



National Brownfields Assessment Pilot

Detroit, MI

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5101)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. Between 1995 and 1996, EPA funded 76 National and Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilots, at up to \$200,000 each, to support creative two-year explorations and demonstrations of brownfields solutions. EPA is funding more than 27 Pilots in 1997. The Pilots are intended to provide EPA, States, Tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

BACKGROUND

EPA selected the City of Detroit for a Brownfields Pilot. For decades, Detroit has been known as the Motor City—hub of the automobile industry. As a result, a considerable portion of the City has been subject to heavy industrial activity and a number of Detroit properties have become contaminated. Over 45,000 contaminated sites have been abandoned by their owners and forfeited to the City due to unpaid taxes. To facilitate productive reuse of these properties, Detroit and Michigan's Departments of Natural Resources (DNR) and Departments of Commerce formed the Redevelopment of Urban Sites Action Team—the R.E.U.S. A-Team.

OBJECTIVES

Detroit's brownfields efforts are to develop and refine the R.E.U.S. model to reduce the "entry" barriers to cleanup and redevelopment of lands that either are contaminated or are believed to be contaminated. This includes addressing misinformation regarding the operation of applicable laws, available financial resources, time constraints of remediation, inaccurate evaluations of the cost of remediation versus the benefits of

PILOT SNAPSHOT



Detroit, Michigan

Date of Award:
September 1995

Amount: \$200,000

Site Profile: The Pilot targets the production of the "R.E.U.S. IT: Manual - An Interagency, Common-Sense Approach to Breaking Down Environmental Barriers to Brownfields Redevelopment," and an accompanying video.

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redevelopment, and the fear of unknown liability.

- Meeting with EPA, MDEQ, and City representatives to discuss such topics as: specific sites; the City initiative to address junk yards and auto salvage yards, and scrap iron and metal recyclers.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Pilot has:

- Initiated production of the “R.E.U.S. IT: Manual - An Interagency, Common-Sense Approach to Breaking Down Environmental Barriers to Brownfields Redevelopment,” and its accompanying video to teach other cities “lessons learned.”

The Pilot is:

- Using the R.E.U.S. A-Team approach to address sites proposed for residential, commercial, and industrial uses to identify unique impediments to each type of reuse; and
- Educating lenders, developers, and community organizations about successful brownfields assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment strategies.

LEVERAGING OTHER ACTIVITIES

Experience with the Detroit Pilot has been a catalyst for related activities including the following.

- Working with EPA to cleanup the Anaconda Brass site located in the Empowerment Zone. The 10-acre abandoned industrial facility was the subject of dumping of large numbers and drums of product. EPA and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) worked together to remove these drums as part of the overall remediation.
- Establishing a Roundtable on sustainable development. The City joined with the County of Wayne to establish a policy forum on sustainable development and brownfields. The forum includes significant input from stakeholders, including community groups, lenders, developers, and institutional and governmental representatives.
- Facilitating remediation and redevelopment of several formerly contaminated sites, including a veterinary clinic, an office building, two multi-family residential developments, and a museum. Slated for construction are an intermodal terminal, and a residential development.