

# 8 Steps to Brownfield Redevelopment

## A Citizen's Guide to Action



### Introduction

Figuring out how to clean up a brownfield site and turn it into something positive is both an exciting and complex process. The 8 basic steps outlined here will help you understand the process from start to finish.

Contaminated sites often are cleaned up because a property owner, interested developer or municipality is looking to fill a specific need. For example, if the community needs senior housing and there is a brownfield site that would be appropriate for that use, the municipality might initiate the cleanup and redevelopment of that site.

### How Can You Participate?

There are several ways that citizens can get involved in cleaning up brownfields in their community:

#### Initiate a Cleanup

If you've discovered a possible brownfield site and want to see it cleaned up and reused, contact your local officials and interested community groups. Encourage them to partner with you and others to help get the process moving.

#### Review and Monitor a Cleanup

If someone else (e.g. a Volunteer) has already expressed interest in a brownfield property and is applying to the Brownfield Cleanup Program for help with identifying and removing the contamination, there are still many things you can do:

[Contact the developer](#) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to let them know you are an interested citizen and would like to be on the Site Contact List to receive information such as fact sheets, meeting notices and public comment period information.

[Check with your municipality](#) to see that the developer has been given all information regarding any community vision for the property or any areas nearby.

[Participate](#) in every opportunity for public comment.

### What Are the 8 Steps?

- 1 DISCOVER A BROWNFIELD SITE
- 2 BUILD PARTNERSHIPS
- 3 APPLY TO NEW YORK STATE'S BROWNFIELD CLEANUP PROGRAM
- 4 DEVELOP A WORK PLAN
- 5 INVESTIGATE THE SITE
- 6 SELECT A REMEDY
- 7 CLEAN UP THE SITE
- 8 REDEVELOP THE SITE

# 1

## Discover a Brownfield Site

Find out which sites in your neighborhood might be considered brownfields, and help turn that negative into a positive. You can help motivate your municipality and community-based organizations into starting a cleanup and redevelopment effort. You can make a difference! For hints on how to spot a brownfield, visit [It Might Be A Brownfield If](#) [link to that section].

Keep in mind that a property owner, developer or municipality may already be planning to clean up a brownfield in your community. If so, you can request to be on the Site Contact List [link to Glossary] to receive information on the different stages leading up to cleanup.

To find out who owns a property, visit your county Real Property Tax office.



### SITE QUESTIONS

Are there any properties in my community that are underutilized?

Could any of these properties be vacant because of contamination or perceived contamination?

### CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONS

How can I get involved?

What information regarding a brownfield site is publicly accessible? What information am I legally entitled to obtain through the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL)?

### CONTAMINATION & HEALTH RISK QUESTIONS

Could the site pose any health risks with regard to water, air or soil pollution?

Are there any immediate risks to people who may currently use the site (e.g. kids playing on an empty lot)?

Have any illegal activities, such as dumping, taken place on the site recently?

# 2

## Build Partnerships (Citizens, Non-Profits and Municipalities)

Now that you've discovered a site, work with others in your community to figure out how it should be redeveloped. Determine who will apply to the Brownfield Cleanup Program.

Whether you are actively involved in a cleanup or commenting on the efforts of a developer or property owner, you can partner with an eligible community-based organization to receive a Technical



### PARTNERSHIP QUESTIONS

Are any of my neighbors, local community-based organizations or local officials familiar with this property? Can they help me understand what used to be there?

Does my community have a plan or vision for this property or area?

If there isn't currently a plan or vision, what might be an appropriate future use for the site?

Assistance Grant for help with understanding certain areas of the cleanup.

If your community has several brownfield sites that could be redeveloped together, the DEC's Brownfield Opportunity Area Program may help. This enables communities to address the cleanup and redevelopment of multiple sites on an area-wide basis, instead of working on them one at a time.

## 3

### Apply to New York State's Brownfield Cleanup Program

The Brownfield Cleanup Program applicant will work with the DEC to apply for money to clean up the site. This state program helps communities/developers/property owners finance cleanup, thus preparing the site for redevelopment.

Fill out a BCP application, or contact the DEC Brownfields Coordination Section at (518) 402-9711 for more information.

#### CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONS

How can my municipality or community-based organization help get this site (or set of sites) cleaned up?

#### FUNDING QUESTIONS

What is a Technical Assistance Grant (TAG)?

Who is eligible to apply for a TAG?

What defines an eligible community-based organization?

How and when can my community-based organization apply for a TAG?

