

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

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Partnership Initiative For Reusing Petroleum Brownfields

Background

Over the past several years EPA, along with many state and local leaders, made a commitment to sustainable development and preserving green space by cleaning up and making available for reuse contaminated properties, particularly those in economically distressed communities. EPA is helping to move toward this goal in many ways, such as providing grant money to state and local governments for assessment and cleanup. EPA awarded over 500 brownfields grants to communities to address properties contaminated with hazardous substances and 50 USTfields grants to states to address petroleum contaminated brownfield properties. As a result of the new Brownfields Law, many more petroleum contaminated sites will now be assessed, cleaned up, and available for reuse. The new Brownfields Law requires that 25 percent of the grant money available each year be awarded for petroleum brownfields. These grants provide seed money that will help states and communities more quickly address low risk petroleum contaminated properties with potential for reuse.

Partnership Strategy

EPA's goal is to increase cleanup and reuse opportunities for petroleum contaminated brownfields properties by creating partnerships with public and private entities that will help to prevent the creation of new brownfields and lead to the reuse of existing brownfields. We will build on the successful public/private sector partnerships EPA developed for other programs.

One of the key elements of a successful reuse of a brownfield site is to create a demand for the property. In order to accomplish this, EPA must ultimately bring the public and private property owners together with the public and private end-users who may want to use the property. EPA is reaching out to the public and private sector including: end users; developers; property owners; federal, state and local organizations; tribes; and non-profits who are interested in establishing partnerships to promote the cleanup of brownfield properties and to stimulate the reuse of these properties.

EPA's strategy is to partner with public and private sector organizations who may be interested in reusing petroleum contaminated properties. Our goal is to get large and small public and private entities to incorporate into their every day decision making a greater emphasis on the environment, particularly on ways to promote cleanup and reuse of former petroleum brownfields properties. We envision developing at least one partnership in each of the following four reuse scenarios this year: (1) retail/commercial; (2) residential; (3) ecological/recreational (e.g. parks); or (4) community/public purposes (e.g., fire stations).

The Agency believes there are numerous benefits from such partnerships. Under formal and/or informal agreements between EPA and public and private partners, each partner would offer something different to promote reuse of former petroleum brownfields properties.

For example, EPA could provide some assistance to address obstacles and challenges (e.g., administrative/process, liability, information and funding) to cleaning up and reusing these properties including:

Environmental Information: Property listing of communities with USTfields pilots and brownfields grants as well as available assessment and cleanup information.

Tools to Facilitate Cleanup and Reuse: EPA has developed, and is continuing to develop, enforcement and compliance tools to help clarify liability issues that facilitate cleanup and subsequent redevelopment of a site. These tools may include exploring the potential of Ready for Reuse determinations for property owners who are not eligible for federal brownfields grants but are nevertheless interested in clean up and reuse of petroleum brownfields properties; comfort letters; multi-site cleanup agreements.

Facilitation: Provide federal assistance to promote cleanup and reuse of petroleum contaminated brownfields properties. Often developers and end users identify timing as a crucial factor in siting decisions. EPA can work at the federal, state, and local level to identify process issues and help resolve them quickly. Showcasing models of past success can provide valuable lessons for communities new to reuse/revitalization.

Public Recognition: EPA could provide corporate-wide or site-specific recognition to partners who make a commitment to reusing petroleum contaminated properties. EPA will promote this public recognition to all stakeholders so the award becomes meaningful and desired by other entities as a symbol of their good corporate citizen attitude.

EPA will work with each partner to make a public commitment to cleaning up and reusing formerly contaminated petroleum brownfields properties. For example, a private sector partner could make reuse of petroleum contaminated brownfields properties a significant factor in its market strategy and commit to reusing formerly contaminated properties. Similarly, public or private sector partners could share information on obstacles they faced and solutions they used to clean up and reuse petroleum contaminated brownfields properties.

