



SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE THROUGH EPA BROWNFIELDS AND LAND REVITALIZATION

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE REFLECTED IN THE BROWNFIELDS AND LAND REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) [Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program](#) provides grants and technical assistance to empower states, tribes, communities, and other stakeholders to work together to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A critical part of the Program is to ensure that residents living in communities historically affected by economic disinvestment, health disparities, and environmental contamination have an opportunity to reap the benefits from brownfields redevelopment. The Program continues a rich history rooted in a commitment to environmental justice in urban and rural areas, and to helping communities revitalize brownfield properties, mitigate potential health risks, and restore economic vitality.

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), as amended, is EPA’s authorizing statute for the Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program. CERCLA requires that during the national grant competitions, EPA considers “the extent to which a grant would address or facilitate the identification and reduction of threats to the health or welfare of children, pregnant women, minority or low-income communities, or other sensitive populations.” Additionally, EPA must consider “the extent to which a grant will meet the needs of a community that has an inability to draw on other sources of funding for environmental remediation and subsequent redevelopment of the area in which a brownfield site is located because of the small population or low income of the community.” CERCLA Section 101(39) defines a brownfield site as 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.

Demographic Analysis of Communities with EPA-funded Brownfield Properties





	Census Block Groups with EPA-funded Brownfield Properties (2019)*	Census Block Groups Nationwide (2019)*
	Poverty Rate Percentage: 21.7%	14.9%
	Minority Population Percentage: 41.0%	38.2%
	Vacant Residential Unit Percentage: 15.2%	11.7%
	Per Capita Income: \$26,642	\$38,712

Table 1: EPA grants are awarded to communities with higher poverty rates, minority populations, and vacancies and lower incomes than the national average.

*Data is based on Brownfield sites reported on in EPA’s ACRES database as of FY21 and population data from the 2019 American Community Survey

EPA defines environmental justice as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.

SUCCESS STORIES

Zender Inc. Program Provides Opportunities for Rural Alaskan Residents

Zender Inc.'s Brownfields Job Training Grant seeks to provide job opportunities to residents affected by brownfields. Zender Inc. has built a successful program to train underserved tribal and isolated rural populations in Alaska. With a job placement rate of 95%, students are trained and well-prepared for various environmental services careers.

Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Housing Innovation | San Diego, CA

With the help of EPA's Brownfields Cleanup Grant, the Jacobs Center nonprofit organization was able to remove thousands of tons of pesticide-contaminated soil in two of San Diego's underserved neighborhoods. Redevelopment of the area included a new, sustainably built residential complex, urban trails and pedestrian enhancements. This new housing will provide apartments for low-income families near the public trolley transportation.

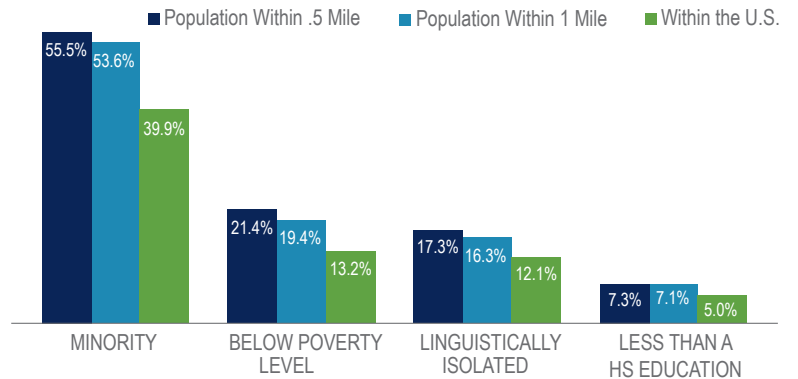


COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS NEAR BROWNFIELD SITES

Brownfield sites from Assessment, Cleanup and Redevelopment Exchange System (ACRES) as of FY20
Population Data from 2016-2019 American Community Survey

The population living within .5- and 1-mile of a Brownfield site is:

- ▶ more minority,
- ▶ more low income,
- ▶ more linguistically isolated, and
- ▶ less likely to have a high school education than the U.S. population as a whole.



