U.S. EPA

Community Reuse Property Prioritization Tool

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U.S. EPA COMMUNITY REUSE PROPERTY PRIORITIZATION TOOL

Introduction

Developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Land Revitalization Team, the Community Reuse Property Prioritization Tool is designed to help communities identify and select of brownfields for potential reuse. The Tool is designed to help communities prioritize properties based on a specific reuse plan. Additionally, the Tool supports communities in developing a low-level inventory that can be used to prioritize brownfields for future assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment by capturing information that will help estimate the complexity of such activities. The Community Reuse Property Prioritization Tool is a spreadsheet that can be filled out by community leaders and/or stakeholders who can solicit input from community representatives, property owners and other parties to gather applicable information.

The information collected can help the User identify possible impediments to reuse, such as:

- Properties with poor access,
- Properties where control may be difficult to obtain (e.g., privately owned), and
- Environmental contamination or buildings that may be cost-prohibitive to address.

The Community Reuse Property Prioritization Tool can also be used to identify properties that are strong candidates for reuse, including those that:

- Are close to population centers,
- Have existing infrastructure that would facilitate reuse (e.g., buildings, utilities, road access),
- Have historical significance,
- Are owned by the community, and
- Offer minimal environmental constraints.

How to Use the Outputs from this Tool

Using the information collected in the Community Reuse Property Prioritization Tool, community leaders and stakeholders can make more informed decisions on which properties to pursue and focus attention on those with the greatest potential for successful reuse. It should be noted that, while helpful in making general prioritization decisions, the outputs of the Tool **should not be used independently or as the primary reuse decision-making tool at any property**. The property owners, community representatives, investors and developers that will ultimately make reuse planning and investment decisions should base these decisions on their own unique drivers, detailed valuation tools, and local knowledge of the property.

The Community Reuse properties Prioritization Tool was based on two more comprehensive tools that support property analysis and reuse decisions. If additional work and higher levels of detail are needed to support a review of risk assessment, property analysis, or redevelopment opportunities, please consider utilizing these reuse planning tools:

- EPA PREPARED Workbook: This tool is designed to help municipal officials facilitate the cleanup and redevelopment of contaminated properties. The information in this Workbook should also be useful to tribes, county and state governments, and quasi-governmental entities such as economic development corporations.

- West Virginia Decision Enhancer: The purpose of the Decision Enhancer Tool (DET) is to facilitate the redevelopment of potentially contaminated, underutilized and/or abandoned properties. The DET helps communities consider land reuse options and think about future uses for complex properties that are economically and environmentally sustainable.

User Guide

The remainder of this document provides guidance on each question presented in the Community Reuse properties Prioritization Tool, which is organized into three tabs within an Excel Workbook:

1. Current Status
2. History & Environmental (Env) Conditions
3. Reuse Planning

The Workbook allows users to collect and evaluate information for up to 10 properties within a community, and up to three parcels per brownfield.

1. Current Use Tab

The **Current Use** Tab is designed to capture the current state of the property and basic property and parcel level information, to provide high-level overview of property features.

How many properties would you like to evaluate?	Identify how many properties will be entered in this Workbook (1-10 properties). Information for up to 10 properties can be stored within one Workbook, and up to three parcels per property.

Property Level Information

Property Name	Add the most commonly used name of the property. The property name will carry through to all other tabs.
Property Point of Contact (name, phone number)	Enter the name and phone number for the primary point of contact for the property. This is person who can best help fill information gaps or will have a primary role in the property's redevelopment.
Address	List the property's address, including town and state.
Brief Description of the Property's Current Use	Note whether the property is currently being used or vacant, and the general type of land use (e.g., gas station, parking lot, retail store, multi-family housing).
Brief Description of the Property's Physical Characteristics	Provide a qualitative description of the property's physical characteristics, including topographic features, water bodies/wetlands, structures, infrastructure, and access. This description should give a picture of the property to someone that has not seen it. Be as descriptive as possible to help with future discussions.
Current Zoning	Zoning plays an important role in establishing cleanup goals and property reuse. Zoning definitions vary from community to community. When identifying this information, be sure to read the zoning regulation to understand what uses are allowed on the property.
Property Size (Acres)	N/A – a formula will calculate the acreage for the property, based on parcel-specific information entered in the next section.
Number of Buildings	N/A – a formula will calculate the number of buildings on the property, based on parcel-specific information entered in the next section.
Number of Aboveground Storage Tanks	N/A – a formula will calculate the number of aboveground storage tanks on the property, based on parcel-specific information entered in the next section.
Number of Underground Storage Tanks	N/A – a formula will calculate the number of underground storage tanks on the property, based on parcel-specific information entered in the next section.

