

FAQs

City of Oroville Brownfields Program

What is a Brownfield?

A brownfield site is a property where expansion, redevelopment or reuse efforts are complicated by the presence or perceived presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant. Common examples are vacant or underutilized properties including gas stations, auto repair sites and older manufacturing sites.

Why is redevelopment of brownfields important?

Brownfield sites often cause blight on neighborhoods and can potentially impact the environment. Most brownfields produce little tax revenue, reduce local employment opportunities and have a negative effect on the local economy. Cleaning up and reinvesting in brownfield sites can increase the local tax base, facilitate job growth, and improve and protect the environment while using existing infrastructure. Reinvesting in brownfield sites can help protect public health and revitalize economic development in Oroville.

What is the 2014 Community-wide Assessment Grant?

The \$400,000 U.S. EPA Brownfields Community-wide Assessment Grant will provide \$200,000 to assess properties known to contain hazardous substances and \$200,000 to assess properties known to contain petroleum products. Grant funds will be used to compile and rank an inventory of sites, conduct Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments of selected properties, develop cleanup strategies for impacted properties, and conduct community involvement activities. Assessment of sites will be focused in the city's targeted reinvestment areas in southern Oroville.

What is the 2014 Site-specific Assessment Grant?

The \$350,000 U.S. EPA Brownfields Site-specific Assessment Grant will be used to perform environmental site assessment work at the properties comprising the former 39-acre Las Plumas Lumber Mill at 1245 Oro Dam Boulevard. Grant funding will also provide for the preparation of a cleanup plan, acceptable to the overseeing regulatory agency, and will enable community outreach activities.

What does the selection and first steps of the assessment process involve?

Sites are inventoried and prioritized using a variety of criteria including site location, potential contamination, how reuse fits into the City's general plan, community expectations and needs, and other factors including meeting eligibility criteria. After you submit your application to the City, you will be notified whether your site is selected for a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA).

Once your property is selected, at no expense to you, the Phase I ESA is conducted to evaluate whether or not areas of potential contamination may be present. The assessment includes visual site inspection, interviews, review of historical sources, searches for recorded liens, records search, and other activities performed by an environmental professional. It conforms to the All Appropriate Inquiry standard for purposes of establishing certain landowner liability protections.

If my site is assessed and contaminants are found on my property am I responsible to clean it up?

Not necessarily. The Phase I ESA that results in recommending further action is followed by a Phase II assessment. Samples of soil, water and/or soil gas are collected to confirm the contamination. Sites

that contain low levels of contaminants are compared against screening levels created by regulatory agencies. Sites with higher levels of contamination may be referred for assistance under state or local voluntary cleanup programs if the site owner or future land purchaser is looking to have the site cleaned for reuse. Determining responsibility for cleanup is based on many factors including who caused the release and the condition of the site as the result of the release.

What does the cleanup process involve?

The level of contamination is typically determined from the Phase II assessment that analyzes the samples and compares the results to standards. If the levels are higher than the standards, or not enough data has been collected to make a determination, additional studies may be required. Once the site is characterized, a cleanup plan is prepared by environmental professionals to identify the techniques that might include removing soil or treating the groundwater. Once the cleanup is completed, the land can be reused again.

Can I get financial assistance for site investigation and clean up?

Possibly. For qualifying sites, the Phase I and Phase II assessment under the grant program are free to property owners or future landowners or businesses. Cleanup plans can also be prepared as part of the cleanup process. Other state and federal programs offer similar grant or low interest loans and can be found on EPA's or CalEPA's websites.

How do I qualify? Are there any program restrictions?

Qualifying a site is simple; the City submits to EPA a completed checklist form for their approval. EPA makes sure the site meets the brownfields definition discussed above.

Program restrictions prevent certain ineligible sites from participating including the most significant toxic sites identified across the country referred to as Superfund sites (those listed on the National Priorities List), facilities subject to certain enforcement orders and those under the jurisdiction of the United States.

I am interested, how do I apply and what are the next steps?

You may contact Luis Topete via email at topetela@cityoforoville.org or call at (530) 538-2408, to inquire about the program and provide information regarding your property that will help to determine if the property is eligible. Properties must be within the targeted assessment areas and meet the eligibility requirements established by the EPA. Eligibility is determined primarily through an evaluation of property ownership/tenancy and the history of hazardous substance and/or petroleum usage on the property.