

How to Make your Brownfields Blue

Redeveloping Areas in Small Towns and Cities



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A Brownfield Primer

What is a Brownfield?

NRTEE Definition:

“Abandoned, vacant, derelict or underutilized commercial or industrial property where past actions have resulted in actual or perceived contamination and where there is an active potential for redevelopment”.



What is a Brownfield?

- Land on which industrial / commercial activity has taken place in the past
- May be vacant, underused or abandoned
- Soils and water typically are impacted by contaminants from past practices and uses
- Usually located either close to downtown core or in other strategic areas of communities (e.g. riverside or lakefront locations)
- Usually located near existing transportation, infrastructure, and facilities (e.g. roads, schools, parks, sewers, libraries)

Brownfields in Canada

- Estimated 30,000 brownfield sites in Canada
- 40% of potentially contaminated sites are found in Ontario
- Brownfields can be found in any community across Canada - Large and small, urban and rural.
- Privately owned; publicly owned, held in trusteeship, 'orphan' sites without ownership
- Brownfields can include:
 - Old manufacturing operations
 - Decommissioned refineries
 - Former service stations
 - Former dry cleaners
 - Former railway yards

Municipal Preparedness

Municipalities are at different stages of brownfield redevelopment:

- Some are not aware that brownfields exist
- Many do not understand the benefits and barriers
- Other municipalities recognize the importance of brownfield redevelopment as an integral part of sustainable community development

Source: Ontario Rural Brownfield Project, MMAH & OCETA, 2006)

Current State in Small Urban and Rural Municipalities

Findings:

- 68% responded brownfield sites existed in their municipality
- 66% responded brownfield redevelopment **not** a priority
- 25% started the redevelopment process

Barriers include:

- No market drivers
- Limited municipal resources
- Real and perceived risk

Source: Ontario Rural Brownfield Project, MMAH & OCETA, 2006)

Brownfield Market Classification

Top Tier (Viable - 15-20%) :

- Risk involved, but market value exceeds cost of remediation. Redevelopment is driven by market forces. Sites not left idle for long. Remediation requires little outside assistance.

Middle Tier (Neutral - 60-70%):

- Cleanup costs are high, but so is potential for redevelopment. Sites well located (urban, transportation corridor, services). Some financial assistance or incentives required to move process forward.

Bottom Tier (Negative - 15-20%):

- High cleanup costs far exceed value of land after remediation. Sites often located in rural or smaller urban areas. Lands will remain dormant without government assistance

Benefits of Brownfield Redevelopment


Economic

- Increased property values and an increased property tax base
- Improved quality of housing, commercial and mixed use properties

Social

- Improved health and safety
- Improved quality of life in neighbourhoods – people live closer to work and recreation

Environmental

- Restored environmental health
 - Reduced urban sprawl pressures on greenfield sites
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Challenges of Brownfield Redevelopment

- Liability Risk
- Limited access to Insurance
- Municipal Sector Readiness and Capacity
- Financing
- Regulatory Delays
- Cost and Access to Technology for Clean-up

Key Success Factors for Brownfield Redevelopment

- Build an effective project team (internal municipal staff and external)
- Identify the barriers and benefits
- Engage and consult with stakeholders early in the process
- Conduct research and develop a business case
- Prepare a community vision, plan and brownfield strategies
- Establish a partnership approach with developers
- Implement innovative remediation / redevelopment options
- Obtain information on realized benefits (increased tax revenue, economic development and employment)
- Showcase successes