around a particular issue—that we got our Vice Chair nominated to City Council, really from a grassroots approach. It was the first time that people really began to take stock within the community. It was really balancing a point of anger of what was to coming up with a plan within the community and being a stakeholder at the table to see it through. It wasn't a thing of just identifying, marching, protesting, and putting a fence up; but how could we put it into some kind of a reuse.

EPA Interviewer: What was the organization that you created?

Mitchell: The organization that I created was called ReGenesis and that name came up from—during that time that I was sick, I was looking at TBN [Trinity Broadcasting Network] one night and Bishop TD Jakes was ministering on—he didn't minister on regeneration, his topic was stewardship and in that, he basically stated that we were responsible for the surroundings, period. He went through a couple of different scenarios in society and stated that we had really dropped the ball and if we can go back and regenerate the process... And that name stuck with me during that time when I was sick. We wanted the name to really represent what we were trying to do. So the second time we had a big public meeting, we invited some people in from outside to kind of help bring more, as far as input, to the community. They really wanted us to go ahead and try and organize with the name. When I mentioned the name and the origin where it came from, it was hands down unanimous that... It was like, "Hey we like it." So we moved forward with ReGenesis because it was a low income, African-American neighborhood and a low income predominantly white Mill Village and then there's a load of middle income community that most of the people there worked at either the school system or in the hospital. Neither one of the neighborhoods had ever come together before. So we just took the name ReGenesis and combined all three of those neighborhoods together to deal with first, which was the IMC fertilizer facility.

EPA Interviewer: How did you get the different communities to come together? You were the Chair and CEO [Chief Executive Officer] of ReGenesis, correct?

Mitchell: Yes.

EPA Interviewer: How did you get them all to come together?

Mitchell: The thing was not to exaggerate or to deal with any emotions in this. It's almost like a lot of lessons that through either experiences that I've gone through or seeing from others, however you attract and get somebody's attention was how you were gonna have to basically continue that method. So the thing was just basically bringing all the information that I had received about the site itself, because everybody from the community worked there, and look at what was there on paper. Just the facts. We began the talk and EPA Region 4 was able to conduct a couple of workshops on brownfields to look at reuse and

then we talked about the Superfund Redevelopment Initiatives. The fact was, yes it's contaminated and yes there was some injustice that was done.

It was kind of like monitoring a couple of different tracks. One was dealing with the anger and the second one was the cleanup and who was going to clean up. And the third was, well what are we gonna do about it once that was addressed? So it's kind of juggling all three at the same time. And knowing, too, how agency and industry views the community and as well the community not trusting the agencies and industry for the cover up. So it's kind of juggling all of that at the same time.

EPA Interviewer: When did you first hear of this thing called Superfund?

Mitchell: The first time I heard the term Superfund was at a local meeting. It was a meeting that I attended with my father at Benedict College. Representative Joe Neal was part of the South Carolina Environmental Watch and that's where I first heard about Superfund and sites like the one in Spartanburg because I thought that, "Hey, this is the only site like this in the country." And I thought we were on an isolated island by ourselves being exploited. And then to come to find out that there's a term that's coined around this, and not only here in South Carolina, but all the way back to the Nixon Administration. You're looking at this and at that point, I think President Clinton had just signed the executive order back during that time.

EPA Interviewer: And that was the Environmental Justice Executive Order?

Mitchell: Yes. And that's when I realized that it was more than just Spartanburg, South Carolina. This was something that was huge and big and impacting communities across the country. And not just African-American but, just poor communities.

EPA Interviewer: What did you think Superfund was going to be able to give to you or give to your community?

Mitchell: Looking at environmental justice first and then Superfund, I was trying to figure out—it was a thing where I was wondering if Superfund really had the teeth in it to rectify the problem, which you knew you could never really... At one point, I didn't think that there was any way that you could correct or reverse [things] until I actually saw a couple of instances [of it being done]. The thing was how do you get to that point? And that's where I saw a lot of frustration of communities, when they would attend the NEJAC meetings. They really didn't know how to connect the dots of the problems that were impacting their communities. Coming to the agencies... It's almost like you would expect to come there and they give you a prescription like doctor.

EPA Interviewer: Now explain was NEJAC is.

Mitchell: The National Environmental Justice Advisory Council.

EPA Interviewer: And that's for EPA.

Mitchell: Right. And that's where I think I really received a lot of the classroom education as far as listening to the communities and those that represented the NEJAC council and hearing the representatives from EPA.

EPA Interviewer: When you started working with the Superfund program, did you find out there were some things that it could do and couldn't do? What did it do for Spartanburg?

Mitchell: Well, the thing that I thought initially before dealing even with Spartanburg—hearing, as I say, that communities looking at lawsuits against industry, really seeing exactly the extent as far as the power that was there to deal with industry or the state agencies. I had a misconception about Superfund really being the “grandfather in the room” that could deal with the state agencies and those that just did not follow good environmental policy. So there was a lot of thought as to: was Superfund really this piece that was going to come in with civil rights or whatever else to help rectify the injustices that were impacting some of these communities?

EPA Interviewer: Neither one of those two sites were ever listed to the National Priorities List [NPL], is that right?

Mitchell: Correct. They're NPL-caliber.

