

# Brownfields: Recycling Our City

## ***Brownfields Defined***

*"With certain legal exclusions and additions, the term 'brownfield site' means real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant."*  
- Public Law 107-118 (H.R. 2869) - "Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act", January 11, 2002.

All communities have properties that are abandoned, under-used or have fallen into conditions of blight. When considering Brownfields, too often only industrial "war zones" or inner city neighborhoods come to mind. Brownfields are everywhere. They come in all sizes. A Brownfield property can be former gas stations or convenient marts; the old lumberyard, or the vacant city lot where waste is buried.

Many of the properties that suffer from the perception of environmental problems have excellent business locations, existing infrastructure, and access to transportation. Fear of the unknown prevents buyers, lenders and developers from redeveloping these properties and choosing sites with less "risk." The fear of environmental contamination and regulatory intervention has been enough to hinder or stop redevelopment of these otherwise developable community areas.

## **Removing the Fear**

Communities and American businesses are resourceful and capable. When they know the boundaries of a problem, they find solutions with the available resources. It takes information to determine whether Brownfields properties have environmental concerns or demonstrate that the "problems" are merely perceived. Once the environmental issue is identified and measured, communities can begin to rectify any real problems. Grants from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provide the means to a community to assess and measure Brownfields. Once the assessment has been completed, the community can move forward with solving the issues, if any, associated with the property in question.

## **Public Perception and EPA Brownfields Program**

With the responsibility to protect public health and the environment, EPA has often been seen in the public eye only for enforcement actions against business and industry. Where public health or the environment stands threatened, the agency will enforce. EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Program is here to assist communities and businesses. This is demonstrated by EPA grants that provide the needed resources to sort through the numerous Brownfields properties from those few properties that require regulatory intervention. These grants help communities make environmental restoration a manageable part of local redevelopment.



### **For questions and comments, please contact:**

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