



## Mid-Columbia Economic Development District Brownfield Revitalization Coalition

### What is a Brownfield?

A **“brownfield”** is a property that has been, or may be perceived to have been, affected **environmentally**. The potential presence of hazardous substances, petroleum, or regulated building materials like asbestos and lead paint may impede redevelopment opportunities. By completing environmental site assessment and cleanup planning, it is possible to transform brownfields from liabilities into assets that will benefit the community.

### What are the benefits of brownfield redevelopment?

Property owners, business owners, and developers who revitalize brownfields provide benefits to themselves and their community, including the following:

- Removing unknowns regarding site conditions that might hold up a future sale, financing agreement and/or redevelopment project.
- Increasing return from the property by making it more valuable and marketable.
- Contributing to economic prosperity and environmental restoration in the community.
- Making neighborhoods safer and healthier.
- Avoiding actions by regulatory agencies that may impose penalties and costly cleanups.
- Reducing potential impacts from and on adjacent properties.
- Accessing cleanup and reuse planning resources.

### How can you participate?

Services are available to parties interested in completing **environmental site assessments (ESAs) and regulated building material (RBM) surveys** and/or developing **site cleanup/reuse plans** in support of a property’s sale or redevelopment. Property owners, business owners, and developers are encouraged to submit a brief application to the program to take advantage of this opportunity to further economic development initiatives, protect public health, and restore the health of the surrounding environment.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Do I own a brownfield site?**

If you answer yes to the following questions, you may own a brownfield site.

- Is your land idle, vacant, or less productive than it ought to be?
- Are concerns about historical use or environmental contamination hindering redevelopment or sale of the site?

## **What assistance is available?**

MCEDD has hired a firm to conduct environmental studies, RBM surveys, and cleanup/reuse planning activities on eligible sites.

- **Phase I ESA:** A background study of historical use and existing conditions to evaluate recognized environmental conditions (RECs) and potential areas where hazardous substances or petroleum may have been released.
  - Assess potential impacts from petroleum or hazardous substances that may impede redevelopment.
  - Establish baseline conditions for liability protection.
  - Support property sale/acquisition activities.
  - Provide documentation required to secure loans.
- **Phase II ESA:** A physical study in which samples (e.g., soil, groundwater, soil vapor, surface water, and/or sediments) are collected and tested to characterize the type, distribution, and extent of substances (if present) in the environment.
  - Evaluate the findings of the Phase I ESA (if contamination is suspected).
  - Determine if a release has occurred and delineate the nature, extent, and concentration of contamination (if present).
  - Support efforts to obtain regulatory closure.
- **RBM Survey:** A physical study where building material samples are collected and tested to assess whether regulated substances are present.
  - Determine if asbestos, lead paint, mold, polychlorinated biphenyls, mercury, or other regulated substances are present in building materials.
  - Evaluate regulations that apply to the disturbance or disposal of confirmed regulated materials before undertaking a building remodel, renovation, or demolition.
- **Site Cleanup/Reuse Plan:** A detailed analysis of cleanup alternatives, cost estimates, and implementation plans.
  - Evaluate cleanup alternatives and estimated costs.
  - Develop site plans and/or renderings to illustrate a vision for property redevelopment.

## **Will an assessment affect the value of my property?**

Property values may be affected by uncertainty about site history and the financial and legal risks of environmental impacts. ESAs help property owners quantify the amount of contamination on a property. For properties with little to no contamination, this knowledge may increase marketability. For sites with significant contamination, assessment and cleanup planning can help property owners pursue cleanup funding, realize increased value, and reduce liabilities.

## **Which sites are eligible for grant-funded activities?**

In general, the property must be potentially impacted by petroleum or hazardous substances and be underutilized. Properties that help achieve the project's primary goals (see Page 1 of this fact sheet) will be prioritized for use of funding.

## **Will an assessment trigger reporting to a state or federal environmental agency?**

Information collected in completing Phase I and II ESAs will be shared with the EPA and would be available to others in accordance with MCEDD and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) information sharing guidelines. In some cases, the results of a Phase II ESA may trigger a state reporting requirement.

## **Will I have control over the work done?**

The program is voluntary. The Coalition's environmental contractor will obtain the property owner's permission to access the property to perform environmental assessment work. The property owner will have the right to stop participation in the program at any time during the assessment process and will receive an electronic copy of all final reports.

