

March 2025

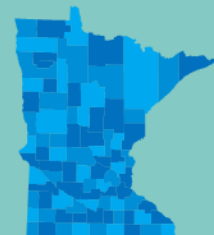
MPCA Brownfield Program 2024 Annual Report

Special features: StoryMap, Community Outreach & Engagement Unit, new
“Brownfields in your community” webpage, and Brownfield Program guidance updates



Soul Apartments in Saint Paul. Photo provided by Schafer Richardson

m MINNESOTA POLLUTION
CONTROL AGENCY



Introduction

A “brownfield” is any property that is abandoned or underused due to the known or likely presence of contamination. Brownfields are located in cities and towns all across Minnesota. Whether it’s a deserted railroad depot, a closed factory, a former drycleaner, or an abandoned gas station, brownfields offer both a challenge and an opportunity for local communities and developers. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s (MPCA) Brownfield Program was created to help overcome the environmental and legal barriers that prevent the redevelopment of these properties. To learn more about the importance of cleaning up contaminated properties for reuse, see Minnesota Brownfield’s [Benefits of Cleanup and Redevelopment](#) webpage.

The MPCA Brownfield Program is a fee-for-service program that provides technical assistance and various assurance letters to promote the investigation, cleanup, and redevelopment of property that is contaminated with petroleum and/or hazardous substances. The assurance letters provide liability protection for eligible parties and environmental closure for identified contamination. Customers include property owners, prospective purchasers, developers, development agencies, lending institutions, nonprofit organizations, and local units of government. Information about the types of letters offered by the Brownfield Program can be found on the [Brownfield Program Services](#) guidance document.

The MPCA Brownfield Program consists of two integrated technical programs: the Petroleum Brownfield Program, which handles petroleum contamination under the Petroleum Tank Release Cleanup Act (Minn. Stat. § 115C); and the Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup (VIC) Program, which handles hazardous substance contamination under Minnesota’s Environmental Response and Liability Act (Minn. Stat. § 115B). The Brownfield Program also includes a Community Outreach & Engagement Unit, which supports the work of the technical units by providing education and other non-technical assistance.

North Loop Park in Minneapolis. Soil impacted from previous industrial use was removed to create this half-acre park. The park is now used for exercise classes, food trucks, and music festivals. Photo credit: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.



