

Dear Brownfields applicant:

This letter is to introduce you to the Brownfields State Response Program which is administered by the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Waste Management. This program may provide exciting opportunities for North Dakota communities.

Since its inception in 1995, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Brownfields Program has grown into a proven, results-oriented program that has changed the way communities address and manage contaminated property. A Brownfield is a property, where the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. It is estimated that there are more than 450,000 brownfields in the U.S. Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties increases local tax bases, facilitates job growth, utilizes existing infrastructure, takes development pressures off of undeveloped, open land, and both improves and protects the environment.

Here in North Dakota we tend to think of Brownsfields sites as large, abandoned industrial properties such as steel mills or large manufacturing plants located in cities like Chicago or Detroit. In reality, Brownsfields sites could be former service stations, dry cleaners, factories, warehouses, parking lots, hangers, lots where heavy equipment was stored or repaired, or an older downtown business. These sites could be changed from potential liabilities into successful developments that will generate revenues and jobs for the community. The Department has been active in the Brownsfields Program since 2002 and to-date has made possible the assessment and/or cleanup at 79 properties throughout the state.

The Brownfields State Response grant, applied for annually from the EPA, can be used by the Department for environmental assessment and cleanup activities at Brownfields sites. These activities include environmental activities preliminary to cleanup such as site assessment, site characterization and site response, or cleanup planning and design for areas that have an actual or threatened release of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant as well as the actual remediation itself. Brownfields assessment funds may only be used at sites where there is release, or substantial threat of release, of a hazardous substance, or there is a release, or substantial threat of release of a pollutant or contaminant which may present an imminent and substantial danger to public health or welfare. In addition, funds may be used at sites where there is a reason to believe that a release has occurred or is about to occur.

Examples of sites that have been addressed by the state's Brownfields Program include:

1. In August 2015, the former Hammelton Building Department Store located in Lisbon, ND was assessed by the Program for lead paint and asbestos. In December of 2015, the Department contracted for removal of asbestos boiler and pipe insulation with funding provided by the Brownfields Program. The building is now available for sale, rehab, and reuse by the community.

2. In April 2016, the Hazen Memorial Hospital Association (a 501(c)(3) federal tax-exempt nonprofit organization) requested cleanup assistance at the old Sakakawea Medical Center located in Hazen. A site assessment was conducted by the site owner prior to their request for cleanup assistance along with a construction plan for a new hospital. The program removed asbestos from several portions of the building including pipe joints, floor tile and mastic, and door and wall expansion caulking. The old medical center was demolished in the fall of 2015, and the new hospital opened in April 2017. This is a very good example of an organization having the groundwork and a plan in place for what they want to do with their Brownfields site once the contamination has been removed.

The Brownfields State Response Program is application based. Cities, counties, local development and non-profit groups where a public benefit is perceived, may apply for assistance. The Program would expect that the entity requesting assistance have future for the property which may include:

1. Renovating the building for reuse;
2. Removing the existing building and rebuilding a new building for occupancy; or
3. Removing the building and creating a “green space”, which can be as simple as planting grass, trees, and placing park benches on the site.

There are no limits on the number of sites that may be submitted for consideration, however, there is a limit on funds available to the Program. Applicants submitting more than one site are asked to prioritize the applications based on local importance for redevelopment. Eligible site applications will be considered on a first-come-first-served basis. Should potential assessment and/or cleanup costs for all sites submitted exceed available funds, the sites will be put on a waiting list until funds become available. We encourage city leaders and county and economic development officials to discuss potential sites for submission.

The Program encourages you to visit our Brownfields Website at <https://deq.nd.gov/WM/Brownfields/> which has our guideline for submitting an application and also links to EPA’s Brownfields Websites.

Should you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 328-5166.

Sincerely,

Derek Hall, Environmental Scientist
Hazardous Waste Program
Brownfields State Response Program
Division of Waste Management