WHAT ARE BROWNFIELDS?

The Need
Many areas across the country, once used for industrial and commercial purposes, sit abandoned or underutilized. Some of these properties are contaminated, while some are only assumed to have environmental problems. These properties are considered brownfields. They are real properties - the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence, or potential presence, of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. The U.S. is home to between 500,000 to 1,000,000 brownfield sites.

Because lenders, investors, and developers fear that they may be required to cleanup a site’s environmental problems they did not create, formerly undeveloped areas, called “greenfields”, are often more attractive for new developments. This may result in otherwise viable properties becoming blighted areas of the community, potentially creating public safety and health risks.

Objective
The Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower states, cities, tribes, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to assess, safely cleanup, and sustainably reuse brownfields.

Activities
The EPA’s Brownfields Initiative identifies and addresses barriers to cleanup and redevelopment. It recommends swift, aggressive measures for change within the context of the existing Superfund law. Milestones in this initiative include:

- Brownfields Assessment Grants
- Brownfields Cleanup Grants
- Iowa DNR Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund
- Iowa Economic Development Authority Iowa River Landing Reinvestment District Program Grant
- Iowa DOT Clean Air Attainment Program IRP RISE PROJECT GRANT
- Workforce development in communities with brownfields
- Clarification of liability issues for owners and buyers of brownfields sites

QUICK FACTS

BROWNFIELDS are 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.

Coralville has received 13 EPA Brownfields Assessment Grants totaling over $2.2 million.

With EPA funding, Coralville has completed:
- More than 150 Phase I & Phase II Environmental Site Assessments
- Cleanup on more than 12 properties

In 2013, Coralville received two more EPA Brownfields Assessment Grants: $200,000 for Hazardous Substances and $182,000 for Petroleum.

In 2012, Coralville received Iowa Economic Development Authority Brownfields Tax Credit: $1,810,000

In 2011, Coralville received Iowa DNR Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund (2011) - $470,000 for sustainable infrastructure elements design and construction
Brownfield Assessment Grants

As of April 2017, EPA Brownfield grants nationwide have led to:

- Assessment of over 26,722 properties
- Over 67,000 acres made ready for anticipated reuse
- $23.6 billion dollars leveraged
- Over 124,300 jobs

In May of 2017, the Fiscal Year 2018 Budget in Brief, provided by the EPA, announced the Presidential Budget has allocated $16 million in funding for Brownfields programs.

For More Information:

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Brownfields Liability
Under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act and amendments (CERCLA/Superfund), new buyers or current owners of a property can be held responsible (or liable) for correcting past environmental problems. However, the EPA recognizes that undiscovered conditions could remain hidden until after a property is purchased. Since 2002, the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act provides liability protection. The Act established standards to conduct “all appropriate inquiries” on properties prior to purchase.

Environmental Site Assessments
Information is necessary to identify if a property is contaminated or not. Common sense tells us that every property with a prior industrial or commercial use does not necessarily require environmental cleanup. Further, it would be impractical to go to every brownfield site and collect samples for laboratory analysis. So how are properties assessed for contamination? Where do we begin?

Phase I ESAs
A Phase I ESA is a preliminary stage which assesses a potentially contaminated property. A Phase I investigation primarily involves records research and onsite visual observations. Often, persons/particles performing Phase I will contact the property owners to ask about previous known uses of the land. No physical sampling or testing is done during this phase.

Phase I ESAs are performed to identify recognized environmental conditions (RECs) in which a real or potentially real release of hazardous and/or petroleum materials has or may have occurred. Identification of a REC does not mean that contamination has occurred or, if it has, that it requires cleanup. Conducting Phase I ESAs provides essential information to provide liability protection to current and prospective property owners; and help decide where actual testing should occur when necessary.

Phase II ESAs
If RECs are found on a property, a Phase II ESA may be performed to physically test the site. A Phase II ESA includes sampling of the soil and groundwater to identify the types, concentrations, and extent of potential contamination. If samples are found to have higher than acceptable contamination levels (according to state and federal standards), cleanup of the site may be necessary.

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The Iowa River Landing Revitalization Area

Coralville’s primary brownfields area, the Iowa River Landing Revitalization Area, is rather extensive. It encompasses approximately 180 acres on the east side of First Avenue and an estimated 60 acres on the west. It is this area that the City has identified as the best opportunity for the use of funds, the best redevelopment potential, and economic payback in the city. The Iowa River Landing Revitalization Area has excellent potential for redevelopment as a commercial district, it boasts good access to Interstate 80, U.S. Highway 6 and the local CRANDIC railroad. Redeveloping this area serves as a feasible option to combat urban sprawl.

Future development in Coralville is limited to currently active agricultural production land, vacant land within residential areas, and brownfield areas. The main sources of infill development land are the existing brownfield sites. However, redevelopment of these areas is hindered by perceived environmental contamination, which the brownfield assessments attempt to address.

Background on Coralville’s Brownfields Program

In 1998, the City of Coralville received its first EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant. This pilot program grant for $200,000 assisted the City in identifying brownfield properties in the targeted area, which was an old industrial park. Since that time, the City has received two Supplemental Assistance Grants for $100,000 each, as well as additional sets of Brownfields Assessment Grants totaling over $2 million. Along with federal funding, the City has also received funding from the Iowa Economic Development Authority in the form of grants and loans for assessments and cleanup of various properties.

Current Brownfields Grants

In 2013, the City of Coralville received two grants, one for hazardous substances for $200,000 and one for petroleum for $182,000, from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These grants are being used to assess properties in all six of Coralville’s Brownfield Zones, perform community outreach activities, oversee the projects, and maintain an online electronic brownfields database for public access and use.
It Can’t Be Done Without YOU
Community involvement is a necessary and vital part to the success of the City of Coralville’s Brownfields Program. We need to reach members of the public to adequately have an understanding of our community’s needs. YOU can help us determine the needs of our community and help shape our future.

YOUR needs are important in leading us in the right direction. We want to know what you envision for Coralville’s brownfield areas. We will work to incorporate the public’s ideas into the overall redevelopment plan to create jobs, generate tax revenues, and attract new residents and businesses.

How YOU Can Get Involved
The EPA requires that cities receiving brownfields grant money involve members of the community by providing opportunities for brownfield redevelopment education. The following opportunities are available to you:

- Public meetings
- Printed fact sheets
- City e-newsletter
- City website with brownfield news, maps, and updates
- Newspaper public notices
- Public comment periods
- Contact persons

How YOU Can Help
You can learn more about the ways you can get involved in Coralville’s Brownfields redevelopment by contacting the City of Coralville Brownfields Project Coordinator, Hannah Neel, at (319) 248-1720 or by email at brownfields@coralville.org. Any property within Coralville is eligible for assessment.

Keep an eye out for Coralville’s e-newsletter, The Beat, and the City of Coralville’s website for brownfield-related updates. Your suggestions and ideas are important to us as we work to assess, remediate, and redevelop the brownfields areas in Coralville.
Current Brownfields Grants
Ongoing and future brownfield activity will be paid for by the two existing brownfield grants the city has that were received in 2013. These two grants are valid until the end of Federal Fiscal Year 2017.

Coralville’s Brownfields Zones
With previous EPA Brownfields Grants, the City of Coralville mainly focused on assessing and cleaning up properties in its Brownfield Zones 1, 2, and 3 (these properties make up Coralville’s former industrial park area). As of now, Coralville’s six brownfield zones contain over 330 acres of property that has been or will potentially be assessed in the future. Additionally, for city-wide testing with EPA approval. To date, there have been three properties assessed that do not fall into any of the zones as seen in the map above.

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