

Environmental Issues Associated with Brownfields

There may be environmental issues associated with a brownfield property based on the historic use of such property. For example: former service stations may leave behind petroleum products, such as waste oil and fuels; dry cleaners use solvents; structures may be impacted by lead based paint and/or asbestos; based on the processes used and products made, manufacturing facilities may be impacted by heavy metals, solvents and other persistent organic chemicals; grain storage facilities as well as former grocery stores and orchards may have used arsenate containing pesticides. Contamination may also come from activities on nearby properties.

Contaminants may be harmful to humans and the environment and may hinder redevelopment, unless they are evaluated and, if needed, addressed. The first step in finding out if a property is potentially impacted by contaminants due to its historic use, is to perform what is called an Environmental Site Assessment.



This resource is made possible via a grant from ATSDR (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry) to facilitate redevelopment of blighted, potentially contaminated properties to improve community health and quality of life in Panhandle communities.

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Brownfields and Site Assessments





What is a Brownfield?

A brownfield typically is a commercial or industrial property that is vacant, abandoned, or underutilized, and may be impacted by hazardous substances, pollutants, or other contaminants.

What is an Environmental Site Assessment?

An environmental site assessment (ESA) will answer the following questions:

- Is the property impacted by contaminants?
- What contaminants are present?
- Are the concentrations of these contaminants such that the site need to be cleaned up prior to redevelopment?

Why do I need an ESA?

Buyers

You may not want to take on a contaminated property. Benefits of Phase I ESAs prior to purchase include:

- Liability protection regarding existing contamination prior to purchase
- Banks will not loan on commercial/ industrial property without a Phase I in hand.

Sellers

- A Phase I and Phase II ESA, if needed, may help you market your property. Contamination is often just perception, and site assessments may show that a property is not as contaminated as commonly believed or not contaminated at all.
- If there is contamination, the ability to quantify it with a Phase II ESA is beneficial in that now the cost of any necessary cleanup can be established, which will help you and the buyer move forward.

Phase I and Phase II Site Assessments

Phase I ESA: involves the review of records; a visual inspection of the property; and interviews with current and/or past owners, occupants, operators, and local government officials to identify the presence or likely presence of any hazardous substances or petroleum products in, on, or at a property.

Phase II ESA: involves sampling activities and laboratory analyses to validate or dismiss the presence of hazardous substances identified in the Phase I ESA.

Environmental site assessments must be performed by a trained and experienced environmental professional, according to the appropriate standards (ASTM, AAI).

Resources for Brownfield ESAs

A unit of local government may apply for free site assessments from NDEQ (Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality) or EPA. The unit of local government cannot have caused or contributed to the contamination at the site.

If you are a private entity, but the redevelopment of your property is in the interest of your community, your local government or a unit of local government can apply for free site assessments of your property from NDEQ or EPA. You will need to grant access to your property via a written access agreement.