Parcel Level Information

Begin by entering information for "Parcel 1." If the property does not have multiple parcels, the information entered for Parcel 1 will represent the full property. If the property has multiple parcels, on Row 36, enter "yes" and a duplicate set of blank cells will appear for Parcel 2. You can enter information for up to three parcels at a property.

Tax Map Parcel Number(s)	Tax map parcel numbers should be captured by the county/local tax assessor. If the information is not available online, you can call your tax assessor and provide the address and/or owner name.
Current Owner	Record the current owner name.
Owner Contact Information	Record current owner's contact information.
Address (if different from property address)	List the known address for the parcel if different from the general property address.
Parcel Size (Acres)	List the parcel size in acres (can be obtained from the tax map if needed).
Other Identifying Information	Use this to record any additional information or observations that can help identify features of the parcel, or may be relevant in making future reuse decisions.
Number of Buildings/Structures	Provide a count of the number of buildings/structures on the parcel. Additionally, add a brief description of the buildings (condition, location, foundation, construction materials). Also indicate if any of the buildings are of historical importance. Building and property information is available from local property records, recorded deeds, assessor cards, and by observation. Note: The PREPARED Workbook (pages 35-37) provides additional information for understanding historical importance of buildings, but states that, "The requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) must be kept in mind if any federal funds or federal permits are used to assess, clean up, or redevelop the property. Common federal agencies that are involved in funding or permitting include EPA, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Commerce, Department of Agriculture – Rural Development Administration, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Be aware that federal funding or a federal license, permit or approval may trigger compliance with the review and consultation requirements of the NHPA."
Number of Aboveground Storage Tanks	Record the number of aboveground storage tanks, if any, on the parcel.
Number of Underground Storage Tanks	Record the number of underground storage tanks, if any, on the parcel. The state environmental agency may have records of registration based on the size of the tank. Past property owners may also have information.

Is there clear title to the property?	Yes/No/Unknown *If no or unknown, describe*. Complicated and time-consuming efforts to resolve title and ownership questions can be a "deal breaker" for reuse. Municipalities may be able to remove this potential impediment (e.g., foreclosure, other means) by obtaining clear title.
Is there another parcel on the property?	If yes, respond to these parcel questions again, for an additional parcel on the property.

2. History & Environmental (Env) Conditions Tab

The purpose of this tab is to understand the property's history. Historical uses and activities can offer information about the types and locations of potential contaminants on the property, which affect the property's potential reuse.

The PREPARED Workbook helps explain why historical property information is important in reuse decisions on page 33: "In addition to being important sources of historical information, past owners and tenants also may have a regulatory responsibility to conduct investigations or corrective action. Under the Superfund law, for example, owners and operators at the time of disposal of hazardous substances may have liability for response costs. In some situations, particularly those involving abandoned properties, past owners or tenants may cooperate in performing, funding, or co-funding due diligence assessments or cleanup."

Potential sources of information on the property's historical uses include Sanborn maps, aerial photographs, municipal records, and state and federal regulatory agency records. The information can be gathered through a review of property records, interviews, and information provided by prior property owners. Additional environmental information may be available in property specific environmental assessments, as well as state environmental agency records.

Information captured on this tab will help identify environmental concerns prior to redevelopment. General property characteristics identified here can help determine what and how much can be built on a parcel of land. Some of the information will be subjective and should be used only for general information purposes. This tool, and the information it helps collect, should not be used exclusively to make a reuse decision or prioritize a property for redevelopment. All information collected should be vetted with community representatives interested in pursuing this project, as well as the appropriate state and federal environmental agencies.

History

Who were the prior owners and tenants of the property?	Past owners are important sources of historical information, and may also have a regulatory responsibility to conduct investigations or take corrective action.
What prior land uses and activities may have resulted in environmental concerns?	Historical uses and activities can provide valuable clues regarding the types and locations of potential contaminants on the property and can help focus additional environmental investigations. List the activities in separate rows (up to four activities) and *note the years in which each activity occurred*. Sources of historical information include Sanborn maps, aerial photographs, municipal records, and state and federal regulatory agency records.
Number of Aboveground Storage Tanks	N/A: this information will automatically populate from the information entered in the Current Use Tab.
Number of Underground Storage Tanks	N/A: this information will automatically populate from the information entered in the Current Use Tab.

