



UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE
Cooperative Extension

Brownfields and Community Factsheet



What is a
Brownfield?

Brownfields are defined as abandoned, idled, or underused industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination. Brownfields are not necessarily exceptionally dirty facilities or sites- they may simply be places that we encounter in our daily lives that are contaminated with a small amount of hazardous waste-material. Examples of brownfield sites include parking lots, warehouses, factories, abandoned railroads, and landfills.

It is helpful to think of brownfield sites as areas with some amount of environmental contamination, though typically not enough to pose imminent danger or threat to the human or biological community. Such sites are commonly known as *brownfields* simply because they are perceived as being dirty, in disrepair, vacant, or blighting the landscape in some manner.

Where
are
Brownfields
Located?

Although Brownfields may be found anywhere they tend to be more concentrated in urban settings. New Hampshire's brownfield sites include abandoned textile mills or manufacturing centers located in the downtown sections of cities, towns, or villages. In total, there are approximately 467 sites in New Hampshire that are contaminated by hazardous wastes and may qualify as potential brownfields (USEPA 1998). Approximately 60-75 percent of these sites are in village centers, but there are still many located in more rural or suburban settings.



Why is Redevelopment of Brownfields important?

The Environmental Perspective

The most obvious concerns related to brownfields are the negative environmental and health effects that they have on humans and the surrounding environs. It is important to note that in order for a site to qualify as a brownfield, it *cannot* be a listed on Superfund's National Priorities List. This clause effectively limits the potential amount of environmental damage that might be caused if the site were to be redeveloped or utilized.

In essence, Brownfield sites are one step down on the hierarchy from Superfund sites. However, even though brownfields may be a lesser evil than Superfund sites, they often maintain some level of hazardous material, and therefore may pose certain health risks and potential for negative environmental impacts. As a result of the potential health and environmental risks of brownfields, many advocates within the environmental and health communities have pushed for the cleaning up of brownfield sites before potential problems manifest themselves.

The Economic Perspective

Communities that ignore their brownfields often find themselves in a physically and economically degraded state and often times are forced to discontinue their investment in roads, utilities, and other infrastructures. In turn, this can leave communities open to the stigmas that brownfields present. In effect, neighborhoods that host a brownfield site(s) are paying the *opportunity cost* of leaving the site undeveloped, since the brownfield is not contributing to a community's productive capacity. Moreover, unreclaimed brownfield sites may unintentionally encourage businesses or other developments to relocate outside of the municipal boundaries into undeveloped locations, some of which are prime community land – so called greenfields.

Local officials must remember that many businesses *prefer* locating in centrally located, infrastructure-rich areas of economic activity. It makes economic sense to redevelop these existing areas, rather than provide expensive services to businesses to locate to sites that are often far from local business centers.



The Social Perspective

Communities that do not encourage the reuse of brownfield sites are effectively encouraging sprawl, since the alternative is to develop areas that are not centrally located within the community. This can be inefficient with regard to the provision of local services, such as sewer, water, fire, bussing, utilities, etc. This often translates to higher taxes.

Is Funding Available for Brownfield Redevelopment?

To put it simply, redevelopment helps to curb sprawl by utilizing the productive capacity of existing sites to lessen the pressure on undeveloped areas.

Communities that maintain brownfield sites may also face a competitive disadvantage, since the mere presence of a brownfield can place a stigma on a community. Furthermore, it conveys a visual message that the community is in a state of distress. In turn, this may impact the number of economic opportunities available to residents.

There are some equity issues involved with developing, or not developing, brownfields. Developing open spaces outside of the community center rather than utilizing brownfields may disproportionately favor already better-off groups of people. Correspondingly, not redeveloping brownfields may disproportionately harm less well-off groups of people, a form of environmental *injustice*. As an illustrative example, those residing by brownfields are often deprived of services, opportunities, jobs, etc., when businesses avoid brownfield locations. On the flip side the suburban “rich” are often the ones that reap the benefits of the new developments in Greenfield sites.