EPA Interviewer: NPL-caliber. So what happened next to start getting those sites cleaned up? What did you and ReGenesis do? Did you use Brownfields?

Mitchell: It was a combination of both Brownfields and Superfund. I saw, from my Congressional staffers... We talked about the process and the time that it would take for cleanup, went through some of the actual workshops at EPA and saw that so many of the people would actually say that the squeaky wheel gets the oil. And it was a thing of really getting from a grassroots standpoint—to build that base—to impact and affect our elected officials. It was like a combination of having the community plus these elected officials who represented us and having an actual plan itself—kind of learning how to work a system.

EPA Interviewer: What was ReGenesis' main goal?

Mitchell: The main goal initially was to identify that there was a problem at this fertilizer facility and the landfill itself because, for so long, the city council had stated that there was not a problem with the landfill. And they really never put it on the radar screen to address it until this situation. So I think what got it to the radar screen was the fact that it wasn't an individual, but a group of people that were there, and it wasn't hearsay and just pulling things out of the sky. We had the actual photos of evidence of things there that were questionable. So at that point, I think there was a combination of things that kind of imploded. Even our former assistance city manager, before he died, stated that everything in Spartanburg, 99.9 percent of everything, was dumped at that site. With all the pressures, we just had different things to pop up at the right time that pushed forward for that investigation.

EPA Interviewer: In 2000, you received an Environmental Justice grant from EPA. What did that enable you to do?

Mitchell: That was a big help because we were able to... One of the things with organizing a grassroots organization is having the capacity to run an organization—the mail outs, the phone calls, the travel, the different things that you would need to do to try to continue this process. What I basically did was: I used a lot of, well, besides my family, but after my family, basically just using insurance money to go back and forth to different conferences and kind of budgeted things out that way. For a long time, I would go to Washington. I'd leave at 11:30 at night and get there in the morning, hit a lot of the workshops that were taking place and hit the Hill. The rest areas were basically my Hilton hotels and I ate a Snickers bar and Mountain Dew. Thank God we didn't have the gas prices that we have now or I would not have made it as far as a lot of those trips.

EPA Interviewer: So eventually, didn't you receive some technical assistance as well?

Mitchell: Yes.

EPA Interviewer: And what did that help you do?

Mitchell: We wrote this one grant to educate locally on the problems that we had within the community. But what it ended up doing was, because of the crime that I was telling you about earlier with the abandoned facility, we were able to look at that and deal with some of the Department of Justice initiatives regarding "weed and seed" because what we saw was that two of these sites were used basically as an incubator of activities, of trafficking cocaine in and out. So we were able to deal with the law enforcement from that side.

The Department of Transportation—we were able to look at some of their initiatives because the neighborhood itself was behind the railroad on these three sites. There was a very active railway there—about 22 trains a day—and sometimes they would stop and sit on the track for an hour and a half at a time. So we had a worse-case scenario where the train was on the track and the fire department tried to get in and they couldn't get there. By the time they got there, a lady and her kids had died in a house fire.

So it was a combination of looking at the environmental, the criminal aspect [of] transportation... We looked at a couple of different agencies and used that money to look at some of those initiatives. The next thing you know, we had as much involvement with the other agencies as we had with EPA. So that built this coalition that we first pulled together—the city and the county governments—and pulled a little memorandum together from both the city and county because we knew, from looking at that one grant of \$20,000 and trying to administer that, that there was no way that we could do that. So the county ended up in-kind-ing part of their staff to help administer the grants. I knew it would be a problem within our community—any time an organization held on to \$500, you have people saying that it's being misused and always questioning you about it. So what we decided to do was just to let the county administer it so I didn't have to have the headache of explaining to somebody why it was used in a particular way. So, we set that up in the beginning and it basically worked, because there's no way in the world I could have administered the amount of money in the grants that we've been able to bring in on the project and continue to work the project and the community as well.

EPA Interviewer: The Brownfields program is an outgrowth of Superfund. When did you become aware of Brownfields and when did you start receiving grants from them?

Mitchell: The Brownfields program itself... Well, we went through the workshops back in 1998. The spring of 1998, Region 4 came in and that's when we were trying to control expectations of the cleanup because after going through some of the meetings and seeing the process, I think residents expected to see that once you found that there was a problem, that they're gonna come out and clean it up next week, we knew that that was not the process. So it was a thing of bringing in and educating and looking at brownfields and looking at the light at the end of the tunnel and seeing that this wasn't a sprint, but a long distance run. That was how we introduced the brownfields to the community. Region 4 came in and initially set up some of the reuses that you can see at some of the actual brownfields sites in the country, whether it's commercial retail or sports facilities that were on these sites now. So that was kind of some of the visioning that we looked at with the community as to just sit back and just dream the "what if."

EPA Interviewer: Was that what happened during the ReGenesis revitalization forums?

