



# The United States Conference of Mayors

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## **BROWNFIELDS REPORT SHOWS UNTAPPED POTENTIAL FOR REDEVELOPMENT IN THE NATION'S CITIES**

### **The U.S. Conference of Mayors Surveys More Than 150 U.S. Cities**

**Oklahoma City, OK** – The U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) today released a national report on the status of Brownfield sites in 150 American cities. Brownfields are abandoned or underutilized properties where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by either real or perceived environmental contamination. As a result, Brownfields present a major challenge for both small and large cities – primarily due to the lack of funding necessary to redevelop and/or recycle these lands.

This report is the eighth in a series of reports that documents the impediments to brownfields redevelopment faced by local communities throughout the United States, as well as identifies the opportunities lost when properties remain idle and abandoned. It also quantifies some of the benefits from brownfields redevelopment efforts across the country, with cities specifically citing their positive results from land recycling and the return of brownfields to productive uses.

"The redevelopment of Brownfield's is a key component to a sustainable community. Cities across the nation have learned to do more with less, but these difficult economic times have made new developments on brownfields even more challenging. Congress and EPA's Brownfields Program has provided tools, but Mayors need additional assistance with the redevelopment of these properties that will create new jobs and preserve city green space." said Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster, Chair of the Conference's Environmental Committee.

This year's results indicate that 136 cities estimated that they collectively had more than 22,537 Brownfield's sites, with the average size of a brownfield site being approximately 8.6 acres. Cities also estimated that Brownfield properties comprised of 60,417 acres of land, representing potential new jobs and land tax revenue. More than 120 cities estimated that 3,035 sites have been "mothballed," which is defined as sites where the current owner has no intention of redeveloping or selling due to environmental concerns. At mothballed sites, owners would prefer to have the land remain idle and unused rather than turn these sites over for development.

Elizabeth (NJ) Mayor J. Christian Bollwage, Co-Chair of the Conference's Brownfield's Task Force, commented on the benefits of brownfields development. "Cities who were experiencing a redevelopment renaissance and residential boom are now facing economic decline and an increase in foreclosed properties. There is still a renewed interest in developing city centers where residents can move closer to their jobs and reduce commuting costs. Brownfield properties are still a value in redevelopment, with an increase in green technology and the reduction of energy costs, cities are finding it easier to redevelop and remediate properties than start from scratch. I believe the program will benefit cities with jobs on land that is already close to the cities core. This is the only way to truly grow in a sustainable manner. To use previously used land and put it back into positive use."

Other highlights of the survey findings include:

- Over 46 percent of the survey respondents stated that if Brownfield's were redeveloped, they could realize nearly \$688 million to \$1.66 billion annually in additional tax revenues.
- 106 cities responded that over 230,223 new jobs could be created on brownfields sites if their brownfield sites were redeveloped, an increase of 39,000 from last year's report.
- There were 59 cities that reported 75,000 new jobs have already been created from redeveloped Brownfield's. These jobs include 19,761 pre-development and 55,085 jobs post development.

More than one-half of the cities surveyed reported offering incentives to encourage brownfields redevelopment through tax credits, low interest loans, and infrastructure upgrades. Additionally, the Conference's survey found that many states are working with cities on Brownfield issues, but few city-state partnerships deal with the issue of sprawl that could result from broad redevelopment.

West Palm Beach (FL) Mayor Lois J. Frankel, Co-Chair of the United States Conference of Mayors Brownfield's Task Force, explained how brownfields have been a very important part of the city's growth. "Brownfield's provide a wonderful tool for urban and city center redevelopment. In today's economy the search for additional resources is imperative and through Brownfield redevelopment additional jobs and a growth in the tax base are two benefits cities can strive for. Communities are reborn and the environment is restored, in many cases, preserving precious green and open space." She concluded.

The entire brownfields report will be posted on the Conference's website at [www.usmayors.org](http://www.usmayors.org).

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*The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country today, each represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the Mayor.*