A linguistically isolated household is one in which no member 14 years old and over (1) speaks only English or (2) speaks a non-English language and speaks English "very well." In other words, all members 14 years old and over have at least some difficulty with English.

Proximity Does Not Represent Risk: Proximity to a site does not necessarily represent risk of adverse health effects. The risk of exposure to contamination varies significantly across all sites.



Zender Inc. job training participants at a spill response activity.

“Through our Brownfields Program, EPA is delivering on the Biden Administration’s commitment to lifting up and protecting overburdened communities across America, especially communities that have experienced long periods of disinvestment and decay. These assessment and cleanup grants will not only support economic growth and job creation, but they will also empower communities to address the environmental, public health, and social issues associated with contaminated land.”

EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan



FOCUSING ON EJ PRINCIPLES IN BROWNFIELDS REUSE

EPA's Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program helps to educate stakeholders on the importance of integrating principles of environmental justice and equitable development into the assessment, cleanup, and reuse of brownfields. Some of these principles include:

- ▶ ensuring access to affordable housing,
- ▶ promoting community resilience against climate change,
- ▶ ensuring equitable access to amenities such as health clinics and grocery stores,
- ▶ working with minority- and women-owned businesses,
- ▶ creating first source hiring ordinances,
- ▶ ensuring jobs with living wages,
- ▶ partnering with community-based organizations,
- ▶ creating commercial linkage strategies,
- ▶ reusing brownfield sites for greenspace and other healthy, safe and walkable areas (such as urban gardens and parks), and
- ▶ developing resident shareholding models.

These principles help to ensure that low-income and minority residents in areas historically impacted by blighted properties and environmental contamination reap the benefits of environmental cleanup.

BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM PROVIDES FREE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO COMMUNITIES

EPA's Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization partners with various organizations to provide technical assistance and resources to brownfield communities. Some of these organizations include the University of Connecticut, New Jersey Institute of Technology, West Virginia University Research Corporation, International City/County Management Association, Kansas State University, and the Center for Creative Land Recycling. At no cost to communities, these partners provide specialized technical knowledge, research, and training to help stakeholders understand brownfields-related subject matter, and guide them through the brownfield assessment, clean-up and revitalization process.

In addition, EPA has a long-standing, 20+ year partnership with the National Park Service and Groundwork USA to support the establishment of community-based nonprofits known as Groundwork Trusts. These Groundwork Trusts engage people and communities to improve their environmental, economic, and social conditions, increase the likelihood of upward mobility, and improve health and overall quality of life. EPA also works with GW USA to help communities across the country integrate environmental justice and equitable development principles into local brownfield assessment, cleanup and reuse projects. EPA is funding GW USA to offer free workshops, trainings, technical assistance, and resources to assist communities with brownfield challenges. With this technical assistance, more communities can build their capacity to incorporate principles of equitable development and provide a more socially, economic, and environmentally sustainable future for residents. They can also preserve critical aspects of American heritage and culturally diverse neighborhoods.

Under EPA's Targeted Brownfields Assessment (TBA) program, EPA can assist communities by providing funding to assess site conditions, establish cleanup options, prepare cost estimates, and conduct community outreach. TBAs are considered a grant of services and are conducted by environmental consultants currently under contract with EPA.

For more information on these Brownfields Technical Assistance, Training and Research Partners, visit: www.epa.gov/brownfields/brownfields-technical-assistance-training-and-research

HIGHLIGHTS FROM BROWNFIELDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TIMELINE

EPA's Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program and the EJ movement evolved over a similar timeframe, fueling one another and helping to build strong communities. For more detail, visit EPA's webpage on [OBLR's Program History](#).

