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Green Municipal Fund



Evaluate, improve, celebrate:
**A guide to enhancing
your brownfield
programs**

Leadership in Brownfield Renewal Program
Guidebook Series

Acknowledgements

This guidebook is based on best practices observed in communities across Canada, as well as information provided by leading brownfield experts and the cities of Edmonton, AB, and Kingston, ON. It also draws on past research commissioned by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). Monique Punt of MPunt Environmental Consulting and Tammy Lomas-Jylha of Lomas-Jylha Consulting Inc. were the lead researchers and authors.



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Evaluate, improve, celebrate: A guide to enhancing your brownfield programs

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About this guidebook

This guidebook contains helpful information for municipalities that want to evaluate the impact of their brownfield programs, improve program performance and celebrate redevelopment success stories. It showcases the brownfield programs of two Canadian municipalities and outlines how those programs have evolved since their implementation over a decade ago.

The guidebook is part of a series developed for FCM's Leadership in Brownfield Renewal (LiBRe) program, a program designed to help municipalities become better facilitators of the brownfield redevelopment process. The information contained in this guidebook will help municipalities complete the final step of the LiBRe best practices framework: "evaluate, improve and celebrate."

LiBRe Best Practices Framework



Commit to action

Raise awareness and secure a formal municipal commitment to support brownfield redevelopment

► [Read the guidebook](#)



Understand the landscape

Conduct a detailed analysis of brownfield sites and the local context

► [Read the guidebook](#)



Build partnerships

Build relationships with key brownfield stakeholders

► [Read the guidebook](#)



Devise a strategy

Develop a formal policy and programs for facilitating brownfield redevelopment

► [Read the guidebook](#)



Promote programs and opportunities

Build awareness of brownfield issues, programs and redevelopment opportunities

► [Read the guidebook](#)



Manage programs and projects

Foster the redevelopment of local brownfield sites

► [Read the guidebook](#)



Evaluate, improve and celebrate

Assess and improve brownfield redevelopment policies, programs and processes, and celebrate success

How to enhance your brownfield programs

To successfully catalyze the redevelopment of local brownfield sites, your municipal brownfield programs should be tailored to your local context and target specific redevelopment barriers. These factors may change over time, so it is important to review and update your brownfield programs periodically to ensure that they continue to respond to your stakeholders' needs. Tracking the strengths, weaknesses and impacts of your programs will enable you to make improvements and identify success stories. These success stories and continual improvements will be key to sustaining program uptake and maintaining buy-in from decision-makers and the community.

➤ Evaluate and report on program impacts

Conduct reviews and performance audits of your brownfield programs periodically (e.g. every five years). Review everything, including the funding offer, forms, approval processes, marketing approaches and service delivery, and seek feedback from key stakeholders (e.g. planning, finance and legal departments; environmental consultants and contractors; developers; and land owners).

These reviews will allow you to:

- ✓ Evaluate the full costs and benefits of each program
- ✓ Assess whether the targets and desired outcomes are being achieved
- ✓ Verify applicant satisfaction levels

With this information, you can determine whether changes to program delivery are needed and identify any need for staff training.

Before you begin, ensure that you have measurable performance indicators in place. Reporting on performance indicators is critical to demonstrating the progress and impact of your brownfield programs. Use the performance indicators outlined in your brownfield strategy, or consider the indicators outlined in the text box.

Examples of brownfield program performance indicators

- | | |
|--|---|
| ➤ Area of land remediated | ➤ Improved neighbourhood aesthetics |
| ➤ Increase in property tax | ➤ New community amenities |
| ➤ Increase in neighbouring property assessment | ➤ Volume of soil and groundwater remediated |
| ➤ Job creation | ➤ Pollutants of concern addressed |

► Adjust your brownfield program offering and service delivery as needed

Each project presents an opportunity to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and uptake of your brownfield programs. For example, you may identify ways to simplify approval processes or reduce processing fees. The evaluation process may also reveal that some brownfield programs are having a greater impact than others. Revise, enhance or terminate programs as needed. Perform regular reviews of best practices in other jurisdictions and integrate them into your brownfield programs when possible.

► Showcase your brownfield success stories

Now that you have evaluated the impacts of your brownfield programs, you can showcase the redevelopment success stories they helped catalyze. Demonstrating the effectiveness of your programs will garner more interest and support from developers, decision-makers and the community.

Communicate your success stories through avenues like press releases, social media and public events. Require that recipients of municipal financial assistance display a sign at their redevelopment sites acknowledging the municipality's contribution. When appropriate, apply for awards (e.g. the FCM Sustainable Communities Awards) to showcase your achievements to the greater public. Also, consider preparing case studies — with information on the project's vision, goals, incentives, process, challenges and results — to showcase your brownfield redevelopment successes.