What can TAG money be used for?



#### APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Who submits the application to the NYS Brownfield Cleanup Program?

How long will it take for the application to be processed?

#### CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONS

Is information regarding a potential brownfield cleanup by a developer or property owner available for viewing at my local library?

How will the public be kept informed of how a project accepted into the Brownfield Cleanup Program is going?

How will the public be kept informed during the different phases leading up to and including the site cleanup?

Will there be regular public meetings about the project?

Who can I call for information on the project?

How will the community be notified of decisions made?

#### CLEANUP QUESTIONS

Who are the decision-makers?

When will decisions be made?

What are the goals of the cleanup? How will they be assessed afterward?

### TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

- 1 Hold a Pre-Application Meeting with the DEC to discuss the project.
- 2 Be sure to demonstrate local buy-in and partnerships regarding cleanup goals.
- 3 Include letters of support from key people in the community.
- 4 Alert and involve your local officials. Get them involved from the start.

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## 4

### Develop a Work Plan for Investigating Site Contamination

Congratulations! The Brownfield Cleanup Program application has been accepted. The project leader should now work with partners in the community to secure funding and hire a consultant to develop a Work Plan for the site. This work plan explains the technical features of the site investigation, such as the number of soil samples needed, levels of testing performed and quality control measures implemented.

In addition, the project leader will develop a Citizen Participation Plan to ensure adequate community involvement. The Citizen Participation Plan should include a Site Contact List so that interested citizens and groups can receive



### WORK PLAN AND CLEANUP QUESTIONS

Who are the decision-makers?

When will decisions be made?

Will local response agencies be notified of any impending site investigation or cleanup activities on the property?

How long will it take to develop the Work Plan?

Does the Work Plan include considerations for adjacent properties that might be affected by the contamination?

Who determines the number of soil samples and other specifics detailed in the Work Plan?

Does the Work Plan outline a monitoring protocol to ensure that no contaminants are released during the site investigation?

information and meeting notices regarding the cleanup effort.

Both the DEC and the New York State Department of Health are responsible for reviewing the Work Plan to make sure it's thorough and that all environmental and public health issues are properly addressed.

Be sure to attend the public hearing where the cleanup consultant will explain the Work Plan to the community. You can also ask the DEC and DOH to clarify anything that might be confusing.

### **CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONS**

How will the public be kept informed of how a project accepted into the Brownfields Cleanup Program is going?

How will the public be kept informed during the different phases leading up to and including the site cleanup?

Will there be regular public meetings about the project?

Who can I call for project information?

How will the community be notified of decisions made?

Is there an opportunity for community input into the development of the Work Plan?

### **CONTAMINATION AND HEALTH RISK QUESTIONS**

What area is affected by the contamination?

Who determines the extent of the site investigation?

Are there any schools or health centers nearby that might need consideration for special protections during the site investigation and cleanup?

Are any imminent threats posed on the site?

What protections will be taken during the investigation to make sure any contamination won't spread?

Will a community health and safety plan be developed?

### **FUNDING QUESTION**

Is there any assistance available to help the community understand the Work Plan?

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# 5

## Investigate the Site

The Work Plan has been approved and it's time to put it to use.

The cleanup consultant will do fieldwork and sampling to determine the nature and extent of contamination, as well as the source of the contamination. The soil, air and water samples will be collected and tested, and a written report will outline the findings. This information will allow the consultant to determine what, if any, contamination exists on the site.

If there is contamination, the investigation will help inform the type of remedy chosen to clean up the site. It's important to note that many brownfield sites have been cleaned up and restored to active use. Through the Brownfield Cleanup Program, even if there is a lot of contamination, it is still possible for the site to be restored and turned into an asset for the community.



### SITE INVESTIGATION QUESTIONS

Who will do the Site Investigation?

How long will the Site Investigation take?

Who determines the extent of the Site Investigation?

Who determines the number of soil samples and other specifics of the Site Investigation?

### CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONS

Who can I call for information on the Site Investigation?

How will the public be kept informed during the Site Investigation?

What do these Site Investigation results mean for my community, and how will they be shared?

Will there be public information meetings about the findings?

### CONTAMINATION AND HEALTH RISK QUESTIONS

Are there any risks of exposure to the community during the Site Investigation?

What symptoms might indicate exposure to pollutants?

What kind of contamination was found on the site?

How much site contamination was found?

Is the contamination in the soil/water/air?

How dangerous is the contamination to my community?

