



BROWNFIELD TOOLS FOR *DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES*

The Northeast-Midwest Institute, the Sustainable Community Development Group and The Ferguson Group have launched an U.S. EPA-sponsored initiative to provide brownfields tools and technical assistance to local communities that are seeking to overcome economic and neighborhood disadvantage.

Across America, communities and neighborhoods that have historically been marked by poverty, joblessness, injustice and lack of investment, often suffer disproportionately from the impacts of brownfields. Overcoming brownfields can be more difficult in disadvantaged communities, due to a lack of economic opportunity, undercapitalized markets, crumbling infrastructure, inadequate local capacity, historical mistrust, concerns about gentrification, or environmental justice issues. Yet, there are a growing number of examples where disadvantaged communities have used brownfield tools and resources to redevelop blighted areas, create economic opportunities, and give hope to their residents.

This initiative will foster a solutions-oriented approach, providing proven tools for the revitalization of contaminated and blighted properties. The project will identify success story examples of disadvantaged communities that have used brownfields revitalization to spark new economic opportunity, improved quality of life, and broader restoration. The project will help both distressed urban neighborhoods, and rural communities that struggle with a lack of resources and opportunities for brownfields renewal. Key issues that will be addressed in the project will include:

- **Brownfields basics** and beyond for disadvantaged communities;
- Institutional and capacity **barriers** to brownfields & community renewal;
- Challenges of crumbling and inadequate **infrastructure** in distressed areas;
- The impact of **small sites** such as abandoned gas stations on disadvantaged communities;
- **Rural** community brownfield challenges;
- **Funding and financing** issues, including the role of banks and tax credits;
- Tapping **federal agencies** for support and resources, partnering with **state agencies**, working with the **private sector**, and collaborating with **community groups**;

- Dealing with risk – **institutional controls & insurance**;
- **Sustainable development**, such as smart growth, green building practices & pollution prevention; and
- Strategies for ensuring that brownfields revitalization **benefits go to existing residents** of disadvantaged communities, including job creation and retention, affordable housing, and improved quality of life.

Launched at the National Brownfields Conference in 2005, the project will include the following activities:

- The establishment of a **national consortium of urban and rural communities** and other stakeholders who are using brownfields revitalization as a tool to renew distressed areas;
- The convening of a “**National Leadership Forum on Brownfields for Disadvantaged Communities**”;
- The production and distribution of a “**Brownfields Toolkit for Disadvantaged Communities**”;
- Regular **conference calls and webcasts** on a variety of brownfields issues to convene communities with leading experts and brownfields resources;
- **Brownfields technical assistance workshops** connecting disadvantaged community leaders with their peers, officials from federal and state agencies active in brownfield efforts, as well as private sector leaders; and
- **Ongoing brownfields technical assistance** to disadvantaged communities, including the distribution of case studies, research reports, and brownfields information via the internet, telephone, and other settings.

We are seeking the participation of interested stakeholders in this project. If you represent a community seeking to overcome disadvantage through brownfields renewal, or are part of an organization that could bring resources to address these challenges, we urge you to contact the team managing this project to get involved.

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