

# Clean-up injects new value into old urban land

September 15 2015

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Effective clean-up of contaminated sites delivers large returns to landholders and taxpayers, and can boost home values for citizens living nearby by more than 10 per cent.

The dramatic gains to be had from expunging the industrial mistakes of the past will be described by one of the world's leading environmental scientists, Professor Rao Surampalli of the US-based Global Institute for Energy, Environment and Sustainability at the CleanUp 2015 conference in Melbourne today.

"Revitalizing 'brownfield' (contaminated former industrial) sites creates benefits throughout the community, and improves image and overall quality of life," Prof. Surampalli says. It also delivers an eye-catching return on investment – for industry, government and for the affected community living nearby.

Through 2014, the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) assessed 24,000 potentially contaminated sites, of which 1200 were then cleaned up and the land reused for sustainable infrastructure development.

"Through fiscal year 2014, on average, \$17.79 was leveraged for each EPA brownfields dollar invested and 7.3 jobs leveraged per \$100,000 of EPA brownfields funds expended on assessment, clean-up and revolving loan fund cooperative agreements," he says.

EPA studies also found that residential property values rose by 5.1–12.8% percent once a nearby brownfield had been assessed or cleaned up.

Through 2014, the US private sector invested over \$22 billion dollars in clean-up, creating more than 105,000 jobs. This led to the safe restoration of 50,000 acres (20,200 hectares), which then became available for reuse and urban re-development.

"An important strength of brownfield redevelopment is its contribution to sustainability," Prof. Surampalli says. "With the growing concern about climate change and greenhouse gas emission control, there has been an explosion of 'green building' statutes and ordinances at the state and local level, many of which have impacted brownfields redevelopment. As a result, a trend has developed of integrating sustainable building principles into the redevelopment of brownfields.

"For example, many brownfield projects are being encouraged to reuse the building materials, to retain and manage their stormwater on site, to conserve energy and water, to install more efficient insulation, and to plant trees. In many jurisdictions, developers can obtain approval of their building plans more quickly if they incorporate sustainable redevelopment principles into their plans," he says.

"As a result, what we used to think of as old toxic sites are being transformed into thriving new centres of commerce and industry. They are creating jobs through clean-up and reuse. They are formatting innovative partnerships among federal, state, and local governments and private-sector stakeholders such as developers and lenders.

"They are training residents of nearby communities for high-wage environmental careers, and there are many other examples of how clean-up and restoration of once-polluted land has positively impacted local

economies and the quality of life of its citizens."

Provided by CRC CARE

Citation: Clean-up injects new value into old urban land (2015, September 15) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-09-clean-up-urban.html>

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