### FUNDING QUESTIONS

Is there any assistance available to the community to better understand the results of the Site Investigation?

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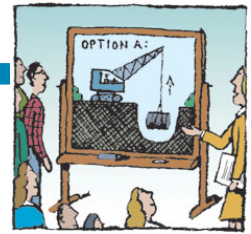


# 6

## Select a Remedy

The fieldwork is complete and now you know the extent, if any, of the contamination. The cleanup consultant will present several plans, or “remedies,” for removal of the contamination based on the information gathered in Step 5. If the site is deemed a significant threat to public health and the environment, the DEC will select the cleanup remedy. If the site does not pose a significant threat, the applicant is allowed to choose the remedy.

It is important to understand that different remedies have different results, and they also have different impacts during implementation. Be sure to find out all of this information before supporting one remedy over another.



### REMEDY SELECTION AND CLEANUP QUESTIONS

Does the remedy support the community’s vision for the site or area?

Does the remedy leave open other use options for the site that the community might want to pursue in the future?

How do I find out about the range of remedies available?

Who decides which remedy will be used to clean up the site?

How long will it take to choose a remedy?

Who oversees quality control measures for the cleanup?

### CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONS

How will the public be kept informed during the remedy selection phase?

Will there be any public information meetings about the different possible remedies?

Who can I call for information about the remedies?

How will the community be notified about any proposed remedies?

How can I understand the implications of each remedy?

### CONTAMINATION AND HEALTH RISK QUESTIONS

Does the proposed remedy leave any residual contamination that could pose future risks?

Will implementation of the remedy pose any health threats?

Will my drinking water be protected during the cleanup?

What protective measures will be taken during construction to protect the health and safety of the community, and of the workers?

Will this remedy make it safe for children to play on or near the site?

Under the chosen remedy, where will the contamination go if it’s removed from the site?

## SITE DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

How can I be assured, as a neighbor, that I will not be negatively affected by the cleanup process or by the future redevelopment of the site?

What can be built on the site once it's cleaned up? Will it be safe enough for houses or a school to be built?

## FUNDING QUESTIONS

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How and when can my CBO apply for a TAG?

What can TAG money be used for?

# 7

## Clean Up the Site

After careful deliberation, a remedy has been chosen and it's time to clean up the site. Getting to this point took a lot of hard work and determination, and your community will reap the rewards for decades to come. Not only is contamination being removed, but soon the property will be ready for redevelopment as a community asset.

The cleanup consultant will oversee the site cleanup according to the method selected in Step 6, making it ready for redevelopment. The DEC will issue a Certificate of Completion that ensures the cleanup was successful. This also triggers some of the benefits, such as tax credits, liability limitations and contribution protections. Redevelopment can begin.

## CLEANUP QUESTIONS

Will anyone monitor the construction of the cleanup measures to be sure they are consistent with the cleanup remedy selected?

How long will the cleanup take?

Will the site be fenced off during cleanup for safety?

Will there be a lot of noise? If so, during what hours?

Will signs be posted alerting neighbors of any safety hazards while the work is being completed?

Will local side streets be used for the trucks?

What hours will the trucks be running? Will it be 24/7?

Who oversees quality control measures during the cleanup?

Will sampling be done during the cleanup to monitor the contamination?

What will be done to verify that the cleanup was successful?



### CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONS

Who should I call if I see something wrong?

How will the public be kept informed during the cleanup?

Will there be any public information meetings about the cleanup?

### CONTAMINATION AND HEALTH RISK QUESTIONS

Will there be any contamination treated on the site? Is there any risk of contaminants being released that could pose a health risk?

What is my risk of exposure to the contamination if it is trucked out through my neighborhood?

What kinds of problems might result in work being stopped? If this happens, how might this affect the health and safety of my community?

What happens if it is discovered that the contamination is worse than originally expected?

### SITE REDEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

When will the site be ready for redevelopment?

What can be built on the site once it is cleaned up? Will it be safe enough for houses or a school?

## 8

### Redevelop the Site

#### Pursue Your Vision

Now that the contamination has been taken care of on the site, you are ready to see the property be redeveloped. Now is the time to look back at some of the work done in Steps 1 and 2 — talk to your partners and finalize a vision for the site. If you haven't already found a developer, now is the time to work together with your partners to locate one who will build the project envisioned by your community.



For more information on brownfield redevelopment, visit our Web site at [www.scenichudson.org](http://www.scenichudson.org).

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Illustrations by Dan Baxter.

