



Brownfields Basics & Funding Resources

West Duluth Business Group - April 2, 2024

An aerial photograph of a wide river flowing through a landscape with dense forests. The trees on the banks are in various stages of autumn, showing shades of yellow, orange, and green. The river itself is a deep blue-grey color. In the distance, the horizon is flat under a pale blue sky with some light clouds. A small, dark structure is visible on the left bank in the lower-left corner.

MPCA mission

Protect and improve the environment and enhance human health.

Brownfield Community Outreach Team



Shannon Martin
Brownfields Outreach Coordinator
St. Paul



Crystal Mogensen
Brownfields Outreach Planner
Duluth

Program Mission

Expand and Deepen Brownfield Outreach To:

- Underserved communities in areas of concern (e.g., rural Minnesota)
- Tribal Nations
- Local units of government
- Property owners and professionals involved in brownfield real estate transactions



Minnesota Representation

- Big Project, Small City: The Confluence. A Convergence of Funding and Partnerships; City of Hastings
- Using an All-In Approach to Redevelop Distressed Sites within the Leech Lake Reservation and the City of Cass Lake, Minnesota; City of Cass Lake
- Recentering and Reclaiming Power for Community in Brownfield Redevelopment; Saint Paul



Brownfields 2025

Sustainable Communities Start Here

AUGUST 5-8, 2025 | CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



NORTHWEST INDIANA

brownfields

COALITION

Revitalizing and Creating New Neighborhoods in the Heart of Brownfield Country: Challenges, Successes, and Lessons Learned in Northwest Indiana

Moderator:

Kathy Luther- Director of Environmental Programs, NW Indiana Regional Planning Commission

Panelists:

Milan Kruszynski-District Manager, Hammond Sanitary District

Frank Rivera – Executive Director, Redevelopment, City of East Chicago

Marino Solorio-Park and Recreation Director/Interim City Planner, City of East Chicago

Brenda Scott-Henry-Director, Office of Sustainability & Environmental Affairs, City of Gary

NWIBC Accomplishments

2014-2024

- **3 Completed US EPA Brownfield Grants
Totaling \$ 2 Million**
- **38 Project Sites (222 acres) Supported.**
 - **33 Phase I Environmental Assessments**
 - **17 Phase II Environmental or Further Assessments**
 - **3 Clean Up Planning**
 - **2 Revolving Loan Fund Remediations**
- **Revitalization Successes**
 - **4 New Housing Developments**
 - **3 Water Towers**
 - **1 Medical Facility**
 - **1 Industrial Facility**
- **Return on Investment**
 - **Net assessed value increase for 4 projects
of 38 project sites \$29,245,700**



Clark Residence Hall Calumet College of St. Joseph Hammond, IN

This vacant 8-acre site of a former trailer park had a prior history of waste disposal and potential impact from adjacent brownfields. The site was a high priority for residential due to its prime location near Calumet College of St. Joseph and next to the Lost Marsh Golf Course, itself an award-winning brownfield redevelopment completed in 2003.

Pre-Redevelopment Assessed Value	\$ 40,100
Brownfield Assessment Grant Investment	\$ 87,107
Local Government Remedial Soil Removal	\$80,000

2024
[Calumet College of St. Joseph](#)
[New 60+ student dorm](#)
Investment: \$4.8 M



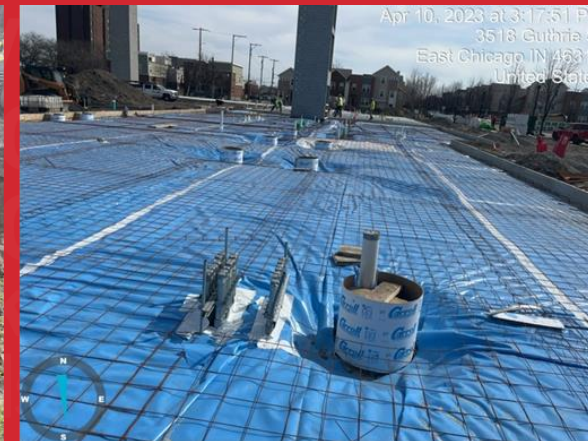
Lakeshore Manor

Lakeshore Manor is a 206-unit senior housing development newly constructed on 3.6 acres comprised of 37 parcels in East Chicago's North Harbor section just blocks from Lake Michigan Shoreline. The project is a public-private partnership between East Chicago Housing Authority and DTM Real Estate to replace a facility that had to be closed.

