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Last eyesores of Asarco plant on their way out

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By [Keith Eldridge & KOMO Staff](#) October 20, 2010

RUSTON, Wash. -- Hundreds of toxic creosote pilings at the former Asarco smelter are on their way out.

It's a victory for neighbors who have said the pilings have been an eyesore ever since the Asarco copper smelter shut down and the EPA declared it a superfund site two decades ago.

"I'm impressed," said Ruston resident Ken Brown. "It's been a little bit slower than we'd like, but it's coming around and we're excited for the future."

Brown is one of hundreds of homeowners who had to have the dirt replaced on their entire property because of the arsenic contamination from the smelter.

The whole cleanup process has been lengthy as the government wrangled with Asarco to make good on its promise to help clean the site. Some 2,300 of these creosote pilings are being cut off at the base and lifted out for removal.

So now the smelter is gone. The 67 site overlooking Tacoma's Commencement Bay has been taken over with a private developer and his Point Rustin project with homes, condos, a hotel, office and commercial space. They hope to have the first residents in about a year.

And there's the walkway connecting the Rustin Way waterfront to Point Defiance Park.

"It really is an amazing transition of this mill that was spewing out arsenic all over Puget Sound," said Rep. Norm Dicks.

The downturn in the economy has the development running years behind schedule, but residents are encouraged by what they're seeing today.

"I think it's going to look real nice," Brown said. "It's going to allow the waterfront to

be open to the public."

Neighbors say it's a gorgeous view, now made better as a waterfront eyesore is lifted away.