

What are Brownfields?

Brownfields are former industrial or business properties where redevelopment or reuse may be complicated by the presence of, or potential for, health hazards or toxic chemicals. They are often found in low-income neighborhoods, such as industrial areas of inner cities. Developers may be concerned about being responsible for past contamination and high clean-up costs because these sites are often left abandoned and rundown.

However, brownfields properties can be cleaned up and reused for the benefit of a community. Government, businesses, and communities can work together to help remove some of the barriers to brownfields redevelopment while also protecting the environment and public health.

What are the benefits of redeveloping brownfields?

Developers can choose to redevelop a brownfield, or to build on never developed land called greenfields. When brownfield properties are redeveloped, contaminated land and rundown buildings are cleaned up and turned back into useful property. This can bring jobs, money, and energy back into the existing community. A brownfield property can become a park, a public service facility such as a clinic or library, or a successful business center that can revitalize neighborhoods and increase local property tax values.

What is the role of Public Health in brownfields redevelopment?

Environmental conditions can affect the mental and physical health of communities. Communities with brownfields are often concerned about contamination of soil, water, or air that may expose residents to unacceptable amounts of toxic chemicals. These communities want actions that promote economic redevelopment, clean up the environment, and protect the health and safety of local residents.

The level of environmental contamination at brownfields properties varies greatly. Residents, scientists, engineers, government agencies, lawyers, developers, and lending institutions can work together to ensure that public health is protected during every phase of a brownfield redevelopment. Local and state health departments evaluate community concerns, and health and environmental data to determine whether the property poses any health threats to the public before, during, and after clean up and redevelopment.



The Atlantic Steel Company before extensive brownfields redevelopment.

What is being done about brownfield sites in Georgia?

In January 1995, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) launched the Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative to encourage communities to redevelop brownfields sites. The goal of the Initiative is to create a safer and cleaner environment, new jobs, increased property tax values, protection of thousands of acres of greenfields, and a better community through redevelopment of abandoned land.

In 2002, the Georgia General Assembly adopted the Georgia Hazardous Site Reuse and Redevelopment Act (Brownfields Act). This law, along with a tax incentive passed in 2003 and amendment passed in 2005, has resulted in more purchasing and redevelopment of contaminated properties. Incentives to redevelop brownfields include:

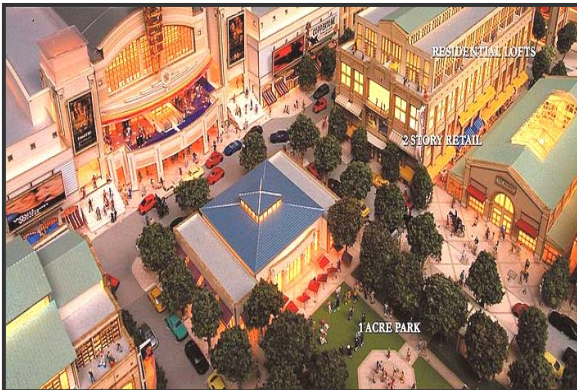
- Providing funds to state and local governments
- Removing barriers from liability that prevent redevelopment
- Developing partnerships
- Promoting the local workforce
- Job training for brownfield site cleanup
- Addressing environmental justice concerns

In Georgia, Brownfields redevelopment is both smart growth and pollution prevention. EPA's Brownfields Initiative promotes green building methods and materials during redevelopment. New and environmentally-friendly buildings on once contaminated land can encourage smart growth and promote healthy solutions for improving communities.

What is Georgia Public Health doing about Brownfields?

The Georgia Division of Public Health's role in brownfields redevelopment is to create and apply strategies to ensure that public health issues are considered early and throughout the brownfields redevelopment process.

Considering public health in brownfields redevelopment can reduce the potential for chemical exposures, encourage healthy behaviors, and improve quality of life. For example, turning a brownfield into green space can increase physical activity by introducing walking paths and playgrounds. As a result, the rates of diabetes, heart disease, and childhood obesity may be reduced. Green space may also help reduce vehicle traffic and, thus, air pollution, and the prevalence of asthma and other respiratory diseases. Redeveloping land that was once contaminated may improve the sense of well being in communities by involving residents in positive growth and change.



The Atlantic Station Live/Work/Play complex after extensive brownfields redevelopment.

For More Information

CHEMICAL HAZARDS PROGRAM

Environmental Health Branch

Georgia Division of Public Health

(404) 657-6534

www.health.state.ga.us/programs/hazards

Or visit:

GEORGIA'S BROWNFIELDS

**Georgia Environmental
Protection Division**

(404) 656-7802

www.gaepd.org/Documents/brownfields

BROWNFIELDS

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

www.epa.gov/brownfields

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BROWNFIELDS REDEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH



CHEMICAL HAZARDS PROGRAM

Environmental Health Branch



**GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY HEALTH**
Division of Public Health