Through such partnerships, EPA and public and private organizations would work together to help build community good will, promote the organization's commitment to a cleaner environment and the preservation of green spaces for future generations, exemplify public-

private sector cooperation, demonstrate high ethics and nationalism, and represent a demonstrated reinvestment in America.

Retail/Commercial Partnership

EPA is looking for private sector partnerships with companies willing to promote retail/commercial reuses by locating and opening new operations on petroleum contaminated brownfields properties. Through a partnership with EPA, private sector entities could commit to a company-wide goal of locating a certain percentage of its planned new shops/businesses on petroleum contaminated brownfields properties. Alternatively, the company may identify site-specific petroleum contaminated brownfield properties and commit to locate new operations on the specified sites.

EPA could provide public recognition (either corporate-wide or site-specific applauding the commitment to reuse petroleum contaminated brownfields properties and help preserve green space), participate in a grand opening, provide an award such as a plaque that could be displayed in the store, and highlight the success story on EPA's web page. EPA could also help facilitate the cleanup at specific sites identified by our partners to help remove bureaucratic barriers, facilitate quicker cleanup and reuse, and meet the needs of all stakeholders involved.

Residential/Housing Partnership

To promote residential development and housing, EPA is working with Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Habitat for Humanity International, and other associations. EPA is looking to develop an expanded partnership to further promote residential/housing reuse. Under this partnership, EPA and its partners would work together to leverage public and private resources, streamline petroleum contaminated brownfield site cleanups which target abandoned gas stations, and create an opportunity to reuse these properties for public and private housing.

Under this partnership EPA, HUD, and other stakeholders would work together to accelerate the cleanup and revitalization of 15-30 abandoned gas station sites in two or more cities that have been identified as an environmental priority and land use target. This partnership could be completed in phases. In the first phase, EPA, HUD, and other stakeholders would designate certain communities as residential partnership pilots after considering among other things, site characteristics, market conditions, and stakeholder interest and involvement. In the second phase, EPA and HUD would work with other stakeholders to facilitate federal coordination and integrate cleanup and revitalization activities to help ensure timely cleanup and reuse. In the third phase, EPA working with each of the partners, would evaluate the success of the pilot for future application.

Ecological/Recreational Partnership

EPA has an established partnership with the Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) to promote ecological/recreational reuse at petroleum contaminated brownfields properties. WHC is committed to facilitating the ecological/recreational reuse of petroleum contaminated properties. WHC provides design expertise to maximize the ecological benefit of the reuse and can bring together all the key parties in a community to help reuse petroleum contaminated properties for parks, wetlands, and other ecological and recreational uses.

EPA wants to expand this partnership to other private and public sector entities to focus on abandoned gas stations and other petroleum contaminated lands. Public and private sector partners could invest in communities by reusing abandoned gas stations and other brownfields properties for ecological/recreational purposes.

Public Partnership

Since petroleum brownfields grants are a new source of funding for state and local governments, EPA would like to build broader partnerships with state and local governments as well as site-specific partnerships to assist in the cleanup and reuse of abandoned petroleum contaminated brownfield properties for all four reuse scenarios. Under such partnerships, EPA, states, and local entities would transfer lessons learned from experienced communities to those just beginning to assess their petroleum contaminated brownfields properties, as well as explore opportunities to leverage resources from EPA brownfields grants, state petroleum trust funds, and the private sector.

EPA is also looking to promote the reuse of formerly contaminated petroleum brownfield properties for public purposes, such as police and fire stations, libraries or other public uses by building on EPA's successful USTfields program. For example, at the USTfields pilot in Trenton, New Jersey, EPA, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the New Jersey Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund, and the City of Trenton worked together to clean up 1.5 acres of petroleum contaminated soil and construct a new fire station at the site. EPA wants to establish partnerships with interested state, local, and private sector partners to replicate this success at other properties addressed under an USTfields pilot and at properties addressed by future petroleum brownfields grant recipients.

For More Information

Contact Steven McNeely at 703-603-7164 or mcneely.steven@epa.gov for more information about partnerships for reusing petroleum brownfields properties.