

Planning and Sustainability Commission
Annual Retreat: Equity Lens

Case: Brownfields

- Brownfield properties pose large opportunities for industrial and commercial development, accounting for about one-third of the growth capacity in Portland’s industrial, commercial, and other employment areas.
- Primary barrier to redevelopment is the market and financial feasibility.

Equity Lens	Brownfields identification	Brownfield redevelopment
What historic inequities and current disparities exist?		
What individuals, groups, or communities benefit? What do those benefits look like?		
What individuals, groups, or communities are negatively impacted? What do those negative impacts look like?		
Are there past initiatives that have had unintended consequences?		
How can negative effects/impacts be mitigated and positive impacts be enhanced? Are there policy options?		
What is the role of the PSC?		
Who else should be included?		
What kinds of data will you look for in order to make a decision?		

Community Impacts	Community Opportunities
<p>Blight When owners abandon or defer maintenance on brownfield sites, these properties deteriorate and often become eyesores. The impressions left by boarded-up buildings and overgrown, trash-strewn lots can signal neglect even in an otherwise well-maintained neighborhood.</p> <p>Community Morale It can be hard to take pride or feel invested in a community filled with rundown or contaminated properties. Compounded with historic disinvestment and a lack of reinvestment due to the presence of contaminated sites, brownfields have a way of diminishing community spirit.</p>	<p>Community Transformation Brownfield redevelopments can transform eyesores into points of pride, as demonstrated by the diversity of brownfield projects across the country, recycled brownfields can transcend their prior uses. Former industrial properties, properly remediated, can become new housing, business incubators, or even productive greenspace such as community gardens or urban farms.</p> <p>Many brownfields remain neglected because for-profit developers are not willing to deal with the potential liability and marketability issues of vacant or contaminated properties in lower income areas.</p>
<p>Pollution Brownfields contamination can pollute soil, air, and water resources both on- and offsite. Harmful substances may be present as the result of past industrial and commercial activities or wastes dumped illegally on a neighboring site. These materials can then migrate through the air and through groundwater to the site in consideration</p>	<p>Public Health and the Environment Redeveloping a contaminated property can improve natural systems and remove a threat to public health.</p>
<p>Safety These neglected spaces are often the site of illegal and dangerous activities receiving unwanted attention from drug dealers, unauthorized salvagers, arsonists, and illegal trash dumpers.</p>	
<p>Public Health Exposure to soil, air, and water pollution stemming from contaminated sites can, under some circumstances, have serious negative effects on the health of nearby residents. For example, exposure to high levels of lead in the soil of empty lots where industries, such as smelters, were once located has been linked to impaired mental function. Reuse options, such as agriculture and housing, should be careful to consider the type and extent of contamination.</p>	
<p>Economic Nuisances, hazards, and criminal activity on vacant properties require local police, fire, building, and health department resources. Abandoned sites generate no tax revenue, and vacant buildings and lots can have negative effects on surrounding property values. Additionally, the uncertainty surrounding if and to what extent a brownfield is contaminated acts as a major disincentive for investment in low-income communities. The threat of costs associated with required environmental assessments and cleanup deter private investors.</p>	<p>Job Creation Beyond the employment opportunities created once a brownfield has been restored to productive use, brownfield projects can also create jobs at earlier stages related to site investigation and cleanup.</p> <p>Property Values and Community Services Successful brownfield redevelopment might increase the value of property in a community. Increased land values can result in more money for schools, parks, transit, and other community services and amenities.</p>