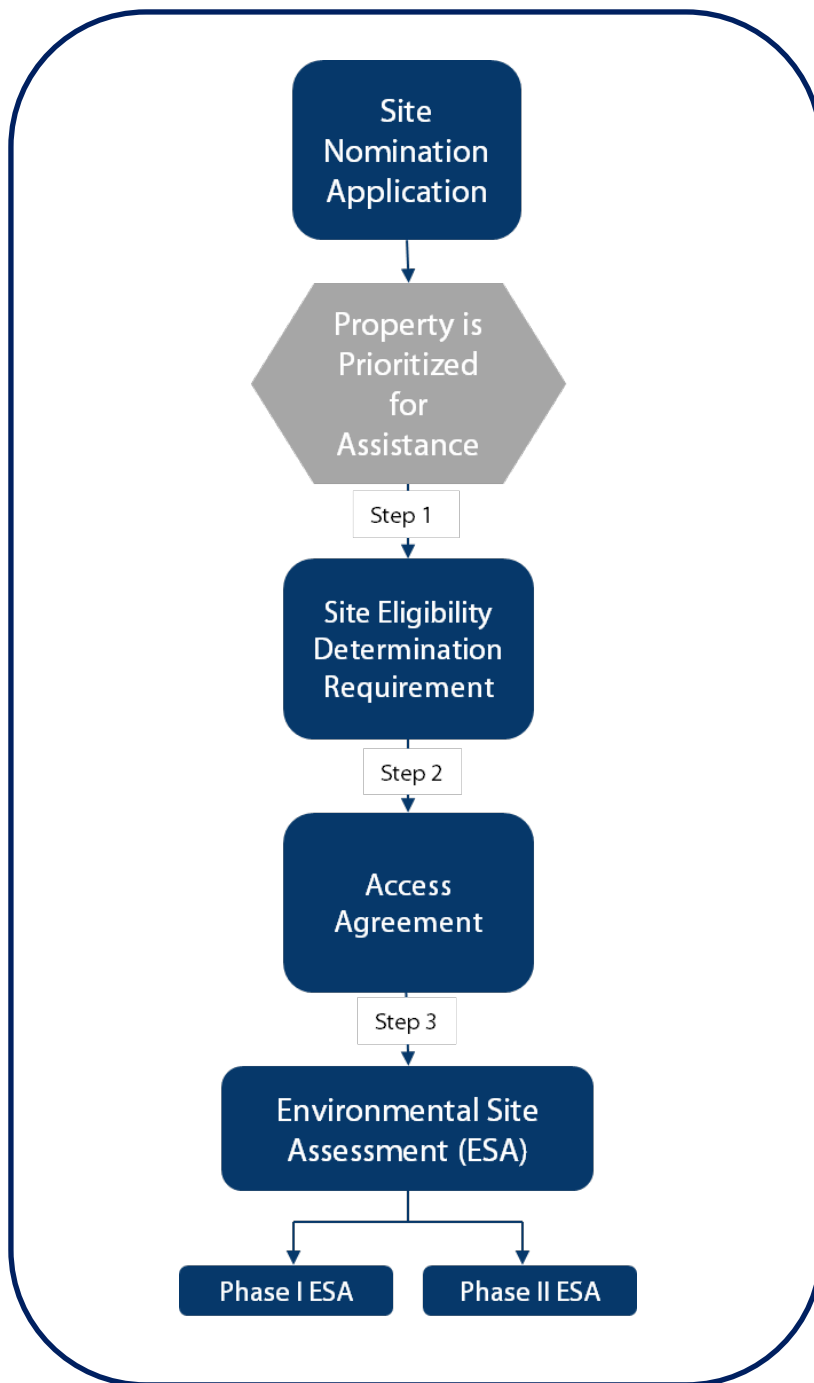
## **How do I nominate a site for grant funding?**

Stakeholders are encouraged to nominate sites for grant funding by completing a Site Nomination Form available on the MCEDD website (<https://www.mcedd.org/industry-development/special-projects/mcedd-brownfield-revitalization-coalition/>). Property owner permission is required to perform grant-funded assessments.

## **How is this program funded?**

In 2023, the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) formed a coalition with Columbia Cascade Housing Corporation (CCHC); Wasco County, OR; Sherman County, OR; and Klickitat County, WA to address brownfields within the Mid-Columbia Region, which includes MCEDD's five member counties: Sherman, Wasco, and Hood River in Oregon, and Skamania and Klickitat in Washington. This coalition was awarded a **\$1 million Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant** from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The grant funds will be used to assess high priority sites to achieve the following goals: 1) resolving buildable large and small employment lands environmental barriers to create family-wage jobs; 2) creating additional units of housing for all income levels; and 3) ensuring that individuals disproportionately impacted by brownfields benefit the most from program projects.

## MCEDD BROWNFIELD PROGRAM PROCESS GUIDE



### For more information contact:

Lindsay McClure

541.296.2266

[lindsay@mcedd.org](mailto:lindsay@mcedd.org)

<https://www.mcedd.org/>