Mitchell: Yes. During those forums, what we tried to do was just to en-couple all of this at the same time. We had different tracks, whether it was housing, health care, environmental cleanup, transportation, and the criminal aspect, pulling all of that together because in order to do a revitalization project, you would have to look at all the facets in order to create a livable community in itself. With our forums, we constantly would bring in our state officials because by then, in 2000, the state was involved. Gail Jeter and her staff from DHEC [Department of Health and Environmental Control] became more involved. So we were able to pull the state back in at that point, because prior to that there was a lot of anger with some of the residents about comments from the state. You had some people that were actually the ones that buried material with the front-end loaders and then you would have a state official to say that, "We don't think that there's anything here." And to sit eye-to-eye and tell someone that, and they actually buried it within the community in a well, there was just no trust whatsoever. It was a thing of slowly building that trust back into within the community. And I'm not gonna sit here and say that there were roses and everybody singing kum-ba-ya, but we had to move to this point to see some change within the community. As long as the community felt that they were being heard and not just used, and being a major stakeholder and seeing the change... We had some that didn't want to move that route, but the majority wanted to move forward.

EPA Interviewer: What's the status of those sites now?

Mitchell: The status of the sites right now, we finished with the landfill [and] we're in the process of looking at the design for the cap and working at capping that site. The fertilizer plant is in the process of completing the feasibility study. On that one the textile mill... With our Brownfields assessment we just went on and assessed everything around the two sites, which ended up being six brownfield sites which were assessed.

The textile mill was one that we had a petroleum problem and we're working with the state through the voluntary cleanup program. So we were able to use funding that we secured from Senator Hollings through HUD [Department of Housing and Urban

Development] and purchased the sites around it. It's about 500 acres altogether within that area. We went after another Brownfields cleanup grant to do the cleanup on that site after we assessed it. So we're in that process now of putting the RFP [Request for Proposals] out to get a contractor that to come on and do the cleanup on that site.

EPA Interviewer: So what does the community look like now? Do you still have a lot of the same problems?

Mitchell: No, the community now, because of... It stemmed basically from those Superfund sites and initially getting the attention there, that we currently have a community health center, which we went into a partnership with the hospital system that's in the community. We've been able to start addressing some of those abandoned houses that were around those abandoned sites because with the abandoned sites—drug activity and the incubation of the drugs there—a lot of the home owners moved out, renters came in. The renters couldn't take it so they ended up with a bunch of abandoned houses that were around. So we've been able to go in and work with the housing authority and the city and county government to start purchasing those homes. We even had problems of investors that would come in, purchase those sites at \$4,500 and go back and flip those sites out of state and you ended up with mortgages of \$30,000 to \$68,000. Being able to use only your funding of what it's appraised for, the city's hands were tied, everybody's hands were tied using government money. It wasn't worth it to an investor to come in. So it's something that, through the process of the non-profit, we were able to work out with the banks.

Currently, we've been able to rid a lot of the blighted housing. We received a \$20 million Hope VI Grant¹ that we partnered with the housing authority to get rid of other unwanted areas there. We just completed the demolition on the public housing site and [are] getting ready to start later this summer in constructing about 151 affordable housing units there and completing our master plan on another 158 acres that we're building 262 units there of mixed use. Creating this new urbanism concept on the same Fairforest Creek and how all of that's actually gonna tie together. It's a different situation when you look at it and the attitude within the community itself.

We've got some job training that's taking place in there as well. We trained residents within the community on asbestos abatement to tear down the public housing unit so we were able to create 15 jobs. But really, it was just a little test pilot to show the residents in the community, as well as the private sector, the business sector, [to see] what could happen if someone had a chance and an opportunity because the 15 people that we were able to pick were those that were on the street corner that dropped out of school or came out of drug rehab. And of those 15, five went down during Hurricane Katrina and were part of the cleanup there. Two went back to the Pentagon to do some of the asbestos abatement there.

EPA Interviewer: During 9/11?

¹ The HOPE VI Program is administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to help eradicate severely distressed public housing.

Mitchell: No, just here recently. And then all of them are going to go back to Maryland to do a cleanup project. And then later this year there's another Hope VI on the upstate which they've been contracted to do. This time last year, they were unemployed on the corner and now they're productive. One of the women, she actually closed on a house. She's like the poster child for what could happen as far as given an opportunity and turning your life around. So with that, we've been able to partner with our upstate workforce investment board and the deaf and blind school and come up with a construction trade project. They've given us a building that we're getting ready to start doing some of the job training work there. It's just evolving into more and more of rebuilding the community, which stemmed out of this much of a blighted nightmare.

EPA Interviewer: You and ReGenesis have received a number of awards and recognition for the work. One of them was from the Martin Luther King Center, correct?

Mitchell: It was the Spartanburg Human Relations Commission. They've got this award—Martin Luther King Award—that they give to community organizations or businesses within Spartanburg that distributes the type of attitude or motive of Dr. King. We won that back in 2000.

EPA Interviewer: And you've been recognized by EPA a couple of times. What did that recognition mean to you when you received the [EPA's] Excellence in Community Involvement award? What did that mean to you?

Mitchell: To be honest, it was kind of humbling to receive the award, but I never get caught up into that. It was just an opportunity once we received the award to really keep the project on the radar screen. I just looked at it as, "Hey this is an opportunity to get out, talk more about it and to see if I can leverage more."

EPA Interviewer: Through some of your work on NEJAC and some of the national work, have you kept up with any of the changes in Superfund over the years at all?