Credit: Federation of Canadian Municipalities

The City of Edmonton, AB, received an FCM Sustainable Communities Award in 2016 for its Brownfields Redevelopment Grant Program.



Credit: Actual Media / Canadian Brownfields Network

The City of Guelph, ON, received a Brownie Award in 2016 for its Guidelines for Development of Contaminated or Potentially Contaminated Sites.



Credit: Actual Media / Canadian Brownfields Network

The City of Orillia, ON, received a Brownie Award in 2016 for revitalizing a brownfield site through the construction of the Orillia Recreation Facility.



Credit: Federation of Canadian Municipalities

The Region of Waterloo, ON, received an FCM Sustainable Communities Award in 2016 for its involvement in the Breithaupt Block revitalization project.

The following case studies highlight how the municipalities of Edmonton, AB, and Kingston, ON, were able to remain responsive to the needs of their stakeholders through periodic assessments and adjustments of their brownfield programs.



Edmonton began piloting a brownfield redevelopment grant program in 2005 to accelerate remediation and redevelopment of privately owned brownfield properties. Program uptake did not initially meet expectations, so the city formed an internal task force in 2010 to review and improve the program. This resulted in a more focused and comprehensive set of funding tools targeting refueling sites in mature neighbourhoods. The city re-launched the grant program in 2012, and continues to improve the program based on lessons learned and evolving stakeholder needs.

Program overview

Edmonton now offers brownfield property owners the following financial support:

- ▶ **Phase I environmental site assessments:** A maximum of \$5,000 or 80 per cent of eligible costs (whichever is less).
- ▶ **Testing, delineation, remedial/exposure control planning:** A maximum of \$80,000 or 80 per cent of eligible costs (whichever is less).
- ▶ **Remediation:** Up to 100 per cent of total remediation costs, or the net annual increase in municipal property taxes as calculated by the city assessor over six consecutive years (whichever is less). Properties that obtain at least a LEED® Gold certification can receive up to 100 per cent of total remediation costs, while all other properties can receive up to 50 per cent.
- ▶ **Remediation / exposure control / interim solution:** A maximum of \$200,000 or 80 per cent of the remediation and exposure control program being proposed (whichever is less). The grant can also be applied to the implementation of an innovative interim land use or renewable energy project while the site is undergoing longer-term remediation with exposure control.

How the program evolved

Those who applied to the 2005 pilot program highlighted the following reasons for low uptake:

- Incentives were needed at each step of the project to support incremental progress toward project completion.
- Some projects could not be completed by the deadline set by the city.
- The grant was not substantial enough to make projects economically viable for developers.
- The program needed to support interim uses, as some brownfield sites take years to be redeveloped, either due to the chosen remediation approach or because the owner has no immediate redevelopment plans.

Based on this feedback, the program was modified in 2011 in the following ways:

- Providing support for various stages of the remediation process (e.g. environmental site assessments, delineation, remediation) and for the application of sustainable remediation methods and interim land uses.
- Increasing the remediation grant maximum from \$100,000 to \$200,000.
- Removing deadlines for completion of project milestones, while still providing payout at the end of all approved work.

Since the launch of the new grant program, additional adjustments have been made as applicant experiences are better understood. The most significant improvements to the program include revising the funding formula for remediation grants from a maximum of \$200,000 or 80 per cent (whichever was less) to a maximum of 100 per cent of remediation costs plus LEED certification costs (or 50 per cent of remediation costs if an applicant chooses to build at less than LEED Gold level).

Performance evaluation and reporting

The city regularly evaluates and improves its brownfield programs. Stakeholders (including environmental consultants, planners, lawyers, financial institutions, developers and property owners) are consulted to ensure that current incentives meet their needs and to identify potential impacts that program modifications may have on specific properties. The main performance indicators used are the tax uplift generated by redevelopment projects, stakeholder feedback and the number of project phases completed.

City council is updated annually on:

- program uptake
- lessons learned
- suggested program improvements

Program results

Thus far, the program has achieved the following results:

- From the original inventory of potentially qualifying brownfield sites, over half have now been redeveloped.
- More than \$10 million has been paid or reserved since the launch of the program.
- Projects have achieved many of the city's priorities: environmental restoration, neighbourhood revitalization, municipal financial sustainability, use of existing city infrastructure, and compact urban development.

