

Brownfields and Environmental Justice Timeline

The EPA Brownfields Program has a rich history rooted in environmental justice. The Brownfields Program and the environmental justice movement have evolved over a similar timeline, fueling one another and helping to build strong communities.

- 1982 Residents of Warren County, NC protest construction of a hazardous waste landfill in the predominantly African-American community, bringing environmental justice issues into the national spotlight
- 1987 The United Church of Christ publishes *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States*
- 1991 The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit is held
- Cuyahoga County Community College Environmental Justice Grant
- 1993 Cuyahoga County Planning Commission receives first EPA Brownfields Pilot
- 1994 Executive Order 12898 requires that each federal agency make achieving environmental justice part of its mission
- 1995 EPA awards additional Brownfields Pilots to 22 communities
- EPA and NEJAC convene public dialogues to provide stakeholders an opportunity to express concerns related to brownfields and public health
- 1996 NEJAC publishes *Environmental Justice, Urban Revitalization, and Brownfields: The Search for Authentic Signs of Hope* highlighting recommendations to EPA raised through the public dialogues on how to develop the Brownfields Program
- 1997 The Puyallup and Navajo Nation become the first Tribes to receive Brownfields funding
- 1998 EPA awards first Job Training Pilots
- First 16 Brownfields Showcase Communities are designated, providing resources and support from more than 15 federal agencies to address local revitalization issues
- 1999 EPA develops *Civil Rights Act Title VI Case Studies* report
- 2002 “Brownfields Law” signed; statute includes requirements to address environmental justice; nonprofit organizations are eligible to receive funding
- 2005 EPA brings environmental justice and community representatives together to develop the All Appropriate Inquiry Final Rule
- EPA awards Job Training grants to Mississippi DEQ and Southern University to recruit and train residents in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina
- Brownfields Program begins providing Targeted Brownfields Assessment funding to EPA’s Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) grantees
- 2006 NEJAC publishes *Unintended Impacts of Redevelopment and Revitalization Efforts in Five Environmental Justice Communities* highlighting concerns of gentrification and displacement in brownfield communities
- 2007 Brownfields Program contributes to EPA Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response *Environmental Justice Action Plan*
- EPA awards first round of Training, Research, and Technical Assistance grants focused on environmental justice issues
- EPA convenes nonprofit cleanup roundtables to assist nonprofit organizations in building capacity to address environmental issues
- 2009 To date, 78 Tribes and 90 nonprofit organizations have received Brownfields funding

Redevelopment for Affordable Housing

Using EPA funding to help provide affordable housing helps to prevent displacement of current residents. The Redevelopment Agency of the City of Oakland, California used an EPA Brownfields Cleanup grant to help turn a former commercial and industrial property into 80 units of affordable housing for local residents. The complex integrates green building design and eco-friendly materials.



Future Opportunities to Measure and Promote Environmental Justice

The data presented in this brochure affirm efforts by EPA’s Brownfields Program to serve communities most in need. However, additional data and analysis are needed to gain a clearer understanding of how the demographic and socioeconomic composition of communities has evolved as a result of Brownfields funding. Ultimately, this analysis is a first step in determining if the program is serving low-income and minority communities, as it was designed to do. EPA hopes to conduct future analyses of communities that have received EPA funding to correlate 2000 census data with 2010 census data. This information collection will help OBLR determine ways to enhance the program to better serve the American public.

EPA Cleanups in My Community:

Mapping and listing tool that shows sites where pollution is being or has been cleaned up:
iaspub.epa.gov/Cleanups/

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Addressing Environmental Justice in EPA Brownfields Communities



“In communities that are under economic stress, particularly low-income areas that have experienced long periods of disinvestment and decay, successful revitalization takes more than a focus on individual properties. Revitalization requires a hard look at the surrounding area in order to establish a comprehensive area-wide plan that identifies reuses that both meet the needs of the local community and that incorporate the elements of public improvements and infrastructure that are necessary to attract private investment.”

