

# Niagara County Brownfields Program

## “Where Opportunity Knocks Twice”

### What is a brownfield?

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), “Brownfields are abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial and commercial facilities at which expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.”



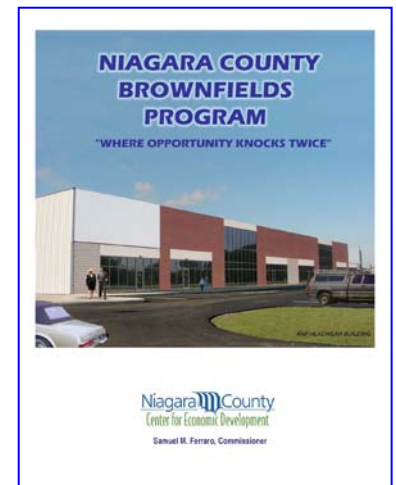
### Where are Brownfields Located?

Virtually every community in the nation’s older industrial regions contains brownfield sites. Niagara County is no exception. Niagara County is aware of the legacy that abandoned commercial and industrial sites have had on the economic and environmental landscape of the region. However, brownfields are a link to our industrial past and a valuable community resource that through redevelopment and reuse can bring important benefits to many economically depressed communities. Consequently communities across Niagara County, with state and federal assistance, are working to put these idle sites back into productive use.

### Niagara County’s Brownfields Program

Reuse of brownfield sites is a priority for the Niagara County Legislature. The Legislature views brownfield redevelopment as an important economic tool for stimulating growth in Niagara County. With the Legislature’s support, Niagara County’s brownfield program was established in 1999 with the following goals:

- Identify and create a county-wide inventory of brownfield sites
- Create a collaboration between all levels of government and the private sector
- Engage the public in the brownfields identification and redevelopment process
- Identify funding mechanisms and evaluate innovative ways to finance redevelopment of brownfield sites



2007 Program Brochure

### Niagara County Brownfield Grants

To help accomplish our brownfields redevelopment goal, Niagara County has received six grant awards from USEPA totaling \$2.85 million and one \$85,000 grant award from New York State.

### USEPA Demonstration Assessment Pilot and Supplemental Assessment Pilots

Grant funding totaling \$350,000 was awarded to Niagara County to inventory and conduct Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments (ESA) at hazardous waste brownfield sites throughout the County. The grant was completed in 2010 with a total of forty-four (44) parcels receiving Phase I ESAs and six (6) parcels receiving Phase II ESAs.

### USEPA Petroleum Assessment Grant

Niagara County received \$200,000 to address petroleum contaminated brownfield sites in the County. Grant funding is being used to conduct an inventory of sites, conduct Phase I and II ESAs, create informational packets on petroleum contamination, and convene a Brownfields Petroleum Working Group. As of mid-2010, eight (8) parcels received Phase I ESAs and two (2) parcels received Phase II ESAs. Additional assessments and outreach activities are planned.

### USEPA Showcase Assessment Grant

Niagara County, Erie County, and the Cities of Niagara Falls and Buffalo joined forces to become designated a USEPA Showcase Community. This designation brought \$400,000 in grant funding to help identify, assess, and prioritize regional brownfield sites. Niagara County served as the lead agency for the grant and was responsible for coordinating all Coalition activities. Grant activities concluded in 2009 with a total of seventy-nine (79) parcels receiving Phase I ESAs and six (6) parcels receiving Phase II ESAs.

### USEPA Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund Program

To aid in brownfields redevelopment, Niagara County partnered with the City of Niagara Falls to jointly receive a \$1 million Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund (BCRLF) grant from USEPA. The BCRLF provides a source of funding in the form of low-interest loans to the private sector and subgrants to local municipalities and non-profit organizations that need assistance in remediating brownfield sites in Niagara County. The BCRLF was further supplemented with a \$900,000 grant award from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Projects are funded on a first-come-first serve basis.

## **Revising Brownfields: A Regional Strategic Approach**

As part of the Showcase Community efforts, a regional brownfields strategy report was developed to provide guidance on consistently addressing brownfield issues on a regional level. The plan focused heavily on waterfront brownfield sites and included a prioritization strategy for determining which projects would yield the highest return on investment, policies for encouraging sustainable brownfield redevelopment, and conceptual redevelopment plans for three priority brownfield areas in Niagara County. In addition to funding from USEPA, the plan was funded with an \$85,000 grant received from the New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources, under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund.



## **Future Brownfield Efforts**

Brownfields revitalization is critical to the future of Niagara County. Remediating contaminated sites and making them productive again results in job creation and a healthier environment. Therefore, Niagara County is concentrating on brownfields redevelopment as a key strategy for economic regeneration and environmental revitalization, by understanding that brownfield sites offer a substantial economic opportunity for the region. To this end, Niagara County will continue its brownfields mission by working with all interested stakeholders to identify and redevelop abandoned commercial and industrial contaminated sites.

## **Additional Resources**

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/brownfields.html>

New York State Brownfields Opportunity Area Program:

[www.nyswaterfronts.com/grantopps\\_BOA.asp](http://www.nyswaterfronts.com/grantopps_BOA.asp)

United States Environmental Protection Agency: [www.epa.gov/brownfields](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields)

**For more information on Niagara County's brownfields program please contact:**

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