MPCA MISSION

*Protect and
improve the
environment
and human
health.*



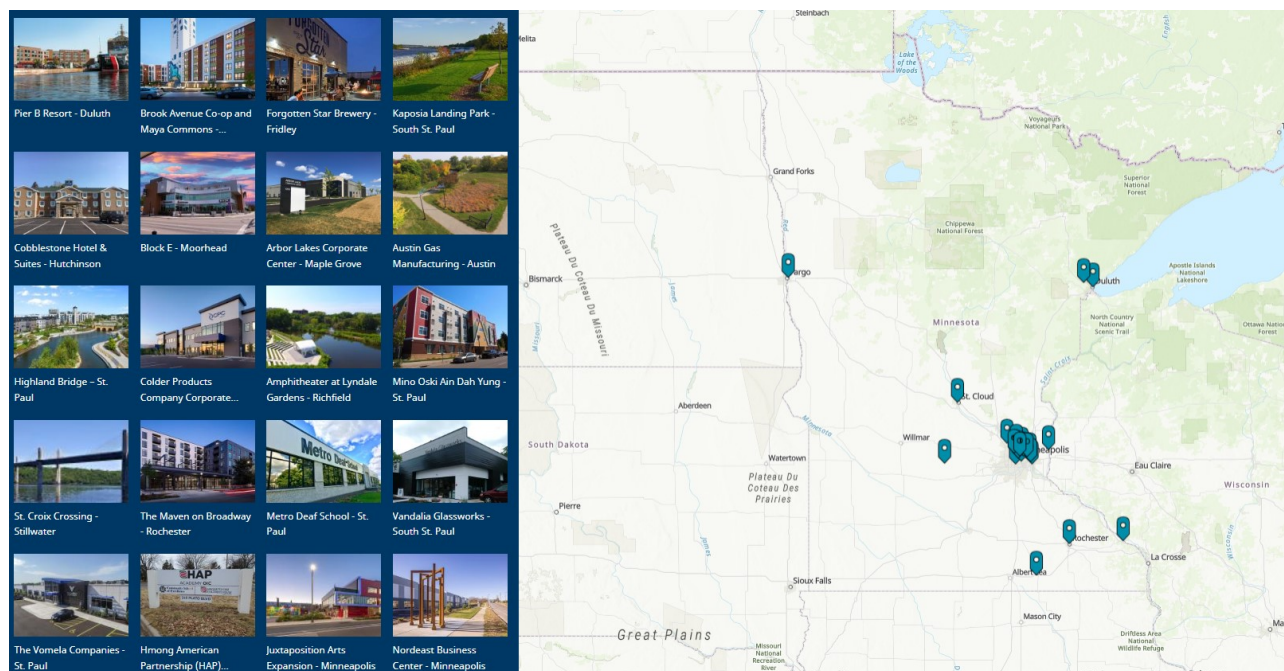
Brownfield Success Stories

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

February 10, 2025

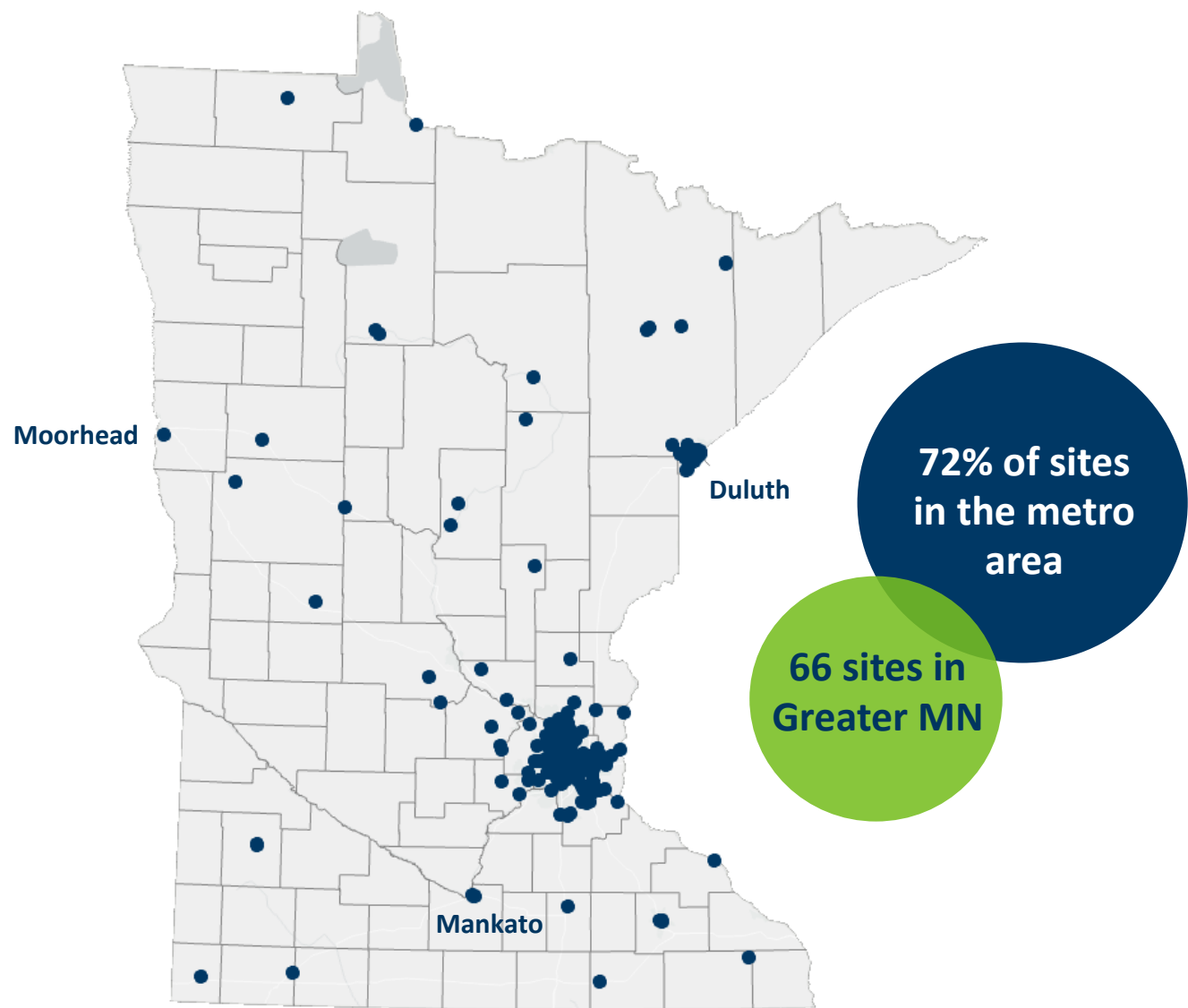
StoryMap update

The [Brownfield Success Stories StoryMap](#) has been updated with more recent sites and is now located on our [Brownfields in your community](#) webpage. This interactive StoryMap provides background information on what a brownfield site is and allows the user to view a snapshot of many of the successful redevelopment sites across Minnesota. The StoryMap will continue to be updated with new sites in the coming years. The photo above depicts the redevelopment of the former Ford Twin Cities Assembly Plant in Saint Paul. This 122-acre site is taking on a new life as a vibrant mixed-use community, known as Highland Bridge. Photo credit: Tony Morrow, ToTomorrow's Media.

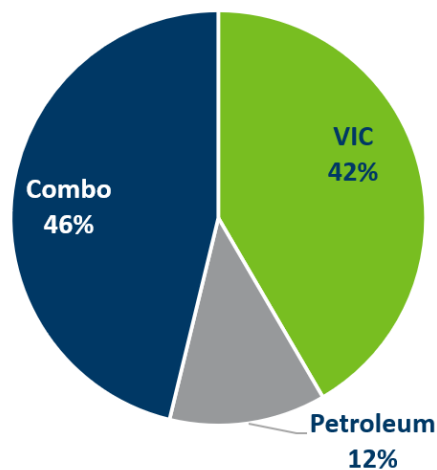


Users can click on either a site photo or a location on the map to see a short summary of each project. View the [StoryMap](#) to see more details on several inspiring projects.

