

Newaygo County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is a brownfield?

A brownfield is 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.

What are some examples of brownfields?

Common examples of brownfields include former gas stations, dry cleaners, factories, bus depots and rail yards, vacant lots with illegal dumping, and other industrial or commercial sites.

What are the challenges of redeveloping brownfields?

Redevelopment can be hindered by environmental concerns, legal issues related to liability, and the cost of cleanup on the site. Sites may contain hazardous substances like asbestos, heavy metals, and petroleum and cleanup may require special techniques and strict regulatory standards. There may be unclear ownership of the property or title issues, expensive upfront costs, and limited financing options due to uncertainties of the site. Deteriorated or unsafe utilities and access issues can also hinder development potential.

What does a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority do?

A Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, sometimes abbreviated as “BRA” or referred to as “Authority,” facilitates redevelopment of brownfield properties by providing financial incentives, coordinating with stakeholders, and overseeing the cleanup process. A BRA can help incentivize a project through a brownfield plan, grants and loans, or incentives which may assist with redevelopment of a site while also supporting local goals and objectives to clean up and revitalize properties in the community.

What is the role of the Authority in the redevelopment process?

The Authority provides guidance, gives advice to landowners and developers, involves the community, reviews applications and plans, and ensures compliance with environmental regulations.

How does an Authority benefit the community?

An Authority can help incentivize brownfield sites with redevelopment which can revitalize blighted areas, create jobs, increase property values, and improve environmental conditions for the community.

What is the Local Brownfield Revolving Fund (LBRF)?

The LBRF is a fund used to support brownfield redevelopment activities, such as assessment, remediation, and infrastructure improvements. It is created through tax capture and can be used to provide grants, loans, or other financial assistance to developers.

How do I know if my property is eligible for financial incentives?

Properties that meet the definition of a brownfield and are located within the Authority's jurisdiction are eligible to be considered for financial incentives for development.

What are some examples of eligible activities for funding?

Eligible activities include such things as: environmental assessments (Ph I, Ph II, Baseline Environmental Assessment (BEA) and Due Care Plans, remediation, demolition, and public infrastructure improvements. In addition, housing projects are also eligible for financial incentives, under the 2023 amendment to Public Act 381, the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act.

What are the key factors for a successful brownfield redevelopment project?

Successful brownfield redevelopment projects require an understanding of the market, addressing environmental concerns on the site, conducting a financial feasibility analysis, and reasonable expectations on the timeline to complete the project.

Can the public provide feedback on proposed redevelopment projects?

Yes. The Authority holds regular meetings which are open to the public and provide opportunities for public comment. Additionally, citizens interested in serving on the Authority may fill out an application to be considered for appointment by the Board of Commissioners.

I'm interested in a property that may be contaminated. How can I apply for assistance to assess the property before I complete the purchase?

An application for assistance is available from the BRA and needs to be submitted along with an application fee. The application will provide needed information such as the suspected problems on the site, proposed redevelopment, budget, and timeline. Staff and the Authority then review this submission to determine what assistance may be available to help assess the property and move it toward redevelopment.

Who do I contact for more information on brownfields and assistance?

The Right Place in Grand Rapids is a business development organization which partners with the 690 County Economic Development Corporation to support economic development, job growth, and entrepreneurship across the county. This collaboration provides expertise and resources to the county and is a contact for business owners and developers. Additionally, the BRA's consultant, Fishbeck, provides resources and assistance related to brownfield sites, and information on financial incentives which can assist with redevelopment of challenging sites. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) are also good sources for information on brownfields:

<https://www.epa.gov/brownfields> and

<https://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/Remediation-and-Redevelopment/Brownfields>