

Brownfields and Land Revitalization in Small, Rural and Tribal Communities



Brownfields are vacant and underused parcels of land that can be eyesores and may threaten public health. A brownfield is a "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.

EPA's [Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program](#) provides grants and technical assistance that helps communities of all sizes overcome the challenges of assessing, cleaning up and redeveloping brownfield sites. These resources include:

- Competitive [grants](#) for site assessment, cleanup, and environmental job training programs.
- Support to [State and Tribal Response Programs](#).
- Technical assistance opportunities, including:
 - Site-specific [targeted brownfields assessments](#).
 - Free access to site assessment, cleanup, reuse and community involvement [expertise](#).

The range of EPA's Brownfields resources can be especially helpful to small, rural and tribal communities who want to:

- address dilapidated or abandoned properties (e.g., mills, manufacturing sites, gas stations, commercial buildings, etc.) that may be contaminated, vacant or underutilized,
- [plan](#) reuse of these properties for economic development, nonprofit use or open space, and
- stimulate market interest in these properties by assessing and cleaning up legacy contaminants associated with past operations.



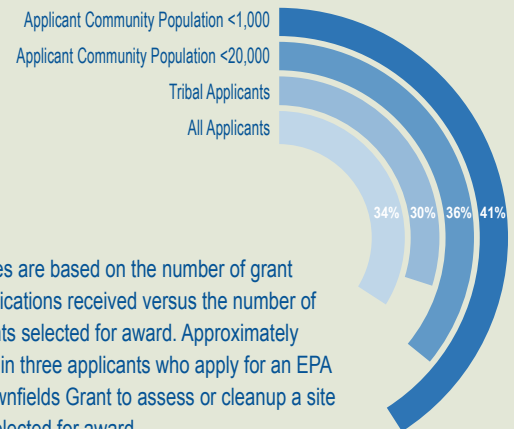
Before and after construction of Growthdome. Cloud City Farm, Leadville, Colo.

Revitalizing Rural Virginia

Working alongside developers and consultants, the Town of Pulaski (population: 8,726) set out to revitalize the formerly booming industrial town. The Town received a \$200,000 Brownfields Assessment grant in 2009, as well as a second assessment grant in 2014. These two grants allowed the town to perform thirteen Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) and five Phase II ESAs.

- Brownfield assessments were able to provide developers with the security to potentially purchase sites or buildings, in turn becoming economic drivers in the community.
- Effective partnerships and collaborations with consultants, investors, and the community were able to propel Pulaski's plan and vision forward in the early stages of redevelopment. Federal, state, and local dollars invested through the Brownfield

Success Rates Among Brownfields Grant Applicants, 2014-2019



Rates are based on the number of grant applications received versus the number of grants selected for award. Approximately one in three applicants who apply for an EPA Brownfields Grant to assess or cleanup a site is selected for award.

program helped spark the Town's transformation into the reinvigorated community that it is today.

- For example, the former Dunnivant Warehouse Building was redeveloped into the Jackson Park Inn and Conference Center, a boutique hotel containing meeting spaces and a restaurant which has provided jobs for over 40 full time employees.

Supporting Revitalization of a Court House on Tribal Lands

Many tribes use EPA funding to establish and enhance tribal response programs that support brownfields cleanup and reuse. Tribal priorities often include cleaning up and reusing contaminated land for non-economic purposes, such as returning land to cultural use. The Hoopa Valley Tribe (population: 2,140), located in northern California, addressed contamination issues during redevelopment and renovation of the

Header photo: Mary Leila Lofts in Greensboro, Ga.
Background photo: Interior of Mary Leila Cotton Mill, before redevelopment.

Tribal Court House in downtown Hoopa, which closed in 2014 due to structural, mold, asbestos and lead-based paint issues.

- In 2016, the Hoopa Tribal Environmental Protection Agency (TEPA) used their Tribal Response Program funding from EPA to provide cleanup oversight and abate asbestos and lead-based paint in the building. The Tribal Court is a crucial entity to the TEPA Environmental Compliance Program, and having a fully functioning court is imperative in enforcing Tribal Environmental Ordinances.
- The redevelopment of the Tribal Court House was completed in February 2018 using Department of Justice Tribal Justice Systems Infrastructure Program funding.
- With the completion of this project, the Tribal Court is once again providing justice services to the Hoopa Reservation.

Senior Housing in a Rural Idaho Former School

The Cottonwood, Idaho (population: 923) School District received technical assistance from EPA's Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program in 2017 to help revitalize their former elementary school. The school district wanted the site to become a community amenity once again. It had tried repeatedly for many years to sell the property, but to no avail.

- EPA's team assisted with explaining market opportunities and limitations, helped develop different approaches to building repurposing, and provided a best value analysis report with potential designs.
- Idaho's Department of Environmental Quality committed to cleaning up the asbestos, lead paint and mercury switch issues using EPA Brownfield Response Program funding.
- The former school is slated to become a five-unit senior living complex next year.

Bringing Affordable Housing to a Historic Cotton Mill in Greensboro, Georgia

The City of Greensboro (population: 3,359) received a \$200,000 Brownfields Assessment grant in 2007 to assess three brownfields sites. Of the three sites, the former Mary-Leila Mill property was selected for redevelopment. The historic property formerly operated

as a cotton mill and at one time employed more than 300 workers. The property was cleaned up under the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Brownfield Program and converted into a 71-unit affordable living community, which opened to the public in October 2016.

- After holding public meetings about the future redevelopment, the City took the necessary steps to rezone the property from industrial to commercial planned unit development in 2013.
- The redeveloped units are energy-efficient and preserve historic elements such as exposed brick walls, arched windows, and original wood plank flooring.
- In 2018, the Mary-Leila Lofts received the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation Chairman's Award, which recognizes extraordinary efforts contributing to the preservation of Georgia's historic resources.

Creating a Living Classroom and Farmland in the Rocky Mountains, Colorado

Lake County, Colorado received a \$400,000 EPA Brownfields grant in 2014 to assess several priority sites within the County that were not associated with the Superfund cleanup of legacy contaminants due to mining operations. The County's brownfields assessment activities in the City of Leadville (population: 2,759) supported the cleanup and reuse of a former vacant property into the "Cloud City Farm, Greenhouse, and Living Classroom" - a farm and environmental education center for local students. The first structure, a 42-foot diameter greenhouse (aka "Growingdome") was finished in 2017. Future phases will include a shed, walkways, a 30 x 80-foot hoop house, and raised-bed outdoor gardens. The project further builds from a 2015 EPA Environmental Education grant, which focused on improving county capacity for environmental stewardship. The Cloud City complex will:

- Provide K-12 students with opportunities to increase their environmental understanding through hands-on education opportunities surrounding clean energy, food systems, recycling, compost, and waste diversion.
- Increase Lake County's ability to grow and access fresh, healthy, and affordable food.
- Lay a foundation for self-sufficiency and long-term sustainability for the community.

Background photo: Interior of Jackson Park Inn in Pulaski, Va.

Photos from left to right: Recently renovated Hoopa Tribal Court House; Jackson Park Inn in Pulaski, Va.; and former Prairie Elementary School in Cottonwood, Idaho.



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