2024 new brownfield applications statewide

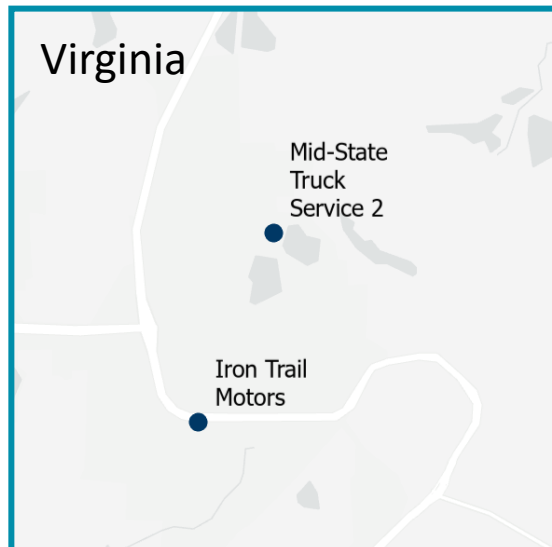
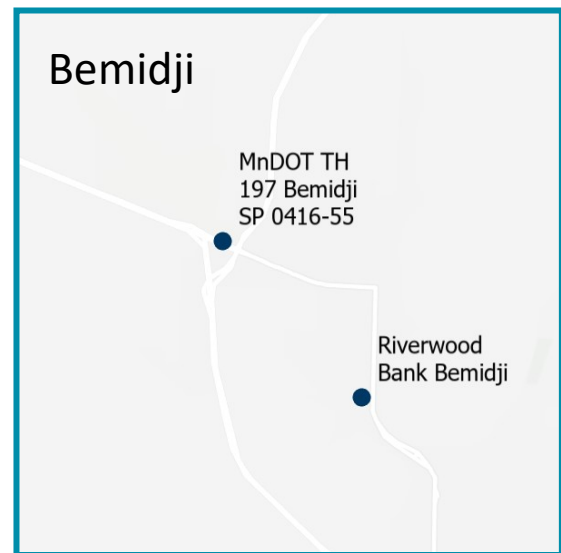
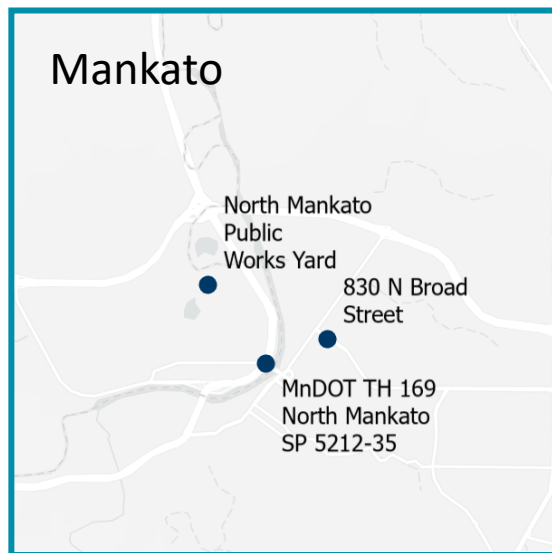
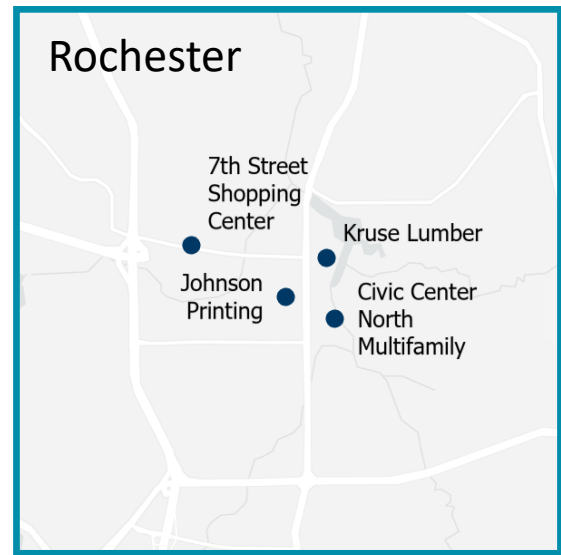
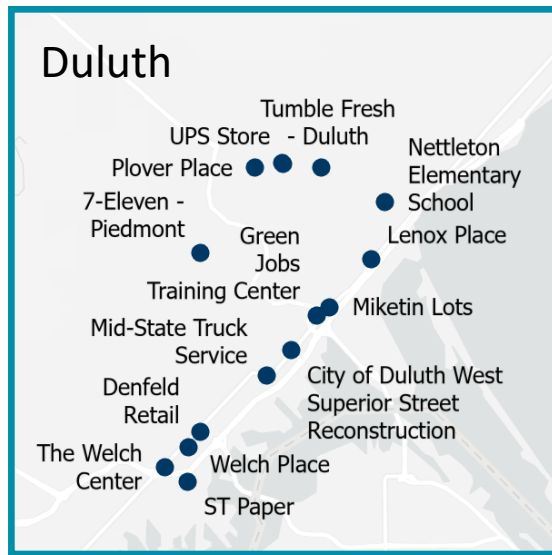


