



NEWS 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 200 U.S. Cities

Las Vegas, NV – The U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) today released a national report on the status of brownfield sites in more than 200 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 sixth in a series of reports that documents the impediments to brownfields redevelopment faced by local communities throughout the United States, and identifies the opportunities lost when properties remain idle and abandoned. It also quantifies some of the benefits of brownfields redevelopment efforts across the country, with cities specifically citing their positive results from land recycling and the return of brownfields to productive uses.

“Brownfields is one of the most important topics on a Mayor’s agenda when planning community development within a city. The City of Charlotte has had many successes in the development of brownfields and we look forward to many more. Brownfields are more than just contaminated or blighted land, they are an opportunity. Every city that has a chance to redevelop brownfield properties has an opportunity to re-write their future and make new sustainable developments and revitalize older communities,” said Charlotte Mayor Patrick McCrory, Chair of the Conference’s Environmental Committee.

This year’s results indicate that 172 cities estimated that they collectively had more than 23,810 brownfields sites, with the average size of a brownfield site being approximately between 5 and 15 acres. There were 158 cities estimating that Brownfield properties comprised of 96,039 acres of land, representing potential new jobs and land tax revenue. Significantly, for the first time, more than 120 cities estimated that 2,579 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 Bolwage, Co-Chair of the Conference’s Brownfield’s Task Force, commented on the benefits of brownfields development. “In Elizabeth, we have been able to convert older, contaminated properties into new and thriving developments within the heart of our community. With property values rising and available land disappearing, it is important for cities to revitalize communities and neighborhoods that have fallen into disrepair.”

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.

Kenosha (WI) Mayor John M. Antaramian, 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. "The Revitalization of our harbor and the construction of new sustainable communities have brought healthier businesses and a population increase. Kenosha has become one of Wisconsin's gems because of our vision to beneficially reuse abandoned properties in a positive fashion. Brownfields have to be viewed as legacy projects, with the intention of leaving future generations' clean and healthy places to live, work and raise a family," he concluded.

Other highlights of the survey findings include:

- 62 cities generated actual tax revenue from redeveloped brownfield sites totaling over \$233 million
- Over half -- 52% of the 201 cities surveyed estimated that redevelopment of local brownfields sites would produce additional tax revenues between \$958 million and \$2.2 billion annually;
- More than 83,171 jobs were created on former brownfields sites (21,977 jobs during redevelopment and 61,194 jobs created post development)
- More than 75% of the cities surveyed called for additional assistance to redevelop brownfields sites including infrastructure upgrades, funds to demolish obsolete buildings, tax incentives, and low interest loans

The complete list of surveyed cities is attached and the entire brownfields report is posted on the Conference's website at 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.