

Brownfield Cleanup: A Brief Discussion

Brownfields cleanup and redevelopment projects can improve environmental conditions, trigger economic development, enrich communities, and generally improve quality of life for people in the area (Bacot & O'Dell 2006). Remediation and redevelopment of brownfields also help preserve previously undeveloped open spaces, greenfields, which not only preserves land, but allows developers to take advantage of extant infrastructure surrounding brownfields sites.

Because brownfields are contaminated, or perceived to be contaminated, with hazardous materials, they pose a threat to public health. Furthermore, the degraded quality of the property drives down property values in the surrounding area, leading to economically depressed neighborhoods. In economically depressed areas like those surrounding brownfields, "residents are in the greatest need of jobs and local governments are in the greatest need of tax revenues" (Howland 2007). Economically depressed areas also often struggle with antisocial and personally destructive activities such as crime and drug abuse. Because brownfields are also potentially hazardous to human health, individuals near brownfields may also suffer adverse health effects associated with environmental contamination. In general, populations in areas near brownfields often face challenges to health and economic sustainability.

Brownfields cleanup and redevelopment can provide much needed stimulus into these economically depressed and environmentally contaminated areas. While brownfield revitalization projects can create jobs in areas where they are needed most (Dixon 2000), neighborhood revitalization and economic stimulus is best accomplished when the new jobs are linked to local residents. This requires community involvement. When employers are able to take advantage of the local labor force, they are more likely to succeed in the area (Howland 2007). Howland (2007) suggests different methods of linking new jobs to local residents, which include: 1) public or private sector workforce training programs to prepare local residents for the new jobs and 2) trainings to improve resident marketability skills, such as resume and interview workshops. One such opportunity is the EPA's [Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training grant program](#), which allows "organizations to recruit, train, and place predominantly low-income and minority, unemployed and under-employed people living in areas affected by solid and hazardous waste" (EPA 2016). Taking advantage of the opportunity to work with local residents helps ensure the success of brownfield redevelopment projects.

While working closely with local residents is vital to healthy and successful brownfields redevelopment projects, success is further enhanced when transportation elements are integrated into cleanup and redevelopment projects (Amekudzi & Fomunung 2004). When brownfields redevelopment projects are undertaken in areas with efficient transportation infrastructure already in place, or when plans seek to couple redevelopment with new transportation infrastructures, the impact of brownfield redevelopment has greater reach (Amekudzi & Fomunung 2004). The U.S. Department of Transportation offers funding opportunities through the [TIGER Discretionary Grants](#) program, which has provided \$5.1 billion to transportation projects throughout the country since 2009.

The Wasatch Brownfields Coalition seeks to encourage successful brownfields cleanup projects. Because of this, the Coalition will give priority to projects that seek to engage local communities and residents through all stages of the project, including linking residents to the jobs created by the project, and to projects that incorporate transportation elements (either novel or extant) into the redevelopment plan.