2024 new brownfield applications by subprogram

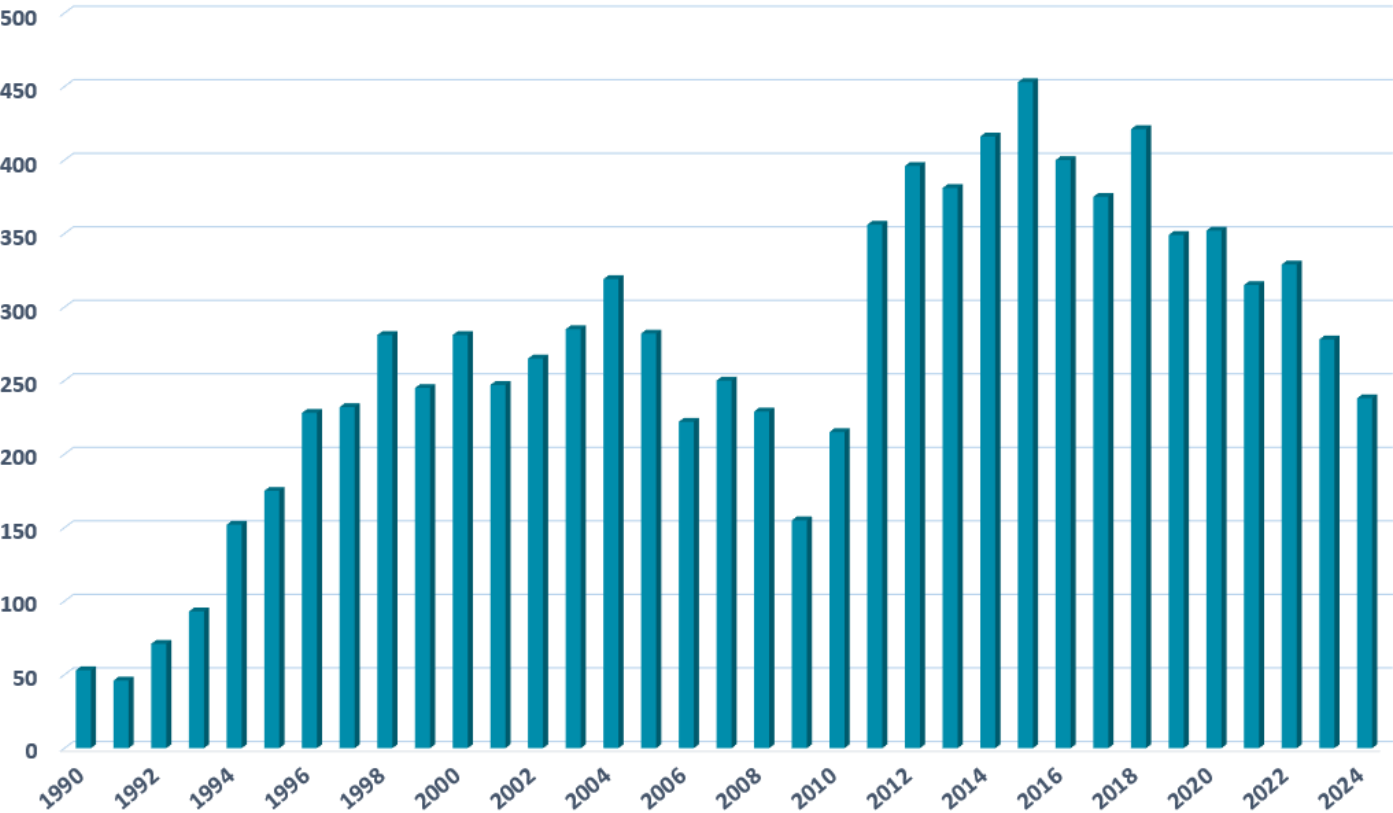


Subprogram	Count
VIC only	99
Petroleum only	29
Combo	110
Total	238

2024 brownfield applications in Greater Minnesota



Annual brownfield site applications



Metrics for 2024



118

sites with
response actions
completed



599

assurance
letters issued



3,171

acres returned to
productive use

Brownfield guidance update

In 2024, the MPCA's Brownfield Program created or updated several guidance documents to help program applicants and their representatives understand the options and requirements for Brownfield Program services.

[Brownfield Program Services](#) describes the various assurance letters offered by the Brownfield Program for technical assistance, liability protection, and environmental closure. The document provides helpful tips regarding eligibility and technical requirements for each letter. Having a clear understanding of the technical requirements for certain assurance letters can help environmental consultants design a scope of work that provides the required data to support the request for assurances.



[Phase I ESA Report for Brownfield Program Enrollment](#) describes the importance of environmental due diligence for parties planning a property transaction and lists key information that is useful to Brownfield Program staff during site review. Providing this information at the time of enrollment allows Brownfield Program staff to review site information more efficiently and can lead to a quicker decision about next steps.

[Brownfield Program Response Action Plans](#) provides an overview of *risk exposure pathways* to be evaluated for a brownfield redevelopment project, the *risk-based screening values* for each relevant pathway, with links to supporting material, and other helpful information to consider during preparation of a response action plan (RAP). Appendix A is a list of topics commonly addressed in a RAP and can be used as a checklist to ensure the RAP is complete and meets Brownfield Program requirements.