Although vacant since 2016, the location previously hosted a wide variety of businesses and facilities over its 100-yr history, including manufacturing, printing, and dry-cleaning. Adjacent property uses included a tin shop, filling station, lumber yard, coal yard,

Previous investigations had shown 10 of the parcels on the western side of the site VOCs, arsenic, and lead in soil, groundwater, and/or soil gases on the property exceeding IDEM residential screening levels.

Brownfield Assessment Grant:	\$ 3,750
Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund Investment:	\$ 650,000
Construction, Architecture, Engineering:	\$ 29.8M
Total Project Cost	\$ 40.9 M





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Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Unique Brownfield Sites for Attainable Housing

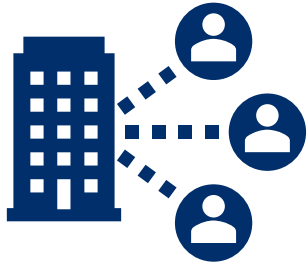
Emily Blanton, AICP

Senior Urban Planner, ICF

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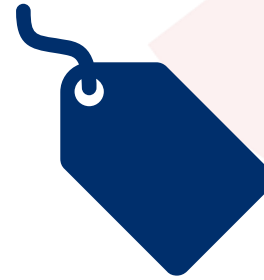
A Place to Call Home...



Extreme shortage of available homes
(estimates up to 7 million in 2025)



Point in Time collections indicate that **580,000+ are experiencing homelessness** on any given night



Rising construction and labor costs leading to less multi-family housing starts



Disconnect between jobs and affordable housing, raising transportation costs

(partial) **Solution:**

Brownfield sites!



But what about...?

CHALLENGES

- Layout of existing building can be difficult to rearrange
- Building codes, zoning regulations, and complex application of local regulations
- Existing market and financial feasibility
- Experience in conversions
- Environmental concerns – make sure you have the right site!
- Alternative community-desired uses

OPPORTUNITIES

- Conveniently located in urban areas
- Often adds property back to the tax base
- Often have existing infrastructure and municipal interconnections that speed up the construction process and reduce costs
- Maintain neighborhood character
- Can stack tax credits and incentive programs



Manufacturing Spaces

Large spans and flexible space

Older buildings have ample light and windows (typically)

Existing finishes (concrete, exposed ceilings, etc.) can reduce construction costs



Schools

Large windows and rooms with high ceilings, wide hallways

Established in neighborhoods with access to transportation

Other spaces (gyms, auditoriums) can be used for community space/amenities



Office Buildings

Can be more difficult with large floorplates (windows/light issues) but often in central business district

Can contribute to downtown economic recovery and market conditions make these attractive



Churches

Brings property back on tax rolls

Large interior spaces make for unique housing options

Typically located in neighborhood settings



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From Blight to Bright: Innovative Strategies for Revitalizing Deteriorated Housing