Celebrating success

The City of Edmonton has celebrated the success of its brownfield programs by applying for brownfield-related awards. It has been awarded:

- ▶ The Canadian Urban Institute's Brownie Award for Reinvestment (2015)
- ▶ The provincial Minister's Award for Municipal Excellence for Larger Municipalities (2015)
- ▶ The FCM Sustainable Communities Award for Brownfields Program (2016)

The city also developed a testimonial video entitled “Innovation in Sustainability: Redeveloping Contaminated Sites” to highlight a local developer’s satisfaction with the municipal brownfield programs. City staff also promote and celebrate the program’s achievements by delivering presentations during webinars and conferences.

Testimonials

“The Brownfield redevelopment program was critical for us in breaking the frustrating logjam we had and finding a way to get these empty, derelict sites back into really productive use in our city. We put in place a brownfield coordinator who could help you through the programs.”

Councillor Ben Henderson,
City of Edmonton, AB



With numerous abandoned and underutilized industrial properties and increasing urban sprawl, Kingston City Council wanted to create a policy that would help to “level the playing field” between greenfield and brownfield development and incentivize infilling and revitalization in older neighbourhoods. In 2005, the city launched a brownfield program as the main component of its Community Improvement Plan (CIP), to provide tax-based redevelopment incentives targeting inner-city areas in need of revitalization (the “CIP Project Areas”). The program has experienced significant uptake and has contributed to the revitalization of over a dozen brownfield sites. The city regularly assesses the program for effectiveness and cash flow, and brownfields continue to be a strategic priority for city council.

Program overview

The brownfield program is available to developers and property owners, and offers three types of funding support:

- ▶ **Initial Study Grant:** Matching grants are available from the city for up to 50 per cent of the cost of a Phase II environmental site assessment, remedial action plan and site-specific risk assessments. A maximum of two studies are allowed per property, for up to \$20,000 in total grants.
- ▶ **Municipal and provincial tax assistance:** The Brownfield Financial Tax Incentive Program (BFTIP) provides relief from paying 100 per cent of the municipal and 100 per cent of the educational property tax for a period of up to 36 months.
- ▶ **Municipal tax rebate:** The Tax Increment-Based Rehabilitation Grant Program (TIRGP) provides financial relief to property owners who redevelop brownfields within the CIP Project Areas. The grant is calculated as 80 per cent of the increase in the municipal portion of the taxes and is paid on an annual basis for up to 10 years or up to the value of the eligible rehabilitation costs, whichever is less.

How the program evolved

A number of improvements have been made to the program over the years based on lessons learned. The most notable changes have included:

- ▶ Expanding the CIP Project Areas in 2006 and again in 2013 to make additional brownfield sites eligible for funding and to support the implementation of specific neighborhood revitalization plans.
- ▶ Hiring a full-time staff member in 2012 responsible for overseeing program management, improvements and uptake.
- ▶ Increasing the Initial Study Grant from \$10,000 to \$20,000 to respond to feedback from developers and property owners who indicated that the grant did not sufficiently cover study costs. Uptake has increased to the point where the city now funds, on average, three Initial Study Grants per year.
- ▶ Approving a “sliding scale” approach in 2014 to allow allocation of brownfield financial incentives based on need and community benefit (e.g. affordable housing, heritage preservation, and innovation in energy and water efficiency). When evaluating applications, the city now considers additional factors, such as the environmental impact compared to the project value. The city also takes into account any previous discounts that were offered on the purchase price due to environmental liabilities associated with the site.
- ▶ Forming a staff committee in 2016 with representatives from several departments, including legal, taxation, finance and planning, to review all BFTIP and TIRGP brownfield applications and examine overall CIP program performance.

Upcoming improvements

Staff are currently reviewing Kingston’s CIP and are considering the following improvements:

- ▶ Simplifying documents to allow for easier understanding of the application and administration process.
- ▶ Updating the CIP based on best practices in Ontario and throughout Canada.
- ▶ Adjusting eligible remediation costs to reflect program experience to date.
- ▶ Aligning the CIP with new municipal priorities, plans and strategies.

Staff are also examining ways to ensure that the brownfield program is making strategic use of municipal dollars by providing the right amount of funding to the right areas.

Performance evaluation and reporting

The city continually assesses the brownfield program for effectiveness and fiscal health. Staff regularly track program uptake, consult stakeholders to evaluate the program's usefulness, and assess the program for its impact on municipal cash flow. They report back to council annually. The main performance indicators used include: tax increment increase, number of acres remediated and redeveloped, and number of residential units or square footage constructed.

Program results

As of January 2017:

- ▶ The city had approved 16 brownfield redevelopment projects, representing approximately 42 acres of land with a gross property tax rebate commitment of \$27 million. Approximately \$8 million in tax rebates has already been disbursed.
- ▶ The redevelopment projects that have been completed to date have resulted in an increase of \$2.5 million per year in property tax revenues. The city anticipates an increase in these revenues to \$6.2 million per year by 2025, based on project timelines.