[Best management practices for development on or near former dumps](#) describes the potential hazards associated with development projects on or near former dumps and the necessary steps for investigation, waste characterization, and possible response actions. Early communication with the MPCA during the planning process is key to determine the feasibility of the redevelopment project, if Brownfield Program assurances are needed.



[Remediation Division Methane Guidance](#) provides general information about methane in the environment and guidance on investigating, monitoring, and responding to methane at remediation sites.



[Remediation Division Institutional Control Guidance](#) describes the tools that can be used to control land use or manage potential future risk at a site with residual contamination. The appendices are of particular interest for environmental professionals working on brownfield sites.

New “Brownfields in your community” webpage

This year the MPCA created a new webpage for the general public called “[Brownfields in Your Community](#).” The Brownfields Program has long had technical resources for experienced brownfield developers, lenders, attorneys, and other professionals well acquainted with the brownfield process. However, residents, small communities, first-time developers, and prospective purchasers couldn't easily find basic information. The new webpage is full of information for buyers and sellers of property, including grants for brownfield investigation, a StoryMap of brownfield success stories, and other helpful resources.

Community Outreach and Engagement Unit

The MPCA's Brownfield Community Outreach and Engagement (CO&E) Unit was created in 2023 to support and enhance the work of the Brownfield Program by expanding and deepening outreach to local units of government, tribal nations, underserved communities, and property owners and professionals involved in brownfield redevelopment and real estate transactions. The unit consists of a supervisor and two planners, one of whom is based in Duluth. The CO&E Unit collaborates regularly with local governments and community groups around the state, often in partnership with Kansas State University's Technical Assistance to Brownfields program (KSUTAB), the nonprofit Minnesota Brownfields, and MPCA's Tribal Liaison.

Site and community-level support

CO&E Unit staff help small business owners, first-time developers, small communities, and others who are new to brownfield redevelopment with information on how to navigate the site investigation and remediation process. They also connect these entities with potential funding sources. In addition to the MPCA's Targeted Brownfield Assessment grant program, small entrepreneurs may be directed to the MPCA's Small Business Environmental Improvement Loans or other grant sources.

The CO&E Unit worked with several municipalities across the state this year to support brownfield reuse planning, including the cities of Duluth, Sebeka, and Rushford. CO&E Unit staff helped the city of Hackensack navigate the MPCA's asbestos program. Many redevelopment projects were supported by the CO&E Unit in 2024, including Little Africa Plaza, an African grocery store and business incubator in Saint Paul, and the Duluth youth-focused nonprofit Welch Center, which discovered the MPCA's Targeted Brownfield Assessment grant program through an April workshop in Lincoln Park co-hosted by the CO&E Unit, the city of Duluth, and KSUTAB.



Little Africa Plaza in Saint Paul. The site received a MPCA Environmental Justice (104k) assessment grant.

Tribal assistance

A high priority for the Brownfield Program is helping Tribal Nations in Minnesota access brownfield resources. Each of the Tribal Nations faces unique circumstances in addressing brownfields on their traditional lands, requiring a personalized approach. In 2024, the CO&E Unit reached out to each of the 11 Tribal Nations in Minnesota to introduce our team and offer an in-person meeting in their community. Individualized engagement, in addition to connections made through workshops and official Tribal consultations, helped us build new relationships with the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, the Lower Sioux Indian Community, and the Red Lake Nation. We have collaborated with Brownfield staff from these Tribal Nations to create brownfield inventories, support current and future community engagement efforts, and identify sources of funding to support ongoing brownfield assessments and reuse.

Community Outreach and Engagement Unit - continued

Brownfields education and tools

The CO&E Unit organizes brownfields education events to explain the significance of brownfields within communities and how to successfully investigate, remediate, and redevelop contaminated sites. The unit often coordinates these events at the request of a community or neighborhood but has also conducted events with a statewide audience. In 2024, these workshops included: a training for emerging developers; a statewide webinar and workshop series for local governments tackling how to pay for brownfield site investigation, cleanup, and redevelopment; and a brownfield redevelopment workshop series co-hosted with the city of Duluth for small landlords, property owners, and community residents.

Throughout the year, the CO&E Unit created tools ranging from communicating the basics of brownfields to the public to accessing various brownfield funding sources. A few examples include:

- a list of site investigation and redevelopment funding options available in Minnesota, including local, regional, state, and federal resources
- a brownfield inventory template that can be customized for neighborhood or community use
- translations of brownfield fact sheets into five of the most commonly spoken languages in Minnesota
- a new MPCA “Brownfields in Your Community” webpage geared towards the general public



MPCA joined U.S. EPA Region 5 staff in a visit with the Lower Sioux Indian Community. Picture includes Lower Sioux Indian Community Brownfield Coordinator Mike Aude and Environmental Programs Director Deb Dirlan.



Duluth redevelopment workshop

Community Outreach and Engagement Unit - continued

Community events

Tabling at community events allows us to connect with residents, answer their questions about brownfields, and provide resources in multiple languages. The goal at these events is to demonstrate how brownfield redevelopment directly benefits communities and to be a visible state agency ambassador who can serve as a future point of contact for brownfield-related inquiries. Right—Brownfields 101 exhibits at the Phillips Clean Sweep event.