The encouraging news is that support for brownfield redevelopment is growing. It is something that both environmentalists and commercial entrepreneurs can get their arms around: environmentalists like the idea of cleaning up a (sometimes perceived) toxic mess while simultaneously avoiding new developments elsewhere, and in general, businesses *prefer* locating in downtown, infrastructure-rich centers of economic activity. As a result of all this popular support, federal budgets for brownfield redevelopment have been increasing. The following table presents some important sources of grants and loans for brownfield site cleanup and redevelopment.

Federal Brownfield Programs

Jurisdiction and Agency	Program Name	Description
Environmental Protection Agency	Brownfield Assessment Grant Program (BAGP)	Award grants to governmental entities to conduct assessment activities at brownfield properties the goal of assisting recipients in developing a long-range strategy for reuse. Generally are up to \$200,000.
	Targeted Brownfields Assessment Program (TBA)	EPA works with contractors at specific, high-priority, reused properties. Information gathered allows local governments to make informed decisions regarding the redevelopment potential of a property. Assessments are valued between \$50,000-\$100,000.
	Cleanup Grant Program (CGP)	Funds are awarded to local, state, tribal, or non-profit entities to conduct cleanup activities on eligible properties. \$200,000 per property.
	Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund Program (RLFP)	Funds are awarded to local, state, tribal, or non-profit entities to establish and capitalize a revolving loan program, for up to \$1,000,000. Recipients may provide loans to private, public, or non-profit entities for cleanup activities on brownfield sites.
	Brownfields Job Training Program (BJTP)	Train workers in the field of hazardous waste assessment and remediation. Applicants must be affiliated with the BAGP.
Department of Housing and Urban Development	Community Development Block Grants	Provides large grants to local government which may use monies for a variety of purposes, including brownfield redevelopment.
	"Section 108" Loan Guarantees	Local governments may issue bonds under this program, which are guaranteed by HUD and sold by private banks to cover development costs, including brownfield redevelopment.
	Brownfields Economic Development Initiative	Specifically provides communities with grants to cleanup and redevelop brownfields, in conjunction with Section 108 loan guarantee funds. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis and may be used for eligible activities, including property acquisition, cleanup and economic development.
Department of Commerce	Economic Development Administration Program Funding	Increasingly, the FDA has been providing funding through budgetary means toward assisting planning, technical assistance, loan funds, and research and public works pertaining to brownfield redevelopment.
Federal Home Finance Bond	Community Investment Cash Advance	Provides advances to member banks and non-member borrowers who use advances to provide long-term financing for housing and economic programs that benefit families with low incomes.

State and Local Brownfield Programs

Other Tax Incentives	The Taxpayers Relief Act allows eligible tax-payers to deduct qualified cleanup expenses at eligible brownfields in the year they are incurred, and rehabilitation income tax credits for 10% of the expenses of rehabilitating structures built before 1936.
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Where
Can I
Get
More
Info?

The Environmental Protection Agency and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services both maintain websites that contain useful publications, forms, case studies, and current legislative information regarding brownfield redevelopment. The brownfields directory on the EPA website may be found at: www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/index.html

It contains many useful links including the following documents related to guidance through the grant application process:

- [Proposal Guidelines for Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund and Cleanup Grants](#)
- [Proposal Guidelines for Brownfields Job Training Grants](#)
- [Proposal Guidelines for Brownfields Training, Research, and Technical Assistance Grants and Cooperative Agreements](#)
- [The Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act \(H.R. 2869\)](#)
- [State and Tribal Response Programs](#)
- [Brownfields Tax Incentive](#)
- [Prospective Purchasers Agreements Guidance](#)
- [Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund Program Guidance](#)

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services also maintains resources available for internet users seeking brownfield information, at: www.state.nh.us/HWRB/hwrbbfld.htm

NHDES allows users to access application forms for use in determining eligibility, and the State's program highlights:

- [New Hampshire's Brownfields Covenant Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund Factsheet](#)
- [New Hampshire's Brownfields Program Factsheet](#)
- [Application for Eligibility Determination](#)
- [Application for Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund](#)
- [Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund Program Brochure](#)
- [Brownfields Provisions in the RCMP](#)