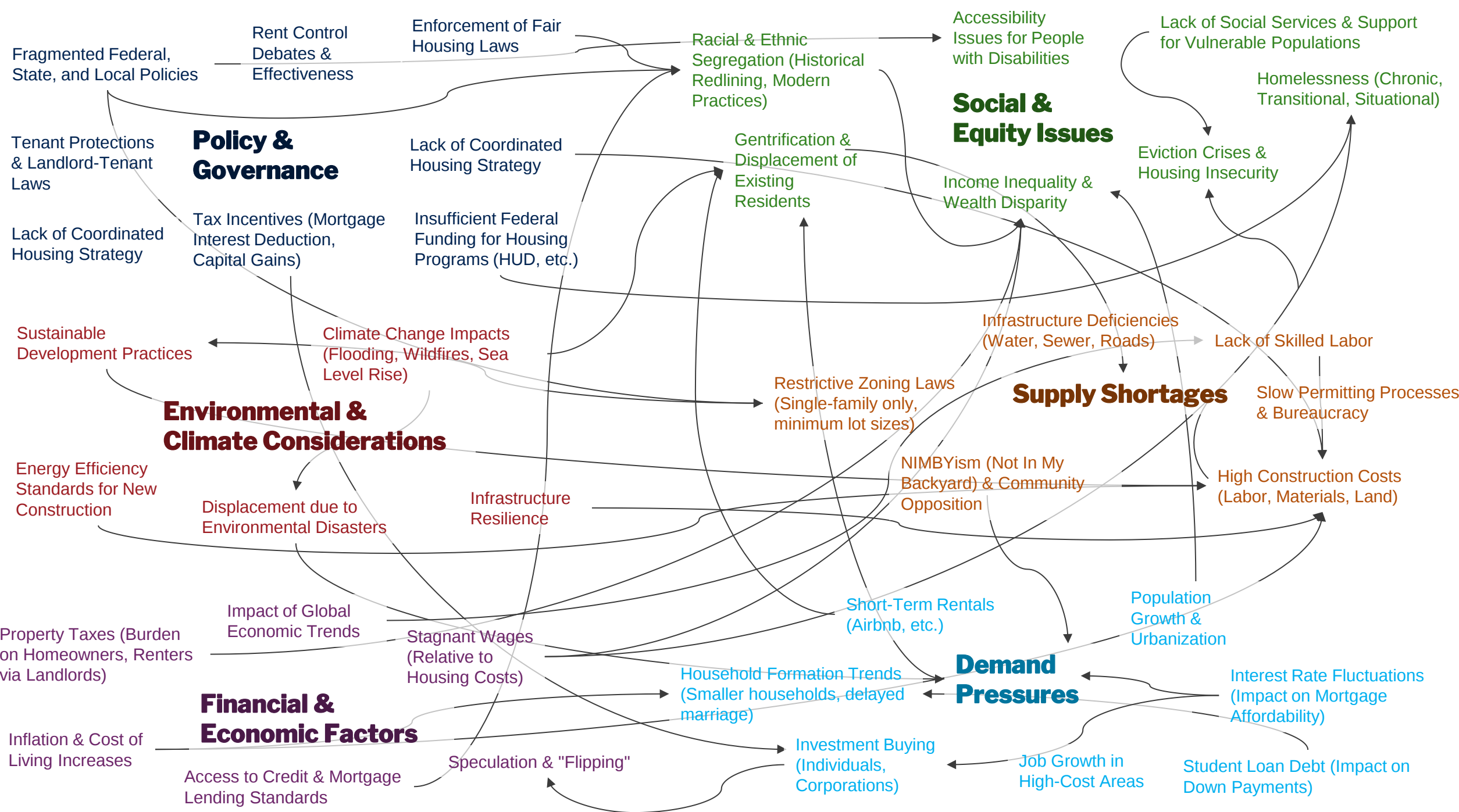
Andrew Brown

Assistant Director of Economic Development & Planning

Village of Park Forest

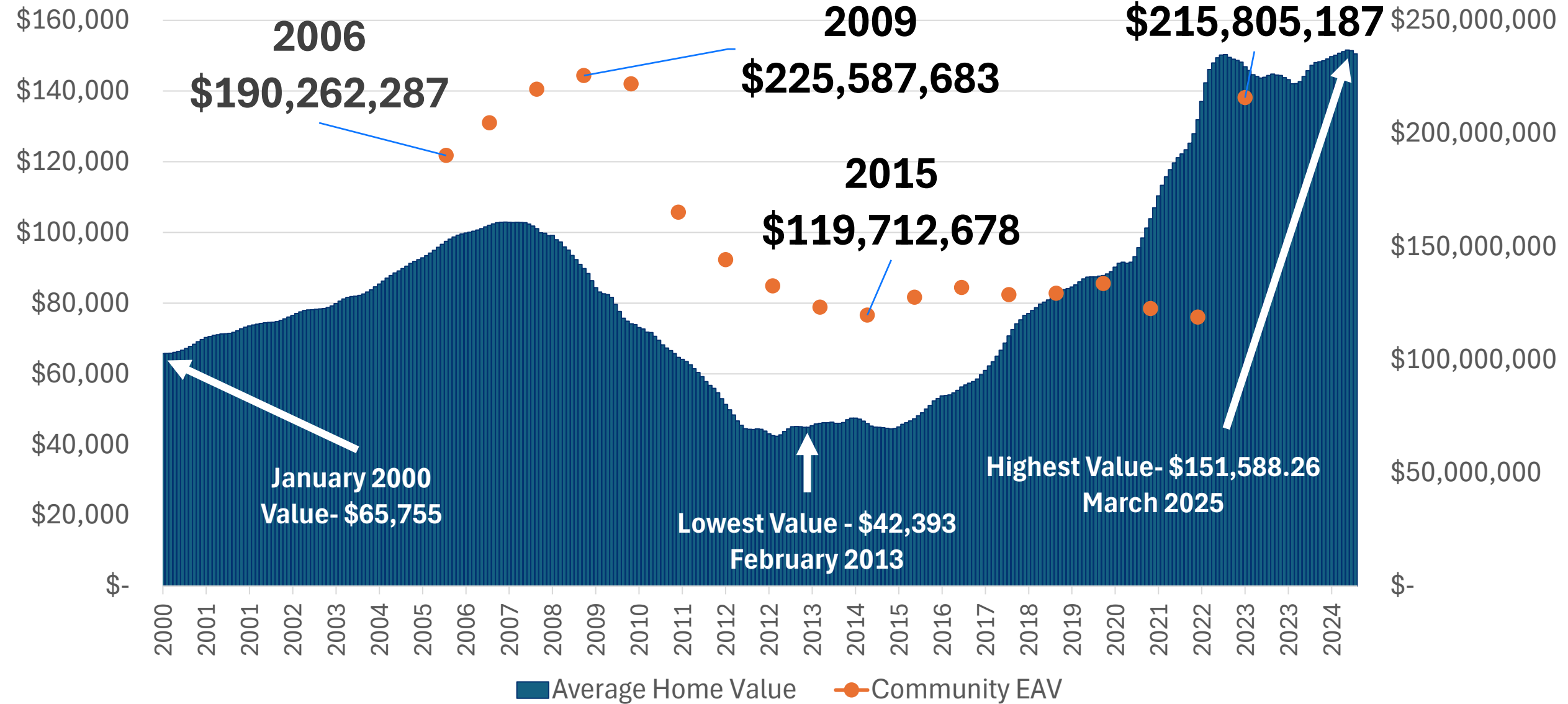
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Average Home Values & Community EAV

2023



Data Source: Cook County Clerk & Will County Clerk



These housing problems are *wicked*...

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Wicked Problems:

- (1) involve many stakeholders with conflicting priorities; and
- (2) its roots are tangled; and
- (3) it changes with every attempt to address it; and
- (4) you've never faced it before; and
- (5) there's no way to evaluate whether a remedy will work, chances are good that it's wicked.

