



## Research Report on Brownfields

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### Introduction

Numerous previously developed lands are currently not in use across the globe. In the US, there are approximately 450,000 brownfields that had either been used for commercial or industrial purposes and are known to be polluted due to hazardous waste and soil contamination (Brandon, 2012). Since the term "brownfields" was first used in the US on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1992, a policy has been developed to ensure that the polluted areas are reclaimed and brought back into productive use. Brownfields program is designed to empower communities, states, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work promptly to effectively assess the damage and then to safely clean and sustainably reuse brownfields (Brebba & Chon, 2012). In most instances, brownfields are situated in the industrial sections of cities wherein the owners are not ready to bring back the land into productive use. However, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has consistently provided technical assistance and grants to states and interested individuals to clean up and reuse contaminated properties. This paper critically analyzes the stipulated program rules that can be applied to solving the problem of brownfields and finding the reasons that hinder the implementation of the policy.

### Developments from Program Rules to be applied to Brownfields

The department of environmental protection should consider adopting the brownfields geo-viewer as stipulated in the program rules. Davis (2002) stated that this is a unique mapping tool designed to help in locating the existing brownfield sites and areas. Some states, such as Florida, have already incorporated the program, and the results are promising as positive feedback has been obtained about detection and cleaning of brownfields. The mapping tool works by keenly identifying the vast lands which have been subjected to massive pollution and sending [C1] back signal to the department responsible. This makes it easier for the environmental personnel, since they do not have to physically move around the state looking for brownfields as before. The self-developing regions are yet to adopt this important tool, even though its use may make them face extra difficulties when dealing with the polluted properties (Kibert, 2012). This initiative is recommended as it saves cost and time, thus being friendly to local economies. Furthermore, the tool is easy to use and can conveniently be manipulated to favor the area of operation. The revised US ecological program encompasses this tool, and all states are expected to incorporate it within the next five years.

The marginalized states should incorporate the Model Brownfield Site Rehabilitation Agreement (BSRA) documents. Mehdipour & Nia (2013) explain that the BSRA model is used when requesting to enter into Brownfield Site Rehabilitation Agreement with Data Execution Prevention (DEP) and is always submitted along with a completed BSRA checklist. This is a program that works by ensuring that the owners of brownfields can reclaim their land with minimal efforts. It offers support in cleaning the contaminated properties and ensures that once the cleaning progress begins, it is executed up to the final steps (Kibert, 2012). The low-income brownfields owners are advantaged

as they can comfortably reuse the land with the assistance of BSRA. Thus, this initiative will help reclaim more wastelands within the shortest time possible peddling the development of cities and economic growth.

The Voluntary Cleanup Tax Credit (VCTC) Program is one of the vital measures when dealing with brownfields. Brebbia and Chon, (2012) argued that this financial aid applies to all cost associated with assessment and remediation of brownfields sites. It is mostly applied to intangible personal property and corporate income taxes. The credits are available to both private and public entities, and the involved parties must enter into Brownfield Site Rehabilitation Agreement (BRA) or Voluntary Clean up Agreement (VCA) (Brandon, 2012). In the US, the available credits are up to \$500,000. This program has been successful in various states, such as Florida, and thus may be applied in different areas.

Loan guarantees should also be emphasized to encourage useful investments in the brownfields. In their article, Mehdipour and Nia (2013) indicated that the government offers loans to make the required capital easier and cheaper to access. Property owners are encouraged to borrow funds to reclaim the polluted land. Research carried out by Brandon (2012) illustrates that 50% of brownfields redeemed in California were cleaned due to governmental loans.

### **The Reason Why the Policies Are Not Used**

Most of the policies are yet to be implemented since their use faces massive resistance from the property owners. Some owners of the brownfields are not ready to utilize the polluted land for personal reasons and interests (Davis, 2002). Brownfields geo-viewer tool is yet to be adopted by various departments as the office specialists fear they may lose their jobs once the technology is introduced. Thus, they consider the manual way of accessing the brownfields more precise and cost effective. Brebbia and Chon (2012) stated that some individuals perceive the steps involved in joining BSRA to be complicated and thus find no need for the policy. The states also fail by not implementing the BSRA making it unavailable to the locals (Kibert, 2012). The fear of unwarrantable expenses prevents some land owners from acquiring the loans, and thus the brownfields remain unutilized.

The cleaning and utilization of polluted properties can lead to the improvement of the nation's ecology and economy. The government should enroll public campaign with the aim of reclaiming more brownfields. The involved departments and property owners are supposed to create a favorable social and economic environment so that they can successfully put brownfields into use.