

A Summary of Hummingbird Firm's Situational Analysis


Philadelphia Refinery Legacy Remediation




I. What is a situational analysis?

Community engagement processes often start with a situational analysis. A situational analysis is a process of gathering background information that can help with identifying strengths and opportunities. Hummingbird Firm, the community engagement firm hired by Evergreen, conducted a situational analysis to learn more about the history of the former Philadelphia Refinery and the ongoing remediation efforts, gain an understanding of who lives and works in the community, and understand the concerns of the community as well as the perspectives of “what success looks like” for all those who are involved.


Hummingbird Firm’s situational analysis included four parts:

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1. Philadelphia Refinery 101

What is the background of the former Philadelphia Refinery and the current remediation?
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2. Demographics Analysis

What are the characteristics of the population that live near the former Philadelphia Refinery site?
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3. Site Visit

What does the former Philadelphia Refinery currently look like? What are the ongoing activities on the site?
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4. Interviews

What are the different perspectives that residents and other stakeholders have about Evergreen’s remediation and communication efforts?

II. What did we hear in our interviews?

The most critical part of the situational analysis was the interviews, hearing from residents and other stakeholders about the legacy remediation. We have taken the comments, concerns, and overall thoughts from the interviews and identified five key themes:

1. Legacy



- There are many long-term residents in the neighborhoods around the refinery site. Some of these residents and their families have lived here for generations.
- From the perspectives of several interviewees, the refinery has had lasting adverse impacts on their health and that of family members.
- Environmental advocates have been involved in this project for decades.
- Some residents have feelings of anger and frustration.
- Several interviewees expressed a desire for acknowledgment of the pollution from the refinery into the nearby neighborhoods.
- Some residents are concerned that development is playing a role in fostering gentrification and the displacement of legacy residents.

2. Trust & Relationship Building



- Many people in the community do not understand exactly what Evergreen is doing at the site, what contaminants are being cleaned up, and what it means for their health.
- This lack of understanding leads to a lack of trust among some members of the public and nearby communities.
- Some of the interviewees do not trust the information that Evergreen provides and they feel they are intentionally being told as little as possible.
- Many of those interviewed felt that Evergreen has not done an adequate job responding to public questions and comments.
- Some residents and key stakeholder groups are not confident that Evergreen will conduct a thorough cleanup. Several interviewees requested third-party audits.
- Some interviewees mentioned community organizations that they trust and encouraged Evergreen to work with those organizations.

3. Communication



- There is widespread dissatisfaction with Evergreen’s current approach to communicating with the communities and neighborhoods most directly affected by this project.
- Several people stated that the information Evergreen provides to the community is too complex and filled with technical language that is not easy to understand.
- Some people are still confused about the details of the remediation and the specific roles and responsibilities of those involved in the cleanup.

Interviewees had many suggestions for how to improve communication. We have organized them into five buckets:

i. Relationship Building

- Engage the community early and often.
- Reach out to block captains, local churches, state representatives, and retail establishments like corner store owners to find effective ways to engage directly with residents.
- Work with community partners and trusted individuals to gain the trust of the community.

ii. Updates

- Provide more regular updates about site activities, even when it might appear that nothing new is happening.
- Provide regular updates that combine information from all the key parties responsible for the cleanup (i.e., Evergreen, Hilco, and the government regulators).
- Provide updates in plain language, with visuals to complement the information.

iii. Meetings and Events

- Use focus groups to engage and hear from stakeholders about the outreach process, and ensure that the process benefits the public.
- Have smaller, neighborhood-based meetings or topic-based meetings.
- Have more in-person and hybrid meetings (consider outdoor parks or recreation areas), as it is hard to build relationships and trust through virtual meetings.
- Make virtual meetings highly engaging by using breakout rooms, allowing for questions and discussion, and adding levity to the conversation - do what you can to hear the voices of residents, wherever possible.
- Use events, such as community cookouts, as a way to reach people.
- Use parks and recreation/community centers to reach the younger generation.

iv. Communication Methods

- Use printed materials (e.g., mailed letters, flyers, and newspapers), as well as digital tools, such as email and social media, to reach more people.
- Use plain language and analogies to explain technical or complex concepts.
- Use interactive visuals, including maps and flowcharts, that make information easier to understand.
- Have fact sheets and timelines that summarize current work and next steps.
- Improve the website. Include a summary of all clean-up activities to date, make the Q/A on the website more user-friendly, and keep it up-to-date.

v. Greater Level of Involvement

- Some stakeholders want to be more actively engaged with Evergreen and participate directly in technical discussions regarding site remediation.
- Some stakeholders want Evergreen to provide opportunities for the public to review documents before they are submitted to the regulatory agencies for review.
- Some stakeholders want Evergreen to provide more than 30 days for the public to review and understand the technical documents (i.e., involve the community before the 30-day period) that are submitted to regulators.

4. Environmental Remediation and its Future Implication



- Some residents and organization members are dissatisfied with the level of the cleanup (i.e., “industrial” and “site-specific” standards instead of “health-based” standards) and feel that changes need to be made to the remediation.
- Some organized interest groups suggested there should be third-party audits of the technical work being conducted by Evergreen at this site. This suggestion for third-party audits (i.e., reviews) of Evergreen’s technical work is in addition to the public comment period associated with the release of all technical reports and in addition to the technical review and oversight of all remedial activities by the state and federal regulatory agencies.
- There are concerns about odors, truck traffic, contaminants migrating off-site, environmental and human health impacts, and groundwater contamination.
- The contaminants of most significant concern to some of those interviewed seem to be lead and PFAS/PFOS (“forever chemicals”).
- There were also concerns about Hilco’s site redevelopment. The interviewees want development that is safe and will not harm public health or the environment.

5. Outreach



- Some organized interest groups suggested that Evergreen organize a citizens' advisory group, as part of its public outreach efforts, to advise the company about what the community and residents want and need as this remediation moves forward.
- In addition to sharing their thoughts about Evergreen's remediation and public outreach efforts, some interviewees expressed their ideas for opportunities to better the community.
 - Some people feel that community residents should have access to some of the jobs related to the remediation and the future development of the site.
 - There is a desire to see events that are focused on sharing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) career opportunities, empowering the youth to pursue related careers, and hosting skills training sessions.
 - Several interviewees mentioned educating the community about environmental topics through fact sheets and other resources.

III. What's next?

With the information gathered during the situational analysis, Hummingbird Firm, working with Evergreen, has developed a Public Engagement Plan (PEP) designed to address the needs of the community and Evergreen as this project moves forward. The PEP: builds on the strengths of Evergreen's current Public Involvement Plan and Community Outreach Plan; focuses attention on expanded public outreach and engagement with the broadest possible range of local residents and nearby communities; emphasizes information-sharing to meet identified needs of the community; and incorporates some of the ideas and suggestions from residents and other stakeholders which were identified during this situational analysis. The PEP is a living document and will continue to evolve as the remediation continues, and as Evergreen's engagement with the public becomes more defined and well-established.

For more information on the Public Engagement Plan, visit:

phillyrefinerycleanup.info/public-involvement



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