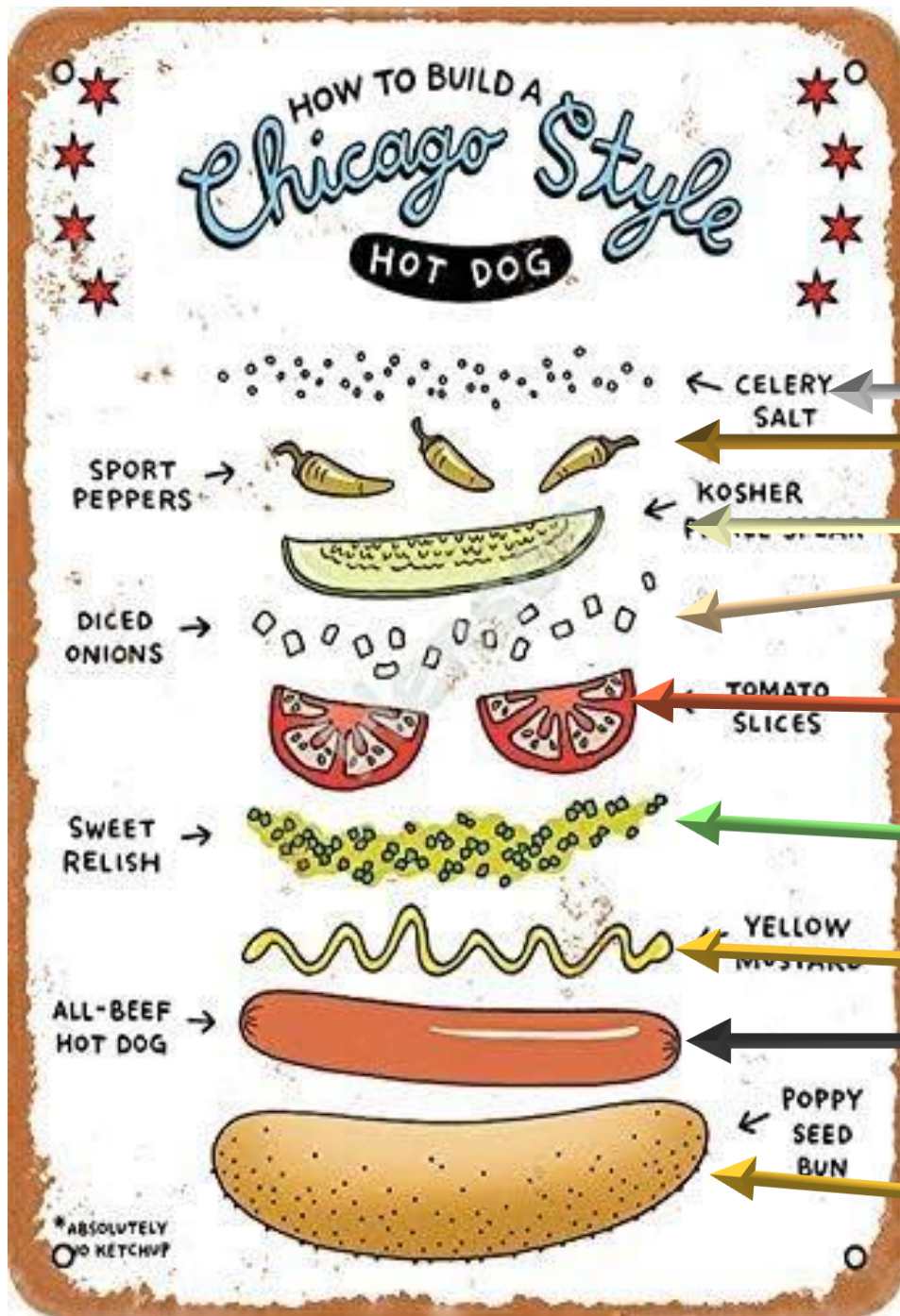
Source: <https://hbr.org/2008/05/strategy-as-a-wicked-problem>



Chicago Style

HOT DOGS





CSHD Ingredients

Celery Salt: The finishing touch, tying all the flavors together.

Sport Peppers: Delivers a mild, briny heat.

Dill Pickle Spear: A crunchy, savory counterpoint.

Chopped White Onions: Provides a crisp, pungent bite.