State Fair Eco Experience

New in 2024, the Brownfields Program hosted a Brownfields in Your Neighborhood exhibit at the MPCA's **State Fair Eco Experience** (photos below). We connected with hundreds of visitors to answer questions about the basics of brownfields and used an interactive flipbook to highlight successful and well-known brownfield redevelopment projects from around Minnesota. We also engaged all ages in a hands-on brownfield “dig” activity to demonstrate how contamination occurs and how to clean it up and then reuse the land.



Cost recovery

Minnesota state law requires parties requesting assistance from the MPCA’s Brownfield Program to pay the agency for the cost of providing assistance. The current fee is \$150/hour. Brownfield Program staff track the time they spend doing site work, including the time to review reports and correspondence, provide guidance and technical assistance, and issue requested assurance letters.

As shown in the table below, the Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup (VIC) Program invoiced \$622,575 in 2024 and the Petroleum Brownfields Program (PBP) invoiced \$343,238. The average cost recovery rate for the Brownfield Program for the previous four calendar years (2020 through 2023) is 99.6%. The cost recovery rate is always temporarily low for the current reporting year (2024), as payments are still being received for invoices sent late in the reporting period. As additional payments are received for site work completed in 2024, the collection rate will increase to be consistent with that of previous years.

	VIC			PBP		
Year	Total billed	Amount paid	Collection rate	Total billed	Amount paid	Collection rate
2020	\$702,250	\$699,625	99.6%	\$421,250	\$421,339	100.0%
2021	\$607,413	\$603,601	99.4%	\$334,182	\$333,852	99.9%
2022	\$737,477	\$731,107	99.1%	\$434,513	\$434,002	99.9%
2023	\$570,976	\$567,075	99.3%	\$355,125	\$354,525	99.8%
2024	\$622,575	\$565,988	90.9%	\$343,238	\$306,900	89.4%

The Verdant apartments in Saint Paul. The site was used for a variety of industrial purposes until the 1980s, and then remained vacant for decades. Cleanup included contaminated soil excavation and disposal. The site has been redeveloped with two mixed-use, income-restricted apartment buildings, which were designed to be 90% more energy efficient than a standard building. The apartments are located near Lowertown of Saint Paul, the Green Line Light Rail, and a variety of green spaces along the Mississippi River. Photo provided by Sherman Associates.

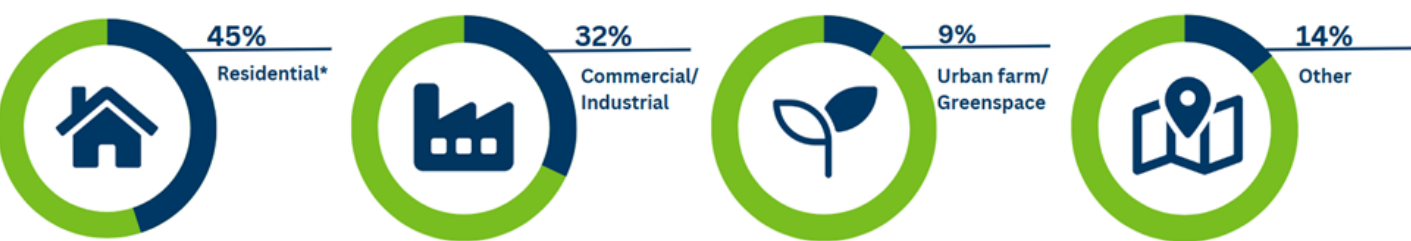


MPCA funding for brownfield projects

The MPCA has two grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to promote brownfield redevelopment in Minnesota, as described below. Grant funds can be used to pay for Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments, hazardous building material surveys, preparation of cleanup plans, community engagement for reuse planning, and Brownfield Program fees for MPCA review and oversight. Assessment work is completed by MPCA contractors at no cost to grant recipients. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. For more information and an application form, see the MPCA’s [Brownfield assessment grants](#) webpage.

If you have questions about funding sources or require assistance, contact the Brownfield Grants Team at brownfieldgrants.mPCA@state.mn.us or call our new **Brownfield Grants hotline at 651-757-2904**. Many MPCA grant sites also receive grant funding from partners such as Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Metropolitan Council, and counties.

MPCA 2024 grant sites by project/end use:



*Residential consists of 50% mixed-use commercial/residential apartment buildings. Approximately 35% of the residential developments have an affordable housing component.

Community-wide Assessment Grant for States and Tribes (104k grant)

The MPCA’s Brownfield Program applied for competitive grant funds made possible by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (aka Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) and was awarded a \$2 million Community-wide Assessment Grant by the EPA in 2022. The grant funds are being used at brownfield sites in areas of concern for environmental justice for projects that have community support, avoid gentrification of the neighborhood, and support first-time developers. The grant has a performance period of up to five years, although at the end of 2024, approximately 86% of this grant has been allocated. In 2024, the Brownfield Program funded environmental investigations at 25 sites in our four target areas (West Broadway Avenue Corridor, University Avenue Corridor, Lake Street Corridor, and the City of Cass Lake) and in other areas of the state. See the table below for more information about all brownfield grant sites funded in 2024. To date, the MPCA has provided 104k grants to a total of 38 sites to support brownfield redevelopment in environmental justice areas.

