

Brownfields in Oregon

What is a brownfield?

A brownfield is a vacant or underused property where actual or perceived environmental contamination complicates its expansion or reuse.

Why care about brownfields?

Contaminated property may pose health and safety risks to the surrounding community. Even the mere perception of site contamination can affect a neighborhood by lowering property values.

On the other hand, cleaning up and reusing brownfields helps communities remove blight and provides needed services, such as industrial, commercial, housing, or open space. Land reuse also reduces the need to extend infrastructure to undeveloped lands.

Brownfields redevelopment barriers?

A prospective purchaser may fear that the cost of investigating and cleaning up a property will be too high to make it a profitable investment. And until the property is investigated, its cleanup cost is unknown. While there may turn out to be no contamination, lenders can be reluctant to finance sites with unknown risk.

In addition, municipalities may fear liability from taking on brownfields. There may be community pressure to take action, but a lack of local expertise and funding frequently results in inaction.

How can DEQ help with brownfields?

DEQ can help remove environmental barriers to redevelopment by providing technical assistance and other services to assist parties with investigating, cleaning up, and planning reuse of brownfields.

DEQ's Site Assessment Program conducts [Site-Specific Assessments](#) to determine whether a property is contaminated and what additional actions may be needed to obtain a DEQ [no further action determination](#).

Brownfields can also be investigated by municipalities or private parties under the supervision of DEQ's [Voluntary Cleanup Program](#). Generally, the parties hire an environmental cleanup contractor for investigative and cleanup work. DEQ reviews the work for consistency with state cleanup law.

A party may also seek DEQ approval through the [Independent Cleanup Pathway](#) after an investigation or cleanup has been completed at qualified sites.

For many parties who want to purchase a brownfield property, DEQ offers the option of negotiating a [Prospective Purchaser Agreement](#), or PPA. A PPA limits the purchaser's or lessee's future liability to DEQ for environmental cleanup of the property. In return for this liability release, the PPA must provide a substantial public benefit. Under a PPA, a prospective buyer of contaminated property agrees, **before acquiring the property**, to contribute a certain amount of money or effort towards cleaning it up.

DEQ's [Brownfields Program](#) works with communities, organizations, and other government agencies to facilitate brownfield redevelopment. For example, DEQ works with [Business Oregon](#) to identify funding for brownfield investigations, cleanups, and redevelopment planning. DEQ also helps local governments and nonprofits apply for grants from the U.S. EPA and other sources.

For more information

Contact Patricia Atkins, DEQ's Grants and Guidance coordinator, at 503-229-5512, or toll free in Oregon 1-800-452-4011. Also see [DEQ's brownfields web page](#).

For information on brownfields financing contact Karen Homolac, Business Oregon's Brownfields Program Manager, at 971-239-9951. Also see [Business Oregon's brownfields web page](#).

Alternative formats

Documents can be provided upon request in an alternate format for individuals with disabilities or in a language other than English for people with limited English skills. To request a document in another format or language, call DEQ in Portland at 503-229-5696, or toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696; or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.



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