



# Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot

## Reading, PA

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. Since 1995, EPA has funded more than 200 Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilots, at up to \$200,000 each, to support creative two-year explorations and demonstrations of brownfields solutions. 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 has selected the City of Reading for a Brownfields Pilot. The City serves as the financial, commercial, and government center for Berks County, Pennsylvania. Reading built its heritage on heavy industry such as ironworks, masonry, and manufacturing. These industries utilized the Schuylkill River canals and railways for transport of raw materials and finished goods. Since 1930, the City has lost nearly 30% of its population as a result of industrial and economic decline. Diverse minority communities currently account for 65% of the City's residents, with over 56% of residents earning a low to moderate income. Reading's unemployment rate is nearly 6%.

Little vacant land within the 9.8 square miles of the City's boundaries is available for new or expanded development. Reading plans to focus its redevelopment efforts on four large areas. Three of these areas, totaling 250 acres, are abandoned industrial sites with suspected contamination. They were used for steel manufacturing, other various industrial uses, and rail yards. The fourth target area comprises 68 acres of vacant land near the Schuylkill River.

### PILOT SNAPSHOT



Reading, Pennsylvania

**Date of Announcement:**  
July 1998

**Amount:** \$200,000

**Profile:** The Pilot targets three abandoned industrial sites and one vacant property near the Schuylkill River for assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment.

#### Contacts:

Community Development Department	City of Reading (610) 655-6023
Regional Brownfields Team	U.S. EPA - Region 3 (215) 566-3129

Visit the EPA Region 3 Brownfields web site at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/reg3hwmd/brownfld/hmpage1.htm>

For further information, including specific Pilot contacts, additional Pilot information, brownfields news and events, and publications and links, visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>

## **OBJECTIVES**

The City's main objective is the cleanup and redevelopment of the target areas and other brownfields to stimulate the local economy and provide needed area jobs, thereby returning the City to its former level of prosperity. To facilitate this effort, Reading plans to combine Pilot funding with significant funds from the new Pennsylvania Keystone Opportunity Zone Program (KOZ), a major utility company, and the local redevelopment authority. The City anticipates that certain sites in the target area will be eligible for the KOZ Program, which allows a moratorium on taxes for 12 years on restored property. The Pilot also plans to conduct site inventories, environmental assessments, and community outreach activities.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

Activities planned as part of this Pilot include:

- Identifying, inventorying, and prioritizing potential brownfields sites;
- Performing environmental site assessments on the four targeted areas;
- Creating cleanup and redevelopment plans for the target sites; and
- Conducting community outreach and public involvement programs.

The cooperative agreement for this Pilot has not yet been negotiated; therefore, activities described in this fact sheet are subject to change.