

Brownfield Frequently Asked Questions

What is a brownfield?

The Region defines a brownfield as "a property which contained environmental contamination either in the ground or buildings due to the operational activities of a previous land use, where the extent of the contamination rendered the property vacant, under-utilized, unsafe, unproductive, or abandoned". Brownfields are often old industrial sites, closed service stations, dry cleaners, junkyards, factories or foundries that have stayed unused or underdeveloped since the time that the original industry or commercial enterprise closed.

Redevelopment of brownfield sites is often complicated by the potential or actual presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant, which can result in additional costs and liability for potential investors and developers. Brownfields are often located in older areas of a city or community, where industrialization first occurred and this underutilization of space can prevent older areas of a community, such as the downtown core, from reaching their full potential today.

How do federal and provincial legislation impact the redevelopment of brownfield sites?

Federal and provincial legislation impact how environmental site clean-ups (site remediation) are carried out and the environmental standards to which the site must be returned. The Canadian Council for Ministers of the Environment (CCME) have established guidelines for levels of site contaminants, such as heavy metals and petroleum products, that are acceptable, given the future use of the site and the presence of drinkable groundwater in the area. The Record of Site Condition Regulation (O. Reg. 153/04), as amended, details the requirements of site assessments and clean-up procedures.

Federal and Provincial Governments also help fund and operate their own brownfield incentive programs.

How are brownfield sites cleaned before redevelopment?

Contaminated brownfield properties must undergo site remediation (clean-up) to restore them to background conditions or prescribed legislated levels of contaminants before undergoing redevelopment activities. Remediation involves investigating the site through the Environmental Site Assessment process, which is designed to characterize the contamination levels and patterns on the site to facilitate remediation.

Environmental Site Assessments are carried out to understand and remediate contaminated sites back to acceptable levels, as set out by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME). The environmental Site Assessment process is broken into Phases 1 to 6, although sometimes a site will not require all Phases to be completed, depending on levels of

contamination and remediation goals. For more information on the Environmental Site Assessments and the Contaminated Sites Remediation Framework, click [here](#).

What is a Record of Site Condition?

The Record of Site Condition is filed in the Environmental Site Registry after the property has been assessed and shown to meet the soil, sediment and groundwater standards appropriate for the use that has been proposed for the property. A Record of Site Condition provides protection from environment cleanup orders for property owners. For more information on Records of Site Condition in Ontario, click [here](#).

What role do municipalities play in brownfield redevelopment? What incentives are available?

Municipalities have several roles when it comes to the facilitation of brownfield remediation and redevelopment. For example, some municipalities offer assistance related to the coordination of development application review and approvals. Others may help interested developers identify sites of opportunity within the community. Many municipalities also offer a range of incentives to help developers overcome the financial challenges associated with these sites.