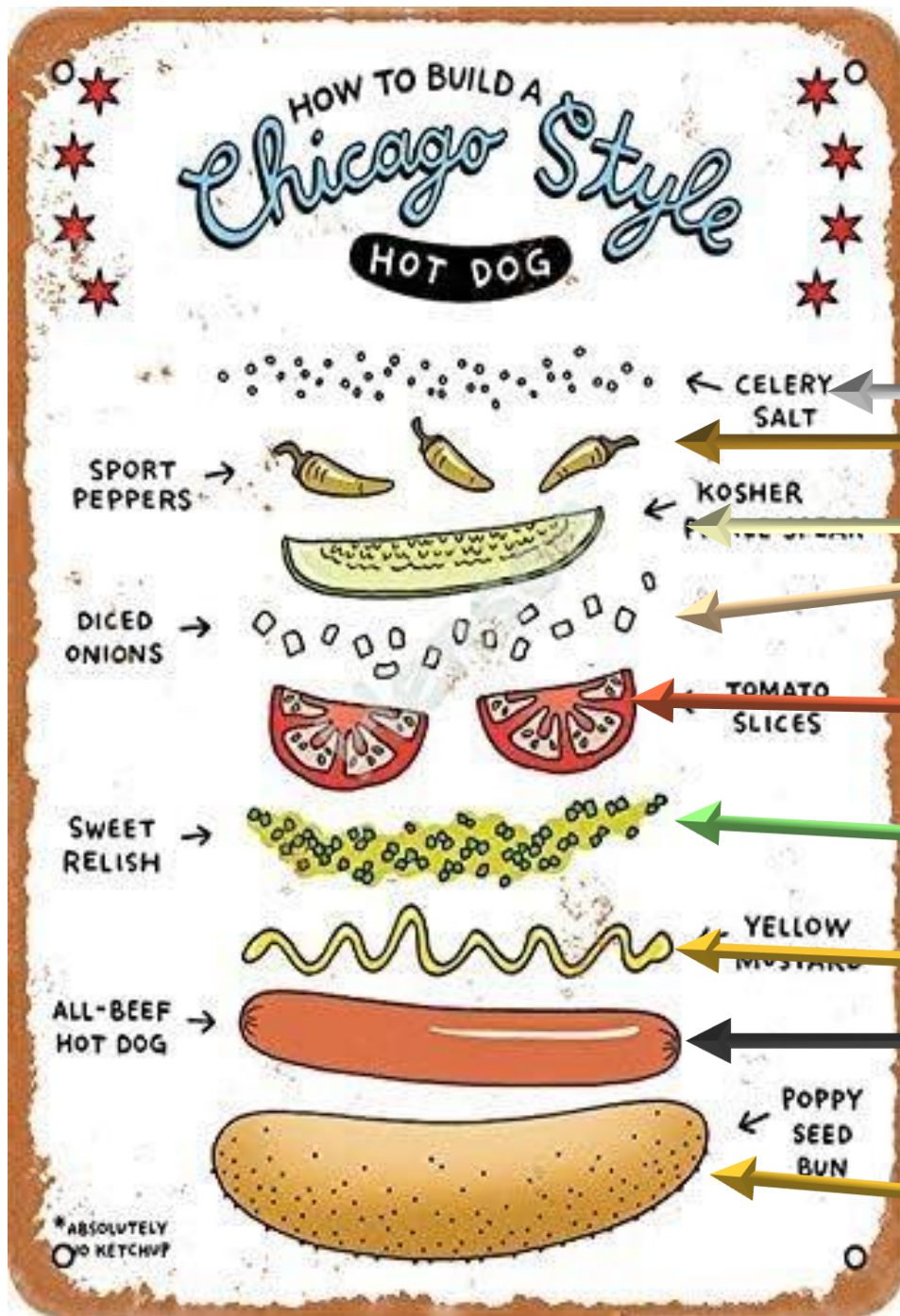
Tomato Slices or Wedges: Offers freshness and a slight acidity.

Sweet Green Pickle Relish (Neon Green): Adds a bright, sweet, and slightly tart element.

Yellow Mustard: A tangy, essential condiment.

All-Beef Frankfurter: The principal element.

Poppy Seed Bun: The base that holds everything together.



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The Foundation: Strategic Housing & Land Use Planning

- 2008 Strategic Land Use & Economic Development Plan
- 211th Street Metra Station Transit Oriented Development Plan (2008)
- 211th Street Metra Station Transit Oriented Development Implementation Study (2012)
- 2018 Comprehensive Housing Plan
- Elevating Aging in Community in Park Forest a Strategic Guide (2022)
- Strategic Goals (2022)

These **PLANS & STUDIES** are the foundation for inclusive policy that leads to effective, *community-led* interventions



The Foundation: Strategic Housing & Land Use Planning

- Collaborating and Partnering with Land Banks (Cook County & South Suburban):
 - Works with Cook County Land Bank (CCLBA) to return vacant/tax-delinquent properties to use.
 - Partners with South Suburban Land Bank (SSLBA) – 29 members, tailored strategies for South Suburbs
- Land Acquisition; Acquires lots via abandonment, lien foreclosure, bank donations, tax sales.

