

Southwest Region
Planning Commission
37 Ashuelot St, Keene, NH
(603) 357-0557
www.swrpc.org

BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is a “brownfield”?

A brownfield is an abandoned or underused industrial or commercial facility where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination. Brownfields pose less of a serious health or environmental threat than Superfund sites, and a key characteristic is their potential to be reused or redeveloped.

2. How do you determine if a site is a brownfield?

A site is classified as a brownfield by having an environmental assessment done on the property. The environmental assessment determines the extent of real or perceived contamination.

3. Where are brownfields located?

While traditionally seen as an urban issue, brownfields exist in suburban and rural areas as well. Consider the former gas station, an old rail yard or abandoned junk yard. Soil, water and air contamination can be caused by many different land use activities.

4. What can the property be reused for?

Brownfield properties are commonly redeveloped for housing, commercial use or office space, recreation, “greenspace,” or governmental uses. Depending on the contaminants found at the site, the property may be subject to institutional controls such as activity and use restrictions (AURs) or groundwater management permits (GMPs).

5. How does a community benefit from brownfield redevelopment?

There are many ways in which a community benefits from brownfield redevelopment. These include, but are not limited, to:



A “brownfield”



The Monadnock Country Club, a “graduate” of the Brownfields Program, provides recreation and green space for the community.



The Monadnock Food Co-op, which was built on a remediated brownfield, hosts many community events like this local foods BBQ.

- Removing health and environmental concerns or perceptions;
- Promoting use of existing infrastructure & reducing sprawl (reuse of existing available properties vs. new land)
- Promoting economic growth (increasing tax base and creating jobs)
- Increasing property values of nearby properties;
- Reducing vehicle miles traveled (due to higher location efficiency);
- Removing blighted property
- Building ties among residents, businesses, and all parties involved;
- Building community awareness and empowering communities to address a problem that directly affects them;
- Assistance with implementing the town Master Plan; and
- Reducing crime in revitalized areas.



Railroad Square in downtown Keene is easily accessible by a multi-use bike path.

6. How does the property owner benefit from brownfield redevelopment?

There are a number of benefits to property owners including, but not limited to,

- Avoiding potential environmental enforcement actions;
- Tax benefits for cleaning up and reusing the property;
- Reducing the likelihood that contamination will migrate off the site or into groundwater and eliminating additional cleanup costs;
- Creating good will within the community;
- Making the property more valuable and marketable; and
- Legacy factor-not passing a burden on to heirs.



This site, which used to be an eyesore for the Town of Jaffrey, later received cleanup funds.

7. Is a brownfield site the same as a Superfund site?

No. A Superfund site is land that is more severely contaminated and has high concentrations of hazardous waste or pollution, therefore posing a real threat to human health and/or the environment. Superfund sites are listed on the National Priorities List; Brownfields are not.



Once this site was cleaned up, the property was sold and redeveloped into Kevin's Auto Sales and Services.

8. How clean is clean?

The level of cleanup varies depending on several factors including, but not limited to, the intended reuse and location of the property.



Boring holes to test for ground contamination

9. What are the prime sources of contamination and/or typical land uses that make a property become a Brownfield site?

Some of the most common contaminants identified at Brownfield sites are from fuels such as oil, gasoline, diesel and kerosene from underground storage tanks, floor drains, outside storage of barrels and machinery, and cleaning solvents. Former land uses at Brownfield sites can be any use that uses fuels (including heating) and cleaning solvents. The more common uses include former service stations, dry cleaners, mill buildings, warehouses, parking lots, abandoned railroads and landfills.



This waste pit contained paper sludge left by the American Tissue Paper Mills in Winchester.

10. Aside from assessment funding, what are some other governmental programs that are available to facilitate brownfield redevelopment?

Several programs have been created to aid property owners in the cleanup and redevelopment of Brownfield sites. Some of the assistance includes;

- Federal, state and local tax incentives
- Grants and low interest loans
- Technical assistance
- Liability protection
- Assistance with local approvals



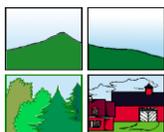
Formerly the NH National Guard Armory, the Peterborough Community Center is one of five community institutions that benefitted from the Brownfields Program.

11. Does participating in a Brownfields Program increase real or potential liability for existing environmental contamination?

As a participant in the SWRPC Brownfields Program, prospective new purchasers, secured creditors or mortgage holders, municipalities and some current property owners are eligible to participate in state and federal “Covenant Not to Sue” programs. The Covenant Not to Sue programs are designed to provide incentives in the form of liability protections for the investigation, cleanup and redevelopment of contaminated properties by persons who did not cause or contribute to the contamination. These programs were instituted in order to encourage redevelopment of underutilized properties.



Under construction: Railroad Square Senior Housing, built on old railroad land in Keene, NH.



SOUTHWEST REGION PLANNING COMMISSION

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