

# Leading Local Revitalization

## A Local Official's Guide to Reusing Shuttered Factories, Abandoned Gas Stations and Rundown Properties

Does your community have shuttered factories, vacant industrial waterfronts, abandoned gas stations, rundown buildings filled with asbestos, or other hazardous sites? These types of properties are called [brownfields](#) and they can be a blight on your community's safety, health and economy.

Good news! Most brownfields can be safely redeveloped into housing, commercial facilities, manufacturing and technology centers, and new community uses including parks and recreational facilities, public and nonprofit facilities, and many other kinds of productive reuse.

### Your Essential Role as Project Champion

As a local official, your actions to support site visioning, planning, assessment, and cleanup activities will bring attention and momentum to revitalization projects.

You can play a decisive role in supporting your community's vision and creating the right conditions for brownfields reuse. Your involvement will help your community to:

- Prioritize brownfield sites for cleanup and reuse;
- Convene stakeholders from across the community;
- Generate interest and investment from the private sector; and
- Determine when public resources are needed to move the site into reuse.

Maybe you have one or more brownfield properties in mind for reuse, but you are hesitant to begin addressing them because of potential liability concerns or costs.

Fortunately, numerous tools and resources are available to address these potential issues and assist with moving these sites toward new and productive uses.

### Three Things a Local Official Needs to Know About Revitalizing Brownfields

1. Investing in brownfields reuse can help your community solve two problems at once; you can create new community amenities while reducing potential exposure to public health hazards.
2. Your community can take several actions now to get started on brownfields revitalization.
3. A party that did not cause the pollution can obtain liability protections and minimize enforcement concerns before investigating and cleaning up brownfields.

EPA and other federal programs provide funding, tools, and free technical support for communities. Scan here to access more information about each of these items you need to know as a local official.



*Local officials in the City of Council Bluffs, Iowa, used EPA Brownfields Grant funding to assess and clean up an abandoned agricultural warehouse. The site is now home to the Hoff Family Arts and Culture Center, a \$27 million facility that includes a theater, gallery, and artist studios, and is also home to five local arts and culture organizations.*

## Getting Help for Your Community

Help is available to support your community's brownfield reuse goals. Many local officials get started by contacting their regional [Technical Assistance to Brownfield Communities](#) provider, who can explain and mentor communities through their initial brownfield revitalization efforts for free.

EPA helps to fund the work of local governments, nonprofits and other organizations to [assess contamination](#), [plan cleanups](#), [conduct cleanups](#), [train environmental workers](#), and [spur revitalization of brownfield sites](#). Many other [federal programs](#) also provide resources and support for brownfield and community revitalization.

EPA also provides [targeted brownfield assessments](#) to handle investigations at brownfield sites, [land revitalization planning assistance](#), and various other types of tools and [technical assistance](#).

The EPA [Land Revitalization Toolkit](#) provides a wealth of resources, including fact sheets, guidebooks, and other tools that highlight best approaches to brownfield and community revitalization.

### What Actions Can I Take Today?

- ✓ Decide to be a champion for brownfields reuse in your community.
- ✓ Call your Technical Assistance to Brownfield Communities provider to help you get started for free.
- ✓ Learn about liability protections and defenses under [CERCLA](#). Do not take site control without conducting All Appropriate Inquiries.
- ✓ Form a brownfield stakeholder group with public and private partners (e.g., homeowners associations, developers, community stakeholders, and local officials) to focus attention on a specific site or target area.
- ✓ Work with your community to create a vision for reuse.
- ✓ Email your Regional EPA contact for help with Targeted Brownfield Assessments.
- ✓ Attend the biennial National Brownfields Training Conference.



*The [City of Hickory, North Carolina](#), worked with local developers and other community stakeholders to revitalize two vacant and abandoned mill properties, including Hollar Mills, which is now home to restaurants, retail shops and a 10,000-square-foot event venue.*