Founding Member of South Suburban Land Bank;
Instrumental in SSLBA establishment.



The Core Program: Building Code Enforcement & Oversight

- Central to neighborhood stabilization
- Keeps homeowners in their homes
- Prevents blight in vacant/abandoned properties
- Ensures safety and maintenance standards
- Provides roadmap for rehabilitation or demolition
- Manages building permits and inspections

The Building Department acts as the eyes and ears for the Village.

Since 1998 the Building Department has adjudicated citations at municipal court which allows for direct intervention with property owners.



The Essential Condiment: Ongoing Property Maintenance

- Maintains over 100 acquired lots (especially post-demolition)
- Prevents blight from tall grass and weeds
- Offers vacant land for community gardens (interim use)
- Manages maintenance expenses and legal fees for acquired properties (e.g., Majestic Luxury Townhomes).

The Villages ongoing property maintenance of Village-owned and non-owned property **allows for future aggregation of land for developers and for the Village to be proactive** with landscaping and/or building concerns.



The Enhancers: Community Partnerships for Rehabilitation

- Partnering with Habitat for Humanity and CEDA to rehabilitate and house low to moderate income residents in the Village
- Since 2016, the Illinois Housing and Development Authority has supported the Village through the Strong Communities Program, Home Repair and Accessibility Program, Abandoned Property Program, and Blight Reduction Program for \$2,967,200
- The South Suburban Land Bank's rehabilitation program has started fully rehabbing homes in the community

Partnerships allows the Village to leverage other organizations core capabilities to renew properties throughout the Village.



The Fresh Additions: Housing Services & Support

- Park Forest Housing Authority was established in 1988; became a division of the Village's Community Development Department in 1994
- PFHA administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8), a federally funded program enabling very low-income families, elderly, and disabled individuals to afford safe private housing
- The PFHA ensures property maintenance, enforces federal and local housing laws, and preserves community character through inspections and tenant/landlord education

PFHA provides essential housing assistance, ensuring property standards, and actively improving the quality of life and security in Park Forest neighborhoods.



The Supporting Workforce: Volunteer & Training Programs

- AmeriCorps NCCC (2017 – 2022)
 - Assists with vacant lot maintenance
 - Leverages volunteer/service programs for property upkeep that benefits every neighborhood worked in
- Cook County Sheriff's RENEW program
 - Deconstructed 15 houses
 - Provided job training to ~ 124 non-violent offenders

The Village looks to collaborate with partnerships near and far to support our neighborhoods.



The Tangy Crunch: Advocacy & Fair Housing Initiatives

- The SSHC's mission is to promote a unitary housing market
- It aims to eliminate discrimination based on race or other protected group status in housing
- The center fosters stable, long-term diverse communities
- They achieve this through Fair Housing Enforcement, Housing Counseling, and Education and Outreach programs



Park Forest League of Women's Voters was part of the founding members of the SSHC.



The Cherry on Top: Collaborative Skill-Building & Targeted Rehab

- South Suburban Trade Initiative (SSTI)
 - Partnership: Village, South Suburban College, Prairie State College
 - Uses IHDA grants & Village matching funds
 - Students/apprentices (construction, HVAC, unions) perform labor
 - Funds primarily for materials; labor largely donated
 - Proceeds from sales and grants continue projects

To date, the Village has rehabbed seven houses and sold them all for above-market rate.



The Finishing Touch: Comprehensive Community Stabilization Efforts

- Demolition of Blighted Structures
 - \$1.7M in grants used to demolish 96 houses since 2009
 - Reduced police calls (52% decrease in Eastgate, 2012-2017)
 - Burglaries to vacant properties decreased significantly (51 to 2)
 - Removed 67 houses in Eastgate neighborhood
 - Nearly \$2M used for 4 major commercial demolitions (2012)

The Village's ability to demolish vacant, abandoned, or deteriorated properties in a swift manner likely saved the rest of the neighborhood from a similar fate. Properties that couldn't even sell after the recession are selling for \$150,000 today...

305 Sauganash Street



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5

336 Early Street



Before

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After
 **Brownfields 2025**
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244 Gentry Street



Before



During

What do we do?

