

Whose brownfields count? Effective brownfield remediation strategies for rural and remote communities

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Project Status: Ongoing; final draft of the annotated bibliography will be completed in February 2018

Project Description: BC's rural and remote communities are often home to significant industrial development activities that leave lasting land-use legacies in the form of brownfield sites. Brownfield—defined as “abandoned, vacant, derelict or underutilized commercial and industrial properties where past actions have resulted in actual or perceived contamination and where there is an active potential for redevelopment”—are often located in key locations within rural, resource-reliant communities (National Roundtable for the Economy and Environment, 2003). Despite significant financing opportunities for brownfield remediation in *urban* areas and associated decision-support tools, significantly less attention has been directed to what the provincial government refers to as ‘bottom tier’ brownfield sites. Bottom-tier sites, in which clean-up costs exceed the value of the land after remediation, are typically located in rural and remote and small urban areas. Designating brownfields in northern remote communities as ‘bottom-tier’ sites due to smaller real-estate markets is problematic, and existing provincial definitions fail to acknowledge the broader community costs of brownfield lands, including impacts to environmental quality, human health, community sense of place, and local economic development. Further, brownfields pose significant equity challenges for communities where impacts of contamination are most likely to be experienced by already marginalized populations.

This project seeks to identify challenges and opportunities for brownfield redevelopment in rural and remote, resource-reliant communities. Through a series of literature reviews, this research will identify promising case-study examples of brownfield remediation in contexts similar to northern BC. Through this process, we will synthesize key learnings and innovations that may be of interest and use for communities across northern BC seeking to remediate or redevelop brownfield lands.

Role of the CIRC: CIRC staff are collaborating with researchers from across UNBC on this project. CIRC staff will provide strategic project oversight, and disseminate research findings using CIRC communication platforms, including ongoing research with communities across northern BC.

Key Deliverables: Develop an annotated bibliography of case studies of brownfield remediation in contexts where the costs of remediation often exceed the value of the land after remediation.