Mitchell: Yes, looking at the reauthorization and some of the other things that have taken place as far as with the legislation and hearing from the Hill their views about Superfund and the time that it's taking to recover most of those sites and put them back into productive reuse—the cleanup process. I think that one was one that I've been watching, but more so I have been kind of surprised by the general principle on brownfields—of being able to go back and look at some of those sites that they see, and I think maybe one or two, which were Superfund sites, how they're putting them back into reuse—like the American Airlines Arena in Dallas, the Texas Rangers Stadium. If you get a couple of examples, people tend to see, "Hey, maybe we can create something here." It just gives the opportunity to look at some type of reuse in those particular areas. I think it's really just connecting the dots.

EPA Interviewer: Looking back over your experiences with Superfund and Brownfields, what was one the highlights for you?

Mitchell: One of the highlights I believe was the community coming together, working together, and the response that we received after those test results came back. For a second there, I thought I was crazy until those test results came back and showed that there was a

problem. Just seeing the response of the people, pulling together to say we want to make a difference. They wanted to be a part of that process. And how the staff at Region 4 and those at Headquarters and the state kind of rallied around us to help us and give us the assistance that we needed. I think that was more attributed to the attitude of the residents within the community of wanting to move forward because they realized that, for so long, kicking against or trying to keep someone out or isolated was not going to do anything to resolve or help us to achieve what we were trying to get to—and that was just rebuilding the community. So I think that's a milestone, is looking at pictures of what it used to look like, looking at conceptual drawings of being able to sit in a meeting and now you see that particular drawing. And then to look at some of those sites that are cleaned—well, not so much cleaned—but just the image of what was there and what's about to take place.

EPA Interviewer: Do you remember what one of the low points was?

Mitchell: To be honest, I think that goes back to the upbringing and more so when I was playing football. I think the first time that I ran a touchdown at the beginning of the game and was jumping around screaming and the coach ran over and grabbed me and was like, "Boy, you've got this quarter and three more quarters to go, what are you celebrating for?" And it's been that kind of a way through life. As far as with my dad and the military—you set a goal and just move forward. It's almost like not being distracted—you get the pats on the back and you get your head chopped off from the same people. So you just set the goal and move forward.

EPA Interviewer: Before I came down here, I talked with Cynthia Peurifoy and she said you really took use of the Superfund Community Involvement program. What did the Superfund Community Involvement program give to you and what were you able to do with it?

Mitchell: From the community involvement standpoint, from day one, as long as there was input from the community and being a part of the process, I saw how agencies and different representatives were able to respond better, especially if you had the community input in that. I think, from the staff at EPA, how Region 4 was able to help us in the process. I think without that, we would not have achieved... I don't think anything would have happened if we didn't have that guidance and followed the norm of the emotions and the anger that you feel and want to release. I probably wouldn't be here where I'm at now. It's hard to articulate into words for somebody on the outside looking at it, but I think what Region 4 was able to instill in our community was something that's worth its weight in gold.

EPA Interviewer: You might have already answered this, but what do you think was the strength of Superfund for you?

Mitchell: I think the strength of Superfund was the stakeholder process and being able to address the concerns of the community. We were able to use the system itself.

EPA Interviewer: If you could change one thing about Superfund and the Superfund process, what would it be?

Mitchell: If I could change something, I think it would probably be the timing—how much time it would take for the reviews and the 45-day comment period here and there. I mean, by the

time you get through weighing all the comment periods and that chain of command as far as the process—I think that would be the one that thing is to try to find some kind of way to speed the process.

EPA Interviewer: When I was looking back over some of the information I have about you, you've gone from being....

Mitchell: A nuisance? [*Laughing*]

EPA Interviewer: No, I wasn't going to say that. You've gone from being a gospel music promoter to someone who worked in your community. What made you finally decide to run for the State House of Representatives?

Mitchell: Well, running for the State House was one thing that was the furthest from my mind, but when Representative Lee decided that she was going to step down, she came over to the office and had a talk with me and basically told me, "Everything that you're doing with ReGenesis is basically the same thing that you would do at the State House. It's like you're covering every aspect that we have in local government or state government. You've been involved with the folks and you have a pretty good relationship with them. You can take your experiences of working with this distressed community and make some laws. You can see the road blocks you were able to run into."

And when she said that, that was the thing that I was like, "Yeah, I remember the road blocks." So one of the things that steered me in this direction was just being a voice and a representative. You want to be able to be that voice, but give the information to the people. I think when people pretty much understand what's going on and [you are] giving them an opportunity instead of trying to hide, I think....

EPA Interviewer: Superfund is 25 years old; where do you think it's going to go in the next 25 years?

Mitchell: In the next 25 years, I believe if you could use more examples of some of the sites that are in some of these areas of distressed communities, that you see those economically distressed areas, it may be an opportunity for investment for the public/private sector. I think at first it was more of something that scared industry as well as local governments because now, "You're accountable; you have to do the cleanup." But I think that there are so many things that have been put in place and the lessons learned. I think it's got a real good opportunity for being to able to create some opportunities around redevelopment and, in some of those areas, of job creation. It could help stimulate the local economies, especially those areas that you see that are most impacted, which are those poor areas that either have inadequate recreational spaces or just a development period. I don't want to sound one-sided or anything. I think it has good opportunities of being able to be the springboard for development in some of these distressed areas that if you get community groups and organizations to be part of the process. If not, it could be used in a way that could be more destructive—you think about gentrification and things like that. I think if it's carefully monitored and used in the right way, I think it would be a great tool.

