



Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilot

Des Moines, IA

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5101)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. Since 1995, EPA has funded more than 120 National and Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilots, at up to \$200,000 each, to support creative two-year explorations and demonstrations of brownfields solutions. The Pilots are intended to provide EPA, States, Tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

BACKGROUND

EPA Region 7 has selected the City of Des Moines for a Regional Brownfields Pilot. Des Moines is a financial, agribusiness, and retail trade center in the Midwest. In 1996, the unexpected closure of a beef processing plant in the City's central core resulted in approximately 1,300 lay-offs and widespread negative economic impact. The plant closure focused the community's attention on the environmental contamination that may be associated with chemical plants, salvage operations, and agribusinesses. The City has estimated that it has 50 brownfields, ranging in size from less than one acre to more than five acres. Private property owners have been hesitant to investigate these brownfields because of potential liability and cleanup expenses.

The City and its partners are responding to these challenges in a variety of ways, including the planning of the Des Moines Agribusiness Park, which is the target of this Pilot. This 1,200-acre tract of industrialized land has a history of environmental contamination. Suspected contaminants include lead, chromium, volatile organic compounds, and PCBs. Many of the parcels within this area may be considered brownfields. The City recognizes that successful redevelopment of this area is not possible until the known or perceived environmental contamination is addressed.

PILOT SNAPSHOT



Des Moines, Iowa

Date of Award:
September 1997

Amount: \$100,000

Site Profile: The Pilot targets a 1,200-acre tract of industrialized land in the eastern part of Des Moines for redevelopment into the "Des Moines Agribusiness Park."

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Visit the EPA Brownfields Website at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields>

OBJECTIVES

The Pilot seeks to redevelop the under-used industrial sites within the Des Moines Agribusiness Park that are or have been threatened by environmental contamination. The area is well supported by easy highway access and current infrastructure sufficient to support the planned uses. Existing businesses in the Park currently employ about 300 people. It is anticipated that a majority of the workers for the new facilities will come from the local Hispanic and Asian populations. Many of these workers were laid off as a result of the beef processing plant closure in 1996. The Pilot has identified several specific objectives to ensure successful attainment of this goal, including: removing real or perceived barriers to redevelopment, especially those related to the environmental condition of the properties; securing new business investment in the Park; creating livable wage employment opportunities for Des Moines residents, especially those laid off by the beef processing plant; certifying the area under the State's Agribusiness Enterprise Zone; developing a quality assurance management plan; exploring liability issues with the State; and exploring implementation of a pollution prevention plan to prevent the creation of future brownfields.

- Secure public involvement in all aspects of the assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment of the Park, including holding public meetings to discuss potential cleanup plans, creating communications products to keep the public informed about the project, and developing an Internet home page;
- Develop cleanup budgets and implementation plans, including site prioritization, cleanup strategies, land use, ownership transfer, and innovative financing; and
- Develop and adopt an urban revitalization plan and tax increment financing district which includes the Park.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Pilot will:

- Complete a land development assessment to determine the opportunities and challenges for redeveloping the Park, that will include research on land use, zoning, property ownership, infrastructure, and flood plain status;
- Conduct Phase I environmental assessments of all lands in the Park to identify specific brownfields sites;
- Conduct Phase II environmental assessments on a minimum of five sites in the Park that appear to pose the greatest threat of contamination and would be the most readily developed;