Targeted Brownfield Assessment program (Section 128a grant)

The MPCA's Targeted Brownfield Assessment (TBA) Program is funded by an annual grant from the EPA, made available through federal brownfields legislation. In 2024, the MPCA's TBA grant program provided approximately \$784,867 dollars to assist with environmental assessments at brownfield sites in Minnesota. The source of this funding comes from the EPA through Section 128a funds, a pot of money that was notably larger in 2023 and 2024 due to additional funds made available by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

The MPCA favors applications that promote brownfield redevelopment projects located in small communities in greater Minnesota or environmental justice areas, or those that support nonprofit organizations, first-time developers, or create community greenspace. Since the program's inception in 2003, the MPCA's TBA grant program has paid for environmental investigations at 99 sites.

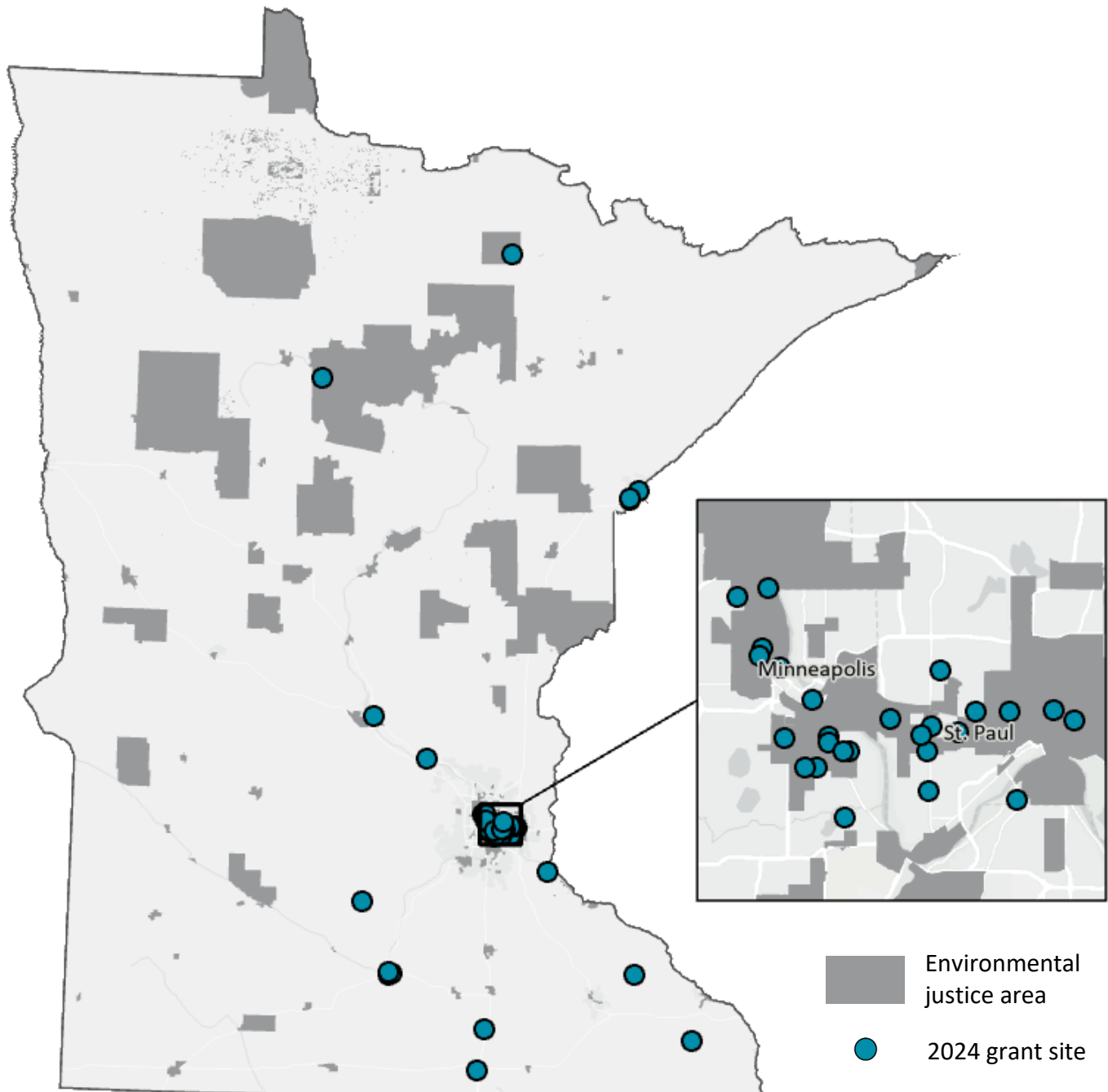
The Brownfield Program's TBA (128a) and Environmental Justice (104k) grant projects that received funding in 2024 are summarized in the table below, which continues onto the next page.

