

BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENTS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

What are Brownfields?

Brownfields are properties that may be difficult to develop or reuse because they were previously used for industrial or commercial activities that resulted in known or suspected soil and/or groundwater contamination from petroleum or hazardous materials. Brownfields exist all around us. Examples include former gas stations, auto repair shops, dry cleaners, warehouses, or industrial sites. Odds are you pass at least one brownfield on your commute to work.

Why are Brownfields a problem?

Brownfields are problematic for several reasons. First, if the site is contaminated it may have polluted soil or groundwater. Second, concerns about environmental issues often complicate property sales and redevelopment plans, which means these sites often sit unused and can be an eyesore. Third, since the properties aren't being used, they aren't providing a public benefit or generating tax revenues. Finally, owners of brownfields may be frustrated and give up on redeveloping their property because they don't know the extent of the contamination (if at all). This program is meant to help those property owners and be a partner in redevelopment.

Why is the City conducting Free Environmental Assessments?

By completing environmental site assessment and cleanup activities, it is possible to transform underutilized properties from liabilities into assets that will benefit both property owners and the community. Determining if contamination exists means proper cleanup can occur.

What Assistance is Available?

Assistance includes environmental studies to research past uses and sample soil, soil vapor, groundwater, and even building materials suspected to contain asbestos or lead-based paint. Technical advice is also available to plan for cleanup and develop reuse strategies. Assistance will only be provided for a property with the owner's consent.

Though this grant does not cover the actual cleanup costs, the City will continue to work with property owners to find resources such as grants or loans to help with cleanup.

How do I get started?

Contact Seth Lenaerts or Alison Robertson to talk about your goals for your property and find out if your property is eligible for free assistance. Funds are limited so don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Contact

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FAQ: FREE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

▶ Getting ready to buy or sell property?

As a prospective property owner looking to buy property, a Phase I environmental site assessment is generally required by a lender and will help you understand the environmental conditions on the property.

If you're interested in selling or building on your property, having more information ahead of time can help remove hang-ups on real estate transactions. Buyers like to have certainty, which comes from a better understanding of the property. If a seller has completed an environmental assessment, that can be offered to the interested buyer to assure them of a clean site, or something that has a plan to remedy any concerns, making the sale more attractive.

▶ Getting ready to build on your property?

Planning to take out a construction loan to develop your property? Loans can have higher interest rates during construction. Having an environmental assessment prior to starting construction means you can resolve things ahead of time, or have the assurance nothing will get in the way of a smooth construction window. Not knowing the conditions of your property can cause costly construction delays.

▶ I'm not selling or building, so why would I still need this?

Sometimes properties that were previously used for industrial or commercial activities might have past soil and/or groundwater contamination from petroleum or hazardous materials. With this Free Environmental Assessment, you would be able to rule out any concerns or know how to address them. This grant will end in 2026, so even if your sell date is after that, you can do an assessment now, and save yourself money later to update the assessment report.

▶ How is this work funded?

The City was awarded a Brownfields Assessment Grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency. The City will use this grant to provide free environmental site assessments to identify and characterize contamination, if present, and conduct cleanup and re-use planning activities.

▶ How can I get more information?

Contact Seth LENAERTS or Alison ROBERTSON with the City, and check out the Brownfields Assessments Program website at <https://www.lincolncity.org/departments/economic-development/economic-development-toolbox-loan-and-grant-programs/brownfield-grant-program>.