—Mathy Stanislaus
Assistant Administrator
for Solid Waste and Emergency Response

“Brownfields Law” Aims to Serve Communities in Need

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) Brownfields Program provides funding to help communities revitalize their contaminated lands. The Program’s grants and technical assistance give communities, states, tribes, and other stakeholders the resources they need to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. The Brownfields Program is authorized under the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act, which amended CERCLA. The “Brownfields Law” is one of the few environmental statutes, if not the only, that specifically addresses environmental justice in plain terms. The law requires that during the grant evaluation process, EPA take into consideration “the extent to which the grant would 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 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.”

Job Training Programs Train Residents of Brownfield Communities

The Brownfields Job Training Program seeks to ensure that the economic benefits derived from brownfields redevelopment remains with affected residents. The Absentee Shawnee Tribe successfully developed a brownfields job training program. More than 100 students have learned the skills necessary to obtain employment in local brownfield assessment and cleanup projects and many have been placed in remediation jobs cleaning up tribal land.



Demographic Analysis of EPA Brownfields Communities

Census Block Groups with EPA-funded Brownfields Properties (2000)		Census Block Groups Nationwide (2000)
Attribute	Average	Average
Poverty Rate Percentage	20.1%	12.4%
Minority Population Percentage	37.9%	30.9%
Vacant Residential Unit Percentage	11.5%	9.0%
Per Capita Income	\$16,693	\$21,587

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

The Unintended Impacts of Brownfields Revitalization

In 2006, EPA, in coordination with the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) Waste and Facility Siting Subcommittee, published a report entitled *Unintended Impacts of Redevelopment and Revitalization Efforts in Five Environmental Justice Communities*. This report examined concerns that EPA’s Brownfields Program may unintentionally exacerbate historical gentrification and displacement of low-income and minority communities through the cleanup of brownfields. This report and the dialogue it created was important because it raised new concerns and brought this issue to light. It led EPA to more carefully consider unintended impacts of redevelopment during its evaluation of cleanup grant proposals and to be more conscientious of potential unintended impacts throughout the brownfields revitalization process.

Measuring Success

Many communities lack the resources needed to initiate brownfields cleanup and redevelopment projects, so EPA funding helps build project momentum where communities can leverage additional funding and resources to revitalize their brownfields. A unique aspect of the Brownfields Program is that it empowers local communities to address economic, environmental, public health, and social issues associated with brownfields from a cross-disciplinary approach. Serving low-income and minority communities is done in part by providing funding to underserved communities. In order to determine if EPA Brownfields grants have been awarded to the intended communities, OBLR compared four demographic attributes of Brownfields grant communities to those of the national average (see table 1).¹ This analysis illustrates and confirms that EPA Brownfields grants go to the types of communities the program was originally designed to help. Demographic data from the 2000 U.S. Census, the most recent complete Census data available, was used

in this analysis. EPA used the LandView tool to obtain Census Block Group data² based on geographic information in the EPA ACRES database for more than 3,000 properties that were reported by grantees to have benefitted from EPA Brownfields funding as of January 2008, including assessment, cleanup, and revolving loan fund grants, as well as targeted brownfields assessment resources.

During both the evaluation of grant proposals and when working with communities throughout their cooperative agreements, EPA helps to educate staff and communities on the importance of integrating principles of equitable development into the cleanup and redevelopment of brownfields. Some of these principles include: the creation of affordable housing, working with minority- and women-owned businesses and environmental contracting firms, creating first source hiring ordinances, ensuring jobs with living wages, partnering with local land trusts, creating commercial linkage strategies, redeveloping brownfields into nonprofit purposes such as clinics and parks, and developing resident shareholding models. These principles help to ensure that low- and moderate-income families are not displaced following redevelopment and that communities historically plagued with blighted properties and environmental contamination reap the benefits of environmental cleanup. With technical assistance from EPA, communities across the country are beginning to realize that incorporating principles of equitable development provides a more socially, economic, and environmentally sustainable future for the community while oftentimes preserving critical aspects of American heritage and culturally diverse neighborhoods.

¹ For an additional description of Census data, and to see the original data in its entirety, please visit www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html
² For a definition of Census Block Group, please visit www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf1.pdf, page A-8