



Community Development Corporation

Brownfield Information Sheet

Scope of the Problem: Brownfields are abandoned or underused industrial and commercial properties where development is complicated by environmental contamination. Abandoned gas stations, former industrial sites, closed dry cleaners, and municipal dumps – more than just abandoned or underutilized properties, these Brownfields become the eyesores and stigma for a community in transition. Declining property values, the increase of crime at abandoned sites, and potential risks to public health and safety stand as the most compelling reasons to accurately assess the problems and potential for redevelopment. Through a process of assessment, remediation and reuse, Brownfields can serve as the realization of economic vitality and sustainability.

Whether you are an owner, developer or community resident, you stand to benefit from programs and funding that address Brownfields in our community. The remediation and reuse of these sites provide considerable benefits, including:

- Growth of local tax base and jobs
- Protection of public health and the environment
- Transformation of abandoned properties into community assets

Challenges and Opportunities: Included in the story of Brownfields is also a chapter about the perceived barriers to development, such as the liability and cost associated with the clean up of contaminated sites. Despite the staggering numbers of Brownfields, data indicates that nearly one-third of sites labeled as Brownfields do not require cleanup. For those that do, awareness of the funding for voluntary cleanup programs has aided in the progress of Brownfield Programs in many communities. In some areas, nonprofits have played a valuable role in identifying priority Brownfield sites, clean up needs, redevelopment opportunities and funding assistance.

A current issue facing Downtown El Cajon is groundwater contamination. Petroleum from abandoned gas stations may contain a chemical that can contaminate ground water if released from underground storage tanks. Assessing Brownfields for their historical use and potential contamination is the first step to reusing the sites and contributing to the revitalization of Downtown El Cajon. Grants from the EPA provide technical assistance to enable communities to stimulate economic and beneficial uses of Brownfields. The City of El Cajon's Redevelopment Agency was awarded a grant to conduct an assessment of Downtown El Cajon. El Cajon CDC is now tasked with administering the grant over the next two years. An area-wide environmental assessment of sites with leaking underground storage tanks will bring us closer to creating solutions for problem sites. As partners, we are committed to a program that will:

- Identify all appropriate uses for particular sites and sources for assistance and funding if remediation is required
- Actively distribute information and referrals to our stakeholders and interested parties for resources that will foster development
- Remove blight by converting underutilized properties into productive commercial and mixed-use projects
- Apply for future assistance and grow a program to address additional unknown releases of hazardous waste

Updates on Downtown El Cajon's Brownfields will be available at El Cajon CDC's website beginning in February 2006: <http://www.downtownelcajon.com/>. For more information, please contact:

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Ensuring the economic vitality of Downtown El Cajon
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