Environmental Conditions

Describe environmental conditions on the property (including conditions stemming from the use of asbestos, lead-paint and other hazardous materials in structures).	Known Conditions: List all known environmental conditions that have either been identified through environmental investigation or recorded with an agency. Suspected Conditions: List all suspected environmental conditions (based on historic use, onsite structures, or other historic information) that have not yet have been confirmed by an environmental investigation.
Are there immediate threats to human health and the environment (e.g., contaminated soil) associated with the environmental condition identified on the property?	Yes/No/Unknown *If yes, list the condition(s) here*. If there are conditions that pose an immediate threat to human health and the environment that need to be addressed, list them here. These conditions should be addressed as soon as possible.
What federal and/or state cleanup programs (e.g., Superfund) are potentially applicable to the property?	A municipality should first understand which federal and state cleanup programs apply to the property and its conditions, and then whether any relevant statutory exemptions exist under those statutes. This allows the municipality to coordinate with all of the appropriate federal and state cleanup programs. This information can be readily obtained from the state and federal agencies responsible for environmental cleanup programs in the region.
Have potentially responsible parties been identified for the property?	Yes/No/Unknown *If yes, list them here*. If a formal action requiring investigation or cleanup of the property was taken or is planned by EPA or a state agency, responsible parties may be identified or are in the process of being identified. Responsible parties can share some of the cost of addressing environmental conditions; however, negotiations between regulatory agencies and responsible parties can also create significant delays. This information can be readily obtained from the state and federal agencies responsible for environmental cleanup programs in the region.
What condition(s) has been assessed?	If assessments have been conducted on the property, list the conditions included in those reports (e.g., soil impacts from historical use of petroleum products). Indicate whether any conditions have not yet been assessed, as that may slow the reuse planning process.
Which condition(s) has been cleaned up?	If cleanup activities took place on the property, list the conditions that were addressed. Indicate whether any identified conditions have not yet been cleaned up, as that may slow the reuse planning process.

Which condition(s) has planned or existing environmental restrictions (e.g., institutional controls, engineering controls)?	If known or applicable, list which conditions remain onsite as part of a completed cleanup activity and if there are restrictions associated with that condition (e.g., a surface parking lot may serve as a soil cap and cannot be disturbed). Institutional controls may be used alone or in combination with engineered controls to ensure protection of human health and the environment. Institutional controls generally include four categories: • Proprietary controls (e.g., easement, real covenant, statutory covenant), • Government controls (e.g., zoning, building permit, land use ordinance), • Enforcement and permit tools (e.g., consent decree, permit, order), and • Informational devices (e.g., deed notice, government advisory, state registry).
Have any conditions been identified on adjacent properties or are expected to migrate beyond the property's boundaries?	Yes/No/Unknown *If yes, list the conditions here*. Environmental conditions could be or come to be located on adjacent properties through the migration of groundwater, surface water, or illegal dumping. The responsible party(ies) would be responsible for halting the migration of and cleaning up the condition. If there is known or suspected contamination that has moved to adjacent properties, list the condition and which adjacent property(ies) it impacts.

3. Reuse Planning Tab

The purpose of this tab is to help review the property for reuse opportunities. The questions on this tab will help the User evaluate cleanup and reuse planning that has already been conducted, the property's suitability for development, community factors, and financial considerations.

In general, properties with direct, high-quality road access are more valuable. Additionally, access to the property by the population that will benefit from its reuse is important to consider. How will people get to your property and use it? Do you have sufficient population density to support planned development?

There is no flag within these questions that would remove a property from consideration, but typically, the higher the population within the property's surrounding area, the better potential for a successful redevelopment project. However, further market and demographic analyses will be required to fully understand whether a specific reuse will be supported by the local population.

Information collected on this tab will need to be reviewed against all other property information gathered in order to make the most informed decision possible.

Note: This tool was initially designed to support decisions about the reuse of a brownfield for a transit stop. The final section (Property Suitability for Transit) is provided as an option for communities considering similar redevelopment.

If you do not have a preferred reuse at this time, you may skip these questions until a reuse is identified. This section can help compare properties for the specific reuse at a later time.

Cleanup and Reuse Planning

Reuse planning utilizes information to build a realistic vision for the property. Community factors will also help identify potential community issues and build public support for the proposed project. Capture information about past cleanup and reuse planning, as well as information that will need to be addressed in order to achieve successful reuse.