Celebrating success

Kingston showcases its brownfield program — both locally and across Canada — through meetings with local developers and property owners, in presentations to stakeholder groups and on the city's website.

The city has also celebrated its successes by applying for and receiving brownfield-related awards. It has received the following awards:

- ▶ The FCM Sustainable Communities Award for Brownfields Projects (2013) for the Belle Park Specialty Tree Planting and Associated Landscaping Project
- ▶ The FCM Sustainable Communities Award for Brownfields Projects (2015) for the Groundwater Remediation Project — Emma Martin Park
- ▶ Canadian Brownfields Network Brownie Awards — Brownfielder of the Year (2016) (awarded to the City of Kingston's brownfields manager)

Testimonials

“Kingston's brownfield program has been a great success and we have seen many historically derelict properties cleaned up and redeveloped. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Green Municipal Fund has been an important component of our brownfields program that has allowed us to add even more value to our financial incentive packages and enabled a positive and collaborative relationship between the city, brownfield developers and FCM.”

Paul MacLatchy,
Environment Director,
Real Estate and Environmental Initiatives, City of Kingston, ON

Lessons learned from Edmonton and Kingston

Evaluating the delivery and impact of your brownfield programs will yield lessons not just for your own municipality but for others as well. By reviewing their programs, the municipalities of Kingston and Edmonton identified some key elements of success. Consider these lessons as you implement and review your own programs.

Consultation is key

- Involve decision-makers at the onset of a brownfield program's development to increase awareness and obtain buy-in.
- Consult external experts and stakeholders to:
 - Identify local redevelopment challenges and develop tailored solutions to overcome them
 - Offer appropriate incentives (type and amounts) based on real need
 - Simplify and streamline approval processes
- Get feedback on program components and proposed improvements from municipal departments and potential applicants (e.g. developers and property owners).

Learn from others

- Learn from the experiences of other municipalities. Consult your peers in other municipalities to learn what works and what doesn't. Connect with your peers by participating in programs such as FCM's [Leadership in Brownfield Renewal](#) (LiBRe) program.
- Capitalize on in-house expertise from a cross-section of city departments when developing and improving your brownfield programs.

Be strategic

- Align the program with other municipal plans, strategies and priorities.
- Identify development projects that would generate an increase in municipal taxes. Get the right amount of funding to the right areas in the community.

Simplify, simplify, simplify

- Hire a full-time brownfield coordinator who can:
 - Act as a single point of contact for developers and others interested in redeveloping brownfield properties.
 - Ensure a more consistent approach to program implementation, partnership development and communication with partners.
- Ensure that program guidelines and applications are simple and clear.
- For more efficient program management, use standardized templates for bylaws, tracking sheets, contracts, requests for proposals and commitment letters.
- Simplify and streamline approval processes whenever possible.

Lessons learned from Edmonton and Kingston

Actively promote your programs

- ▶ Develop user-friendly information packages on your brownfield programs.
- ▶ Engage other municipal departments (e.g. economic development) that can help promote your brownfield program to potential clients.
- ▶ Promote your programs by proactively arranging meetings with key stakeholders (e.g. developers and environmental consultants) and by presenting at industry events.
- ▶ Report back to council annually to showcase the impact of your brownfield programs. This will help maintain buy-in over time.

Track, evaluate and improve your programs over time

- ▶ Track project timelines and grant disbursements to ensure municipal cash flow.
- ▶ Consider expanding the scope of your programs if you receive viable applications for projects that are not currently eligible.
- ▶ Consider linking your funding to performance metrics such as LEED certification.

The path forward

Managing effective brownfield programs that balance the needs of your stakeholders with municipal priorities requires that you evaluate and report on program impacts, and then adjust your offerings and service delivery as needed. Celebrating your success is equally important, as this will raise awareness about your brownfield programs, increase program uptake and maintain decision-maker and community buy-in over time.

“Evaluate, improve and celebrate” is the seventh and final step of FCM’s Leadership in Brownfield Renewal (LiBRe) framework. However, remember that brownfield regulations will evolve, market forces will shift and municipal priorities will change over time. Periodically reassess and adjust your brownfield programs to ensure that they remain useful to your stakeholders and continue to make the best use of municipal resources.

More Funding. More Opportunities.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities can help your community with funding to:

- Improve the quality of air, water and soil
- Adapt to climate change impacts
- Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
- Invest in infrastructure planning
- Make informed infrastructure/asset investment decisions

We also provide peer learning, training and knowledge resources to help you achieve your goals.

Funding is available through the Municipalities for Climate Innovation Program, the Municipal Asset Management Program and the Green Municipal Fund.

Learn more at **fcm.ca/funding**