



# Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot

## Virginia, MN

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. EPA is funding: assessment demonstration pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to assess brownfields sites and to test cleanup and redevelopment models; job training pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to provide training for residents of communities affected by brownfields to facilitate cleanup of brownfields sites and prepare trainees for future employment in the environmental field; and, cleanup revolving loan fund programs (each funded up to \$500,000 over five years) to capitalize loan funds to make loans for the environmental cleanup of brownfields. These pilot programs 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 Virginia for a Brownfields Pilot. The city is located on the east side of the Mesabi Iron Range in northeastern Minnesota, a region that has produced a majority of the country's iron ore and taconite. However, from 1980-1990 the industry experienced a downturn, resulting in a 62 percent decline in mining employment that caused declines in the city's population and other businesses. Since the economic downturn, the city's unemployment and poverty rates, 15.2 and 10.7 percent respectively, have been among the highest in the state.

Although Virginia (population 9,410) has attempted to diversify its economy and attract new businesses, the city has been at a disadvantage due to the lack of available land for both commercial sites and housing. Most of the available properties suitable for development are former industrial sites and mining buffer areas, which may be contaminated from use as dump sites while the properties sat idle.

In an effort to initiate brownfields cleanup and redevelopment, the city established a Brownfields Task Force in 1998 to identify brownfields sites. The

### PILOT SNAPSHOT



Virginia, Minnesota

Date of Announcement:  
June 1999

Amount: \$200,000

Profile: The Pilot targets three brownfields in the City of Virginia to be redeveloped for commercial and residential use.

#### Contacts:

City of Virginia  
City Hall  
(218) 741-2388

Regional Brownfields Team  
U.S. EPA - Region 5  
(312) 353-3161

Visit the EPA Region 5 Brownfields web site at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/R5Brownfields/>

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/>

Pilot will target three publicly owned sites within the Enterprise Mine Area Redevelopment project, located in buffer zones between the city's residential neighborhoods and two idle mines and their dumps.

## OBJECTIVES

The Pilot's objective is to facilitate revitalization in Virginia by conducting environmental assessments on three brownfields that can be cleaned up and redeveloped as business and low- to moderate-income residential sites. The Pilot will also complete a cleanup feasibility study and cleanup action plan for the sites, and prepare plans for residential redevelopment and additional infrastructure. The Pilot will implement its objectives in conjunction with the city's comprehensive plan that focuses on economic development by increasing the amount of land available for development, improving the aesthetics of the city entrances, and addressing other environmental issues such as wetlands protection, storm water management and radon prevention.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Activities planned as part of this Pilot include:

- Conducting Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments on three sites within the target area;
- Creating a step-by-step minelands cleanup and redevelopment guide for use by other cities facing the same redevelopment issues;
- Developing cleanup feasibility studies and cleanup action plans for the target sites; and
- Sponsoring community forums to encourage public participation in the assessment, cleanup and redevelopment plans.

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