



The Brownfields Issue

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The Redevelopment of Urban Industrial Lands

Restoring contaminated property can go hand-in-hand with bringing life and strength to a community through increased jobs, an enhanced tax base and a sense of optimism about the future. The purpose of EPA's Brownfields Initiative is to make it easier for such sites to be redeveloped and become, once again, vital, functioning parts of their communities.

"Brownfields" are abandoned, idled or underused industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination. Frequently, these properties, once the source of jobs and economic benefits to the entire community, lie abandoned for fear of the contamination and the liability it implies. Instead, companies leave these brownfields in the urban core and head for the pristine "greenfields" outside the cities.

While the "polluter pays" principle of some of our strongest environmental legislation has prevented pollution by making it clear that companies are responsible for what they do to the land, many developers have shied away from acquiring and using land that they fear may already be contaminated. Lenders, too, fearful of inheriting cleanup liability for contamination they did not create, avoid making loans for such properties. As these properties are abandoned, so are the communities surrounding them. The

departure of businesses and jobs can mean the decline of the community.

Under EPA's Initiative, attention and resources are focused on several fronts simultaneously:

■ EPA will award 50 Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Pilots of up to \$200,000 each over the next two years. These pilots will support creative demonstrations of redevelopment solutions.

■ The San Francisco Regional Office has initiated a project with the City of Oakland, California and other regulatory agencies. The pilot is a redevelopment project to develop classes of sites defined by specific criteria. Once classes are defined, default cleanup levels for specific compounds of concern will be established for each class of site.

■ EPA is working with states to encourage the development of State Voluntary Cleanup Programs so that owners or developers can clean up the sites themselves with state oversight. The San Francisco Regional Office and the State of California's Department of Toxic Substances Control are working cooperatively so that those participating in California's Voluntary Cleanup Program are assured that when they have completed the state's program, EPA will be satisfied.

■ To promote the concept of sustainable development, EPA is pursuing job training and development activities. EPA is working with the Hazardous Materials Training and Research Institute to expand training and curriculum development to at least 20 community colleges located near Brownfields pilots. The San Francisco Regional Office is launching a joint program with the U. S. Department of Labor to design an environmental training program at a Job Corps center in the region.

■ EPA is working with other federal agencies, including the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor. The goal of this segment of the Brownfields Initiative is to leverage and coordinate federal resources promoting economic development, job training and community empowerment at local Brownfields sites. EPA is also working closely with states, municipalities, businesses, environmental communities and their representative organizations.