What is the preferred reuse for the property?	If you have identified a preferred reuse, list it here (e.g., commercial, residential, greenspace, farmers' market).
List any general and reuse planning studies that have been completed for the property or surrounding area in the last ten years.	*If studies have been conducted, summarize the key findings.* Prior reuse planning work, regardless of what the planned reuse might be, can be helpful and prevent duplication of efforts.
If cleanup has occurred or is planned for the property, has a cleanup action plan been developed?	*If yes, describe the cleanup action plan.* Note the conditions that the cleanup action plan addresses, and any potential limitations on property reuse based on that action plan. *If yes, is the cleanup action consistent with the potential future use of the property?*
Describe property features that should be considered in planning for the preferred reuse.	Note any property features that could enhance or hinder a property's intended reuse. For example, poor physical condition of a structure, lack of access to a portion of the property, and a notable historic structure are features that should be considered.

Describe property history or regulatory status factors that should be considered in planning for the preferred reuse.	Consider the information that was collected in Tab 2 (History and Environmental Conditions): are there any property history or regulatory requirements that need to be considered in reuse planning? Examples include specific regulatory requirements, permits, and violations. If so, note them here.
Describe environmental condition factors that should be considered in planning for the preferred reuse.	Consider the information that was collected in Tab 2 (History and Environmental Conditions): are there any environmental conditions that need to be considered in reuse planning? Examples include significant additional assessment requirements, restrictions on obtaining additional information, and costly cleanup. If so, note them here.

Community Factors

Are there surrounding land uses that would impede development of the preferred reuse?	*If yes, describe them here.* For example, a property located in a very rural or agricultural area may not offer enough population for certain development projects.
What is the relationship of the property to nearby community activities and land uses?	Consider whether there are other uses around the property that would increase a project's viability, including commercial, residential, recreational, sporting, or retail uses.
Describe the level of support for the preferred reuse of this property from municipal officials, community, and other key stakeholders.	Strong support could be a factor for pursuing reuse and redevelopment projects.
Describe other relevant community factors (e.g., demographics of surrounding area, work force characteristics, and access to transit).	Properties located in areas with many homes or jobs are stronger candidates for certain redevelopment projects. Market analysis may be required to obtain a robust understanding of the reuse potential of a property.

Infrastructure and Access

Estimated number of households within walking distance of the property (1 mile radius).	The number of households within walking distance of the property is a simple indicator of the potential population that may be served by the intended reuse.
Is there adequate road access to the property for the preferred reuse?	Based on your preferred reuse, consider whether the property offers sufficient road access. Can vehicles properly access the property? Do you need visibility from the road for your preferred reuse?
Is there safe walking access to the property (sidewalks)?	Based on your preferred reuse, consider whether the property offers sufficient pedestrian access. Can pedestrians properly access the property?
Is there safe bicycle access to the property (i.e., is the road safely accessible to bicycles)?	Based on your preferred reuse, consider whether the property offers sufficient bicycle access. Do you need bicycle access to the property? Can bicycles safely access the property?
Are there other infrastructure issues that need to be addressed (e.g., parking, lighting, utilities)?	*If yes, describe them here.* Based on your preferred reuse, does the property likely require enhancements to infrastructure like parking, lighting, or utilities?

Financial Considerations

Has a preliminary financial feasibility analysis of the preferred reuse been performed to determine whether the reuse is realistic for the property?	*If yes, summarize key findings here.* Financial feasibility analyses help evaluate the cost of cleanup, redevelopment, and reuse of a property, and are a primary factor in determining reuse potential.
Describe any known financial constraints.	If a financial feasibility analysis has not been conducted, it is helpful to document any known major financial constraints, such as a high cleanup costs, high purchase price, or liens on the property, which may impact its future development.

Other

Are there significant data gaps (e.g., ownership status) that are important to resolve?	*If yes, describe them here.* Considering all the information you have collected in this tool so far, consider whether there are any major data gaps that are critical to resolve before continuing with reuse planning.
Are there other factors that could limit the property's preferred reuse?	*If yes, describe them here.* Considering all the information you have collected in this tool so far, consider whether there is any additional information that might make the preferred reuse of the property more difficult or easier than another.

Property Suitability for Transit (optional)

Has an evaluation of the property's suitability for use as a transit stop been completed?	*If yes, summarize key findings, including physical features of the property that would limit or support future uses.* Property features that could impact reuse as a transit stop include parcel size, topography, and road access.
Are there any restrictions for the future use as a transit stop?	*If yes, describe them here.* For example, there is another transit stop located on an adjacent property.
Are there any Department of Transportation issues to consider?	Can the property be approved as a transit stop by the Department of Transportation? This may require appropriate access and egress from existing road infrastructure and/or other property features that will require agency review and approval. This information can be readily obtained from the Department of Transportation.