

What are Brownfields?

According to the EPA, brownfields are “real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.” Generally, we think of large abandoned industrial sites as brownfields. Keep in mind that in addition to typical industrial sites, foundries, mills, and junkyards, the following are also considered brownfields:

- Sites contaminated by controlled substances (e.g. Meth)
- Sites contaminated by petroleum and/or petroleum products (abandoned gas stations, car repair garages, vehicle maintenance facilities)
- Commercial sites impacted by hazardous chemicals, such as dry-cleaning facilities.
- Mine-scarred lands (can also be sites that were used by the coal industry such as rail car loading / transfer areas, maintenance sites, etc.)

Are you interested in jump starting Brownfield Redevelopment in your community?

The East Tennessee Development District (ETDD) is gearing up to apply for an EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant for the 2021 funding year. The Coalition Assessment Grant will be available for use by all communities in our district.

We are actively looking for potential brownfield sites located in our district that can be included in the grant application.

What is an EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant and how can it help your community?

The purpose of the Brownfields Assessment Grant is to provide funding to communities to develop a brownfields inventory, conduct Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESA), prepare cleanup and reuse plans, and conduct community outreach for brownfield sites to help further revitalization efforts and economic development. ESA's typically cost thousands of dollars. Conducting an ESA utilizing a Brownfields Assessment Grant reduces the uncertainty about environmental issues, often eliminating environmental concerns for a property owner or potential investor. According to the EPA, 33% of assessments conducted with EPA Brownfield Grants revealed that no cleanup was necessary.

If recognized environmental conditions are identified during the Phase I ESA, grant funds can be used to perform a Phase II ESA to define the problem and provide a plan for cleanup, if warranted.

Redeveloping brownfields

- eliminates or reduces the need to find and develop open spaces and farmland;
- eliminates dilapidated properties;
- increases property values near redeveloped brownfields sites, thereby increasing the tax base; and
- creates jobs and commercial opportunities.

Typically, for every dollar expended by the EPA Brownfields Program, \$18 in outside funds are leveraged.

ETDD's previous experience with conducting ESA's under an EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant found that most sites have no issues or very minor issues, alleviating property owner concerns for potential future regulatory actions and opening the door for successful redevelopment. The previous grant for \$200,000 evaluated Brownfield sites located in Morgan, Scott, Blount and Knox counties.

A notable local example of successful brownfield redevelopment, the City of Knoxville used EPA assessment grants to jump start the South Waterfront Redevelopment across the river from downtown Knoxville – bringing the Regal Headquarters and mixed-use development.

How will the grant work?

For Coalition Assessment Grants, the ETDD will receive funds to distribute to the participating municipalities to pay for the site assessments. Per the EPA's Brownfields Grant Program, no cost sharing is required for assessment grants. ETDD will be responsible for and perform the required activities to administer the grant and a portion of the Assessment Grant fund is used to cover ETDD's administrative cost.

Based on their current strategic plan, the EPA is focusing their grants in economically impacted areas. Following are some attributes a proposed brownfield site should possess.

- 1) Eligible sites / property can be privately owned, provided the owner is willing to allow access to perform the assessment.
- 2) The site is located in an economically distressed area and/or Certified Opportunity Zone.
- 3) The site is located in a rural area.
- 4) Redevelopment of the site will benefit the community (jobs, health and welfare benefits.)
- 5) The grant will be leveraged with other economic development efforts to enhance its effectiveness.

As mentioned above, completing an Environmental Site Assessment helps the property owner by reducing the uncertainty for future redevelopment and the potential future sale of the property. Further, if issues are found on the property, the Assessment Grant can be used for a Phase II Assessment to define the required clean up. If cleanup is required, it is possible to apply for an EPA Brownfield Cleanup Grant.

If you are interested in participating, or you would like more information, please complete this questionnaire and return via email to Mitch Loomis at mloomis@etdd.org **by June 5, 2020**.

- 1) Do you have a brownfield site or sites that you would like to include in the ETDD Brownfield Assessment Grant Application?

Site name and location:

- 2) Who is your community point of contact for ETDD? This person could provide information about the site, community information, and other data to support the grant application.

- 3) Do you have a Comprehensive Plan for Economic Development, Community Development or another plan for your community?

-
- 4) Please let us know if you would like to discuss the potential for the EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant for your community and if you would like help in identifying brownfield sites. Our consultant, S&ME, Inc. will schedule an appointment (via teleconferencing or a site field visit)

Contact: Lydia Birk, S&ME Brownfield Grant Coordinator
lbirk@smeinc.com

We look forward to hearing from you and including your community in the EPA Brownfields Coalition Assessment Grant application.

Regards,

Terry Bobrowski
Executive Director
East Tennessee Development District

Mitch Loomis
Community Development Manager
East Tennessee. Development District