EPA Interviewer: We've been here about an hour or so and we've covered a lot of different things. Was there something else you wanted to talk about?

Mitchell: I got lost after the... *[Laughing]*

[NOTE: Karen Sprayberry, Community Program Coordinator for South Carolina's Department of Health and Environmental Control's Office of Environmental Community Health, has worked with Representative Mitchell for several years and joined the conversation here.]

Sprayberry: I have a couple of things I think you should go over. I love the stories and lengths that he's gone through to bring attention to the site. I think it had a lot to do with his anger. But [Vice President] Al Gore was in Atlanta one time and I want you to tell that story.

EPA Interviewer: What happened there? I haven't heard that one.

Sprayberry: And about the groups you brought in that brought recognition. How did you get like Maria Rinko and all that? That was through the Superfund Redevelopment Grant, wasn't it? Where all those different parties came together for that meeting?

Mitchell: [Those were] the different people that we had to bring in to this community because Spartanburg is not a poor community. We've got the BMW Automotive facility there. The Carolina Panthers' training camp is there. We've got a lot, as far as industry headquarters, that's in the Spartanburg area. But on that side of town, which was not on the radar screen, we had to create a win-win situation that—it's almost like creating a vehicle that you would almost be embarrassed not to be a part of. So the more we began to invite various groups in... And it's even like with the community—I knew that a lot of people didn't want to hear me. I know it's louder if they hear someone else say the exact same thing. So from day one, we began to bring in different people that would echo what we felt and thought.

So President Bill Clinton was bringing a delegation from South Africa to Spartanburg. During the time were able to... I think [that was] when they picked the site, because that was during the time when they selected the 15 [Brownfields] demonstration projects. One of our representatives from Senator Hollings office told me that Vice President Gore was going to be in Atlanta. So I tried to go down to Atlanta to see if I could invite the Vice President up to Spartanburg during the time that the South African delegation was visiting.

So I got off of [Interstate] 85, and as soon as I got off the exit, they [the police] had just barricaded and closed that particular exit because his [Vice President Gore's] motorcade was going to come that way. So I got out of my car. I wanted to get kind of close so I could give the little invitation to one of the staffers. And it just so happened, Mayor Campbell—I think it was the three former Mayors there in Atlanta—were coming through the crowd. I looked down the street and people were telling me he [Vice President Gore] was going to be eating lunch down there. It was like a lunch meeting. Really, I had just left Atlanta about 12 hours before that and drove back in. I had my suit on and everybody else—it was kind of warm—so you could tell who belonged where.

So I saw the crowd, and the Mayors with their wives, and there was this Asian couple who was talking to me. I don't know what the lady was asking me but I ended up—I stepped

outside that little barricade. And when I stepped outside the barricade, it was kind of like no-man's-land. And at that point, I couldn't step back because I saw the guy with his finger on his little machine gun. So I went down the sidewalk with all of them. We were the only ones—it was like one of those movies in a hostage situation—and we went down the sidewalk and it was like, there was no turning back now—and we ended up getting in. I thought I was going to be thrown out at any second. One of the Secret Servicemen was kind of talking and he came over to the corner, so I was like, "Well, I've been spotted." I was getting ready to get thrown out. We started talking and I could hear him, he was on his little radio, that the Vice President was on his way and they were only a couple of blocks away. You could start to hear the sirens. At that point, I knew I was kind of in there. And remembering from seeing some of the C-SPAN video that I may only have five seconds with him, so I started jotting some things down.

Actually, when they came in, they came in the door where I was sitting. I was trying to hide in the back of the room, but they ended up coming in that door. So I knew his main items regarding the environment around brownfields. So he came in the door and it was kind of just spit it out kind of quick. I think in 10 seconds I got everything out. And he stopped. And then Donna Brazile [Vice President Gore's Presidential Campaign Manager] was going through and he was like, "Donna, come here," and he started talking and conversing and it turned into a little five minute discussion and everybody started coming in. It was like, "Who is this guy? What is he talking about?" We were talking about the site and he began to talk about brownfields redevelopment opportunities and different things of that nature. So they started writing different numbers for me and he stated that his wife—it was their anniversary that weekend and he wasn't going to be able to come over to the event. But they sent Keith Laughlin, who was the Director of the Livable Communities' Initiative, and we talked a little bit. After he [Vice President Gore] left, everybody was like, "Who is that guy, who is that kid?" I've got so many environmental stories of things that actually took place during this little stint. If I had to do anything over, I would definitely not change anything in this little adventure.

[Interview ends and begins again.]

EPA Interviewer: One of the things that we also wanted to mention was how Superfund has apparently been able to help you build some relationships with industry. What is that like?

Mitchell: I think Superfund and the whole cleanup strengthened relationships even with our local government. Before, our city and county governments—they never really worked together. Now we have, with the partnership and the memorandum....