- Remember that **no one is going to fight for your community more than you will**
- **Layer** programs and partnerships as best as you can
- **Build revenue from housing strategies to support more housing strategies**
- **Build the trades!**
- Network and collaborate with your neighbor communities; **there's a good chance they're facing similar challenges**
- **Winning Matters – Never Give Up!**

New Grant Award!

- MPCA recently awarded \$2 Million through the EPA Brownfields Assessment grant for States and Tribes
- Grant duration: 2025-2030
- Applications received on a rolling basis
- Funding decisions made 3 times a year – February, June & November

MPCA Brownfield Assessment Grants - Priorities

- Rural Minnesota
- Areas with elevated environmental health risks
- Redevelopment: affordable housing, jobs, etc.
- Evidence of community support
- Emerging developers (5 projects or less)

Brownfield Assessment Grant



Brownfield redevelopment

Brownfields are abandoned or underused properties where there is known or suspected contamination. They include abandoned gas stations, former dry cleaners, old factories, and more. Investigating and cleaning up brownfields allows for redevelopment while protecting human health and the environment.

Fee for service program

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has a brownfield fee-for-service program that provides technical assistance and issues liability assurance letters to promote the investigation, cleanup, and redevelopment of property that is contaminated with petroleum and hazardous substances. Program customers include property owners, prospective purchasers, developers, lending institutions, local units of government, and nonprofit organizations.

Grant funding

The MPCA administers a grant program, funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), that pays for environmental assessments of brownfield properties to support redevelopment and reuse. The work is performed by MPCA contractors at no cost to grant recipients.

The MPCA seeks to fund projects:

- In disadvantaged communities or areas of concern for environmental justice, when the project will benefit the existing neighborhood and avoid physical or cultural displacement
- That provide community benefits and have community support
- That create community greenspace
- In small communities in Greater Minnesota

Redeveloping brownfield properties benefits local communities

- Improves public health and the environment
- Reduces urban sprawl
- Enhances the livability of neighborhoods
- Creates new businesses and jobs
- Adds to the tax base



Eligible grant applicants

Eligible sites in Minnesota can be publicly or privately owned with known or suspected contamination. Applicants who are determined to be responsible for the release/contamination are not eligible.

Applicants include, but are not limited to:

- Community organizations
- Local units of government
- Emerging developers (developers who have completed five or fewer projects)
- Tribal Nations



Before: Bunge Grain Elevator in Minneapolis. After: Mays Commons & Brook Ave Co-op, affordable housing and student housing cooperative. Photo: Project for Pride in Living & Riverton Community Housing

The MPCA staff perform technical reviews and approve workplans, investigation reports, and cleanup plans to ensure that environmental concerns are properly addressed during site redevelopment. The MPCA also provides liability assurance and environmental closure letters, as appropriate, for contamination identified at the property.

Eligible grant activities

- Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments
- Sampling and analysis plans
- Preparation of cleanups plans
- Community engagement for reuse planning
- MPCA Brownfield Programs fees
- In limited situations, hazardous materials building surveys can be covered to identify lead-based paint and asbestos containing materials

Ineligible grant sites and activities

- Federal or state Superfund sites
- Closed permitted landfills
- Renovations or expansions for single family homes
- Building abatement that does not end in demolition
- Hazardous materials cleanup and/or abatement
- Cleanup actions
- Radon and mold abatement

How to apply



Scan the QR code to access the application form at: <https://www.mca.state.mn.us/grants-and-loans/grants-for-brownfield-investigation>. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis.

Submit your application by email to: brownfieldgrants.MPCA@state.mn.us

Contact us

Brownfield grants
651-757-2904
brownfieldgrants.MPCA@state.mn.us



Website:

[Apply now - Funding for brownfield investigation](https://www.mca.state.mn.us/grants-and-loans/grants-for-brownfield-investigation)
[| Minnesota Pollution Control Agency](https://www.mca.state.mn.us/grants-and-loans/grants-for-brownfield-investigation)

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MINNESOTA POLLUTION
CONTROL AGENCY

Questions?

Brownfield Grants Team

651-757-2283

brownfieldgrants.mpca@state.mn.us



Crystal: crystal.mogensen@state.mn.us