



# Fact Sheet

## Brownfields in Oregon

### What is a brownfield?

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

### Why care about brownfields?

Contaminated properties may pose health and safety risks to surrounding communities. They can even affect neighborhoods by lowering property values.

Cleaning up and reusing brownfields helps communities remove known and potential risks from exposure to contamination and provides needed services such as industrial, commercial, housing or open space. Land reuse also preserves greenspace (like wilderness areas) and reduces infrastructure builds on undeveloped land.

### Do brownfields create barriers to redevelopment?

Yes, by definition brownfields can affect redevelopment. For instance, 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. Even if no contamination is present, lenders may 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 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, these parties hire an environmental cleanup contractor for investigative and cleanup work. DEQ reviews the work for consistency with state cleanup law.

#### Translation or other formats

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800-452-4011 | TTY: 711 | [deqinfo@deq.oregon.gov](mailto:deqinfo@deq.oregon.gov)

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 a contaminated property agrees, **before acquiring the property**, to contribute a certain amount of money or effort towards cleaning it up.

DEQ's brownfield coordinators work with communities, organizations and other government agencies to facilitate brownfield redevelopment. DEQ also helps local governments and nonprofits apply for grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other sources.

## Contacts

Contact a DEQ brownfield representative toll free in Oregon, at 1-800-452-4011 or email [brownfieldinfo@deq.oregon.gov](mailto:brownfieldinfo@deq.oregon.gov) Also see [DEQ's brownfields web page](#).

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

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