First of all, our county planner and the city planner, they never worked together, or the economic development office. So from there, we've been able to build with industry, because we have a company that after the landfill was sold, he purchased a piece of property next to the landfill and told residents that he was going to build apartments, when actually it became an existing chemical facility that's there now. So there was a lot of hostility there. But because of the visitors with the South African delegation, we were able to, from that point, begin to

work with the chemical facility to where we've got an ongoing dialogue now, which Tim Fields is part of.²

EPA Interviewer: From this landfill that's now a chemical facility?

Mitchell: Just from the chemical facility. And this dialogue now has been going on for about two and a half years with American Chemistry Council, the National Manufacturers Association, all kind of looking at the lessons learned from there. They're a pretty active participant in this whole redevelopment process now. They're working to help set up or build a community center there within the community. They've gone through the process...

EPA Interviewer: The American Chemistry Council's doing this?

Mitchell: No, the chemical company that's nearby. It went from being a very hostile environment there with them to now where it's a situation where we're able to sit down at the table and kind of lay things out as far as them coexisting in this redevelopment. Both of our Regional Administrators from EPA have been able to come in and visit the site and the area. [Region 4 Regional Administrators] Jim Palmer and John Hankinson both actually came to the community.³

[Former EPA Assistant Administrator] Marianne Horinko, I think she was just appointed as the Acting Administrator.⁴ It was two months after that, she was there in the community, took the tour. We had one of those forums that she was able to see the participation of everybody that was in the community. Even our Former County Administrator is now working in Alexandria, Virginia—Mr. Hartman. He got promoted through this whole process. I was questioned by the Washington Post. Did he really do what he said he did regarding the participation with this project and process?

EPA Interviewer: And where was Mr. Hartman from?

Mitchell: He was from Spartanburg. He was our Administrator in Spartanburg. But the thing where this is kind of taken it from Superfund or environmental justice, it was a no-no and something that everybody was afraid of. It's gone now to something that is very attractive. And I think that's where it could happen from a national standpoint.

I like taking those negatives and turning them around into an opportunity. Problems are nothing but opportunities. I think a lot of these sites are in problem areas that you don't see any type of opportunity for economic growth, and that's exactly what I think this whole

² Tim Fields was the Acting Assistant Administrator of EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response from 1997 through 1999, and the Assistant Administrator from 1999 to January 2001. He now works for Tetra Tech, Inc.

³ Jimmy Palmer has been the Regional Administrator since 2002. John Hankinson was the Regional Administrator from 1994 to January 2001.

⁴ Marianne Horinko was the Assistant Administrator of EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response from October 2001 through June 2004. She was EPA's Acting Administrator from July 2003 to November 2003.

Superfund process can do. I think somebody had a pretty good vision when they first looked at Superfund in itself, but I don't know if they had that insight to see what kind of opportunities we could have achieved. So I just hope that we can continue to build upon and draw, not only the community and the industry and the agency, but the public/private sector and get them more involved. I think even now, banks see it as an opportunity, your Chamber of Commerce and so on. I think it's got a lot of potential.

EPA Interviewer: You think they're looking at Superfund as a potential opportunity or Brownfields, or both of them?

Mitchell: I think both. I think you can't do one without... Well, you can do one without the other because one is more extensive than the other, but I think that, once it's on track, that they can see an opportunity. We've got a mixture of three brownfields on one site, three on the other and two Superfund [sites] in the middle. I think if we can use this as a model with all of the ingredients and the components that are there, it can be replicated just like with the collaborative problem solving grant program. It was kind of modeled around what was going on in Spartanburg.

EPA Interviewer: Is that out of EPA as well?

Mitchell: Yes, that's out of EPA. And the thing is, if that can be replicated throughout the country and they use—whether it's a Latino community in Albuquerque or an Indian Village on the Columbia River in Washington or even in Hawaii—if it could be used all over the country, I think it has the potential. If you look at those that are making the decisions in Congress, the only thing they want to see is how it can impact for the better. And so if you've got those successful stories and successful projects, I think they tend to release funding that could help speed that process up.

[Interview interrupted and begun again.]

Mitchell: We've got right at now, \$139 million because of the project.

EPA Interviewer: As a Superfund and Brownfields and EJ money? Or is it all Superfund?

Mitchell: Superfund and Brownfields have basically leveraged other funding—from HUD, DOE [Department of Energy], Department of Justice, HHS [Department of Health and Human Services, a foundation. Pulling in all that together is right at \$139 million.

EPA Interviewer: They were redevelopment grants that you used? And Brownfields redevelopment grants that you received from EPA? Or was this investigative money?

Mitchell: Well, no all of this was what was leveraged, even like the Hope VI.

EPA Interviewer: So how'd you become so savvy on how to leverage all this cash?

Sprayberry: He's [Mitchell] good at collaboration and he's good... You were talking about when you found out you had your medical issues—he really goes and tries to learn the whole story about things. So he's real good at learning about grants.

Mitchell: You can see exactly where those initiatives can play in your process because a lot of times, people can really give a flip. But, it's like, where can I stick my initiative to look good in your project and to me look good? It's kind of matching up and presenting that opportunity and they're like, "Hey!" And then once you really create something that's looking good and you've got the type of parties that you need in place, which makes it easier for them, they want to be a part of it.

