

Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission

Brownfields Assessment Project

EPA Cooperative Agreement Number BF-00E01232-0

Fact Sheet #1

Brownfields: Recycling Our Cities

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.

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.

Many properties suffer from the perception of environmental problems. Most have excellent business locations, existing infrastructure, and access to transportation. Due to fear of the unknown, these buyers, lenders, and developers pass over these properties for less “risky” property transactions. Merely the fear of environmental contamination and regulatory intervention has been enough to hinder or stop redevelopment of these once vital community areas.

Removing the Fear

Communities and American business are resourceful and capable. When they know the boundaries of a problem, they deal with it. They find solutions with the resources available. It takes information to identify Brownfields properties in a community. It takes information to determine if possible Brownfields properties really do have environmental concerns or to demonstrate problems are merely a perception. 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 Initiative

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.



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