It's kind of like HUD. HUD wanted to be a part of the project so bad and now that the Hope VI is there... And that helped turn the door for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and the different banks with their CRA [Community Reinvestment Act] monies that they have. It's just kind of like the dominoes. You get the right couple of dominoes falling, then everybody else will want to be a part of it. But you just cannot have that crazy opposition or that anger or some of the people that you've got to keep away from meetings.

Sprayberry: He's good at channeling his anger. I mean, like you said, there was not trust there. It wasn't a good relationship, but he was forgiving and he was willing to try. He could see outside the picture. Like he was saying, he could have taken that road with Superfund where you get stuck and you just can't look outside the picture. It takes so long to get a Superfund site redeveloped and then their anger just boils.

Mitchell: You just can't let it sit 'cause during that little process from here to here, there's a lot in between. You get that much empty space and there's not anything going on in between....

EPA Interviewer: So how did you not get angry? How did you turn the anger from other people around?

Mitchell: I think expectations. People were not really expecting EPA to come in or DHEC to do anything in the beginning. Just seeing that, it was like, "Oh my God." And from there, looking at the planning process and how you can get involved there...

While that was going on, we had so many health problems and concerns, that's when we went out and established and set up the health center and got the funding from that to establish our community health center which created about 28 jobs. We got a little over 11,000 patients now. It's like by the time you get through doing all these other pieces, you've kind of forgotten about the environmental. But it's swinging back around now on the landfill. I talked with the Mayor last night and he said how it was a good meeting with the state and how that's moving. And the next two weeks, got the meeting with Tim [Fields] from Tetra Tech. They're supposed to start working on some reuse plans and ideas for IMC and how to pull those two together. So we've got to look at creating that public golf course.

EPA Interviewer: Oh, public golf course? That's good.

[Interview interrupted and begun again.]

Mitchell: Within that one year, I forgot which year it was, 62 people had died in the community, either that were working in the facility or were living in the community. It wasn't like someone screaming about... This was like our Board Chair, the secretary, two other board members died of lung cancer that didn't smoke and every male on the board, his wife

is dying of lung cancer or rare respiratory diseases. It was a known fact of what was there in the community. And then to have the company to come back and say some of the things that they did was kind of hard for folks to swallow. There was a lot of anger, a whole lot.

EPA Interviewer: So how did you switch that anger around?

Mitchell: That was the thing from day one, because we lived right there at the site and when my dad, my sister and myself and other members of the family lived right there on top of the site and got just as much anger as you have but you guys live right there. This is where our house is right here. Everybody else was at least where you're not looking at the thing. I think some people took it as, "He's taking the attitude." And my mom and my grandmother, they're trying to move forward and it was pretty good to say that, "Hey, there are contaminants that were found," and how they could move forward. But that's why I think that if there was nothing found, boy there's no telling what would have happened at that site. And that was more to the community involvement piece, interviewing and looking at former residents who point to some of the problem areas, and that's when they were able to get a lot of those good hits and things that people did in the past. You had some of the workers that were sitting there and talking about how they poured this stuff down the hill. These little silver beads would try to out race each other and everybody would drop their pens on the table and say, "What the heck is mercury doing at this site?" More little things just begin to unravel there.

Sprayberry: He'd have these ReGenesis partner forum meetings and then he did community meetings. And the partner forum meetings were more like all the state agencies and all. But he would invite us [and] IMC to come. I know there was some bitterness there and nobody really talked to them. Or were just being polite, because we are nice southerners. But otherwise... I mean, you could feel a little tension there.

Mitchell: It was always tension with folks, but if you were isolated by yourself, it would be the one thing they could paint you as the delirious idiot. But when you were sitting at the table with everybody trying to work through the problems getting to the solution, they looked kind of bad themselves that they were not at the table.

EPA Interviewer: Did you ultimately sue IMC?

Mitchell: We were working in the beginning but then it just kept... You'd take one step and they'd take four steps backwards. The lies just kept escalating to the point that I think they had a technical advisor that was working with them that just pushed it beyond the point. The former owner tried to knock the place down and didn't have any of the proper permits to do it. He was not fined whatsoever. This was like a seven acre building. With the asbestos, lead-based paint, no demolition permit whatsoever. They enforced the abatement code on the residents, and not the facility, it was just beyond the point. That's when the litigation cranked up. The lesson out of that litigation was that the residents could see that only the attorneys were going to make the money out of this and unless there was a smoking gun, trying to recreate the past, as far as pathways and exposure, it was almost impossible to go back. And people had basically changed their roots, when you look at the soils in the yards, all that stuff had changed. Those little areas where you plant your flowers and things, change in the soils and thing of that nature...it's over in 12 years.

EPA Interviewer: Did you guys work with a technical assistance with Brownfields, a TAG [Technical Assistance Grant], or one of the universities? That's any EPA-sponsored organization. How did that work?

Mitchell: That too was part of Georgia Tech [as part of EPA's Technical Outreach Services for Communities program]. We used them for their groundwater monitoring there. With them and somebody else we used.

EPA Interviewer: Did you have a Technical Assistance Grant too?

Mitchell: Yes. I can't remember the name of the company now; they were our technical advisor on the dump site... We ended up with CH2M HILL and now Tetra Tech with Mr. Phillips, because Tetra Tech was going to do the best with us on this now because of what we are looking at doing.

I looked at that publication, "The Keys to Unlocking Successful Brownfields" and Tim was a part of this with Melissa Friedland. There was a site where Jack Nicklaus' crew...

EPA Interviewer: It's out in Montana. It's a Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course and they used slag as the sand pits. Instead of having sand, it's black slag.

Mitchell: Mr. Fields were telling me... I told him I saw a contract that EPA had with a Soccer Foundation and we wanted to see if we could use the PGA [Professional Golf Association] to get some funding and see what it would take to pull... If you've got a signature [golf] course that would just...

We've got this new road project running through 150 acres of mixed-use, new urbanism. You've got everybody trying to show the sustainable landscape design with the trails and everything and Superfund is in between it all. If we could build that public [golf] course in that place, which ties over to the other community, which is a mid- to upper-income area around the lake and park, it ties into all the trails that they are trying to develop—all these trails kind of stop within the city—the tributaries that we can create to tie into Fairforest Creek. From those two sites, it's about four miles to the state park. So then we'd be able to connect the state park through the two tributaries that go back into the downtown and then we'd have the pathway that the state has been trying to figure out how to connect downtown Spartanburg to the state park. Having that public course in the middle and at the other end, that's where we've changed the public housing and the triangle of heroine trade zone—we've gotten all of that out. So that's where some of the affordable housing will go, changing the recreational center. We're redoing that whole thing and using some of the funds from there that... The Mary Black Foundation gave us \$750,000 yesterday for that. Housing is probably going to take \$900,000, so we're going to be able to redo that facility itself. It's going to be a totally different area. It's already to the point now where you see how a lot of that blighted area of abandoned houses, that's gone.

EPA Interviewer: So go back to some of the leveraging we were talking about earlier. What made you think, "Oh, I can do this, I can do this." What was the story that you wanted to tell with that?

Mitchell: With the leveraging, I don't think there would have been a point to leveraging. None of this was on the radar screen. We were strapped, from the local government standpoint, to address any of those sites. We were trying to recreate... We're not talking about affordable housing, but the road. None of that would have been a factor if it would not have been for the foundation or Superfund to kind of get that moving forward. I think having Superfund, which kind of stood over everybody in the room... And that's where I got kind of lost [earlier in the interview] when I said, "the grandfather or whatever in the room." Superfund seemed like the one little key to carry that was making everybody straighten up, line up right. That is what I think got the attention and that's when our local agencies began to step up and try to right...

We got the first grant, the Brownfields assessment. Then we started thinking about going after the Superfund Redevelopment revolving loan and we went through that whole thing and now we've gotten it cleaned up. When you're piling all that together, and then going after other initiatives that could play right into it because we could see that that was one that—this was a five year grant of \$225,000—and began to build those neighborhood associations and the safe havens and dealing with law enforcement, creating more of a presence and forming little strategies to deal with whatever problems we were talking about as far as ridding. So we got out a lot of the crack houses and liquor houses in that area and got all of that stuff out.

EPA Interviewer: What made you realize that you were the one who could make a lot of this happen?

Mitchell: Being able to be exposed to some of the meetings and having the relationships with some of the people there. And I knew that there were some instances where... In some of those relationships, you treat everybody the same, but people begin to get promoted into different agencies and I never burned any bridges, even some that fell and came back up. I knew that some of the others in the community were angry to work with...then somebody else, their motive would not be in the right place. The only thing they can see is, "Hey, I can make a little bit of money here." And not see the big picture as to what we could finally complete. And then those that didn't have a vision at all, they just basically saw it as a huge problem and headache that they didn't want to get involved with, because if you acknowledge a problem that meant that you had to do something about the problem. They didn't want to have that on their shoulders or blood on their hands to try to be the ones to clean it up or deal with it. It's kind of like doing something like, "If you want it done right, you got to do it yourself" type attitude. I knew that was not the right attitude to have, but it was just, some people would only...

I mean, I know that there is a process, but even in this, those people would not volunteer to do anything unless they were paid for it. It was like, "I'm not going to talk and give that information for free when they're paying such and such over here." Well, I just didn't have time for that as far as waiting for somebody to give me \$1 for my opinion or comment. I'd rather wait until this thing is completed and you've got an actual model to step out there and market yourself as far as... Everybody wanted to be an expert, but nobody had actually done anything that you could point to that you could use for yourself. But you want to be the expert or want folks to put you on the pedestal. That just made me sick.

Sprayberry: I think about Superfund as an opportunity to network. Brownfields and Superfund conferences provided the opportunity for you to meet people across the country. There were groups from Boston to develop your urban revitalization plan.

Mitchell: We've had people from all over everywhere to come in, and even on that Core Foundation leadership award. That allowed me to step out and go and talk more about this project and some of the other communities where they were sort of dealing with... Well they weren't really dealing with environmental issues, but something else, but they had that same problem in their community. It was like, whatever their health problem was, they started thinking like, "Could this be..."

[*Phone rings*]

EPA Interviewer: Thank you for your time.