Project name	Project ID	Location	Redevelopment
750 Linder Ave	BF0002667	Mankato	Homeless shelter/supportive housing
830 North Broad	BF0002731	Mankato	Office and retail building
Ag Partners - Plainview North	BF0002526	Plainview	TBD
Ag Partners - Plainview South	BF0002527	Plainview	Industrial
Baker Court	BF0002658	Saint Paul	Mixed commercial/residential
Bayfront Lot D	BF0000593	Duluth	Mixed commercial/residential
Big Lake City Hall	BF0002918	Big Lake	TBD
Bois Forte Sawmill	BF0002410	Nett Lake	TBD
Bush & Cypress	BF0002415	Saint Paul	Affordable housing
Como Community Garden	BF0002641	Saint Paul	Community garden
COPAL-LCCE	BF0002532	Minneapolis	Latino Center for Civic Engagement
Court Ave High School	BF0002671	Gaylord	Mixed commercial/residential
Cross City Trail Irving	BF0002448	Duluth	Recreational trail
Ellendale Vacant Lot	BF0002587	Ellendale	Multi-family residential
Emerson Townhomes	BF0002533	Minneapolis	Mixed commercial/residential
Evergreen Industries	BF0002551	Cass Lake	TBD
Extreme Sandbox	BF0002713	Hastings	Veteran athletics and housing facilities
Former Blazing Star	BF0002134	Albert Lea	Mixed commercial/residential

Project name	Project ID	Location	Redevelopment
Former Smith EZ Stop	BF0001462	Saint Paul	Community art space
Get Pressed	BF0002685	Falcon Heights	Townhomes
Hayes Residence	BF0002718	Saint Paul	Long term care facility
It Starts with Luv	BF0002592	Minneapolis	Daycare/learning center
Lady Slipper Lot	BF0002375	Saint Cloud	Affordable housing
LERA Innovation Hub	BF0002357	Minneapolis	Urban garden facility
Marshall Avenue Flats	BF0002628	Saint Paul	Affordable housing
May Day Café	BF0002911	Minneapolis	Café
Nokomis Service Center	BF0002613	Minneapolis	TBD
North Mankato Public Works Yard	BF0002919	North Mankato	Mixed-density residential
North Sight	BF0002702	Minneapolis	Affordable housing
Pillsbury Creative Commons	BF0002647	Minneapolis	Commercial/Community radio station
Plaza del Sol	BF0002716	Saint Paul	Food court, kitchen space, event center, and offices
R & R Repair	BF0002552	Cass Lake	Mixed commercial/residential
Red Lake Nation College	BF0002400	Minneapolis	Tribal college, Minneapolis campus
Roof Depot	BF0002550	Minneapolis	Indoor urban garden, retail
Rushford Farmers COOP Elevator	BF0002717	Rushford	TBD
Schiff Properties	BF0002564	Minneapolis	Warehouse
Shake Cleaners	BF0002668	Minneapolis	Mixed commercial/residential
Snelling Grocery Store	BF0002589	Saint Paul	African grocery store
SPIN Front Ave	BF0002137	Saint Paul	Affordable housing
The Lexington Deluxe	BF0002910	Saint Paul	Affordable housing
The Resolute	BF0002385	Minneapolis	Mixed commercial/residential
The Welch Center	BF0002912	Duluth	After school and summer youth center
Viva Apartments	BF0002648	Minneapolis	Mixed commercial/residential
Western Graphics/Midway Program Center/YMCA	BF0002484	Saint Paul	YMCA youth center

Environmental justice areas and MPCA grant sites

Environmental justice areas are defined by census tracts that meet one or more of the following criteria: at least 35% of people reported income less than 200% of the federal poverty level; 40% or more people of color; federally recognized Tribal areas; and at least 40% of people have limited English proficiency. Data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau. For more information about environmental justice areas in Minnesota and interactive maps, see the MPCA's [Environmental Justice](#) webpage. Note that previous environmental justice areas (prior to 2024) included a margin of error that resulted in a larger area. Current environmental justice areas only include those where the calculated value meets one or more environmental justice criteria and do not include a margin of error.



Partnerships

A successful brownfield redevelopment project depends on many partners working together to navigate the environmental, legal, and financial challenges that arise when transforming a blighted property into a community resource. The MPCA Brownfield Program strives to develop strong partnerships with program applicants and organizations that support brownfield redevelopment work in Minnesota. Key partnerships include **Minnesota Brownfields**, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization which is dedicated to promoting the efficient cleanup and reuse of contaminated land through education and research. MPCA staff are frequent speakers at Minnesota Brownfield forums, where topics are often chosen to coincide with current MPCA initiatives. Minnesota Brownfields also serves as an effective and efficient way for the MPCA's Brownfield Program to seek feedback when developing new guidance on topics of importance to Minnesota's brownfield community. The MPCA Brownfield Program partners with the **Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)** and the **Metropolitan Council** by providing technical support and review of applications submitted to their contamination investigation and cleanup grant programs. On redevelopment projects where the community has questions about risk to public health, the MPCA's Brownfield Program works with the **Minnesota Department of Health** to resolve concerns. The MPCA's Brownfield Program coordinates with the **Minnesota Department of Agriculture** if a brownfield redevelopment site also contains a release of agricultural chemicals. The **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** provides valuable financial support to MPCA's Brownfield Program through federal grants that help pay for program operational expenses and investigation grants administered by the MPCA.

Block 25 Lofts is a 58-unit apartment building in downtown Willmar that provides needed workforce housing within walking distance to area businesses and the local hospital. The site was historically used for a variety of commercial purposes including dry cleaning, a fuel station, and auto repair. Cleanup included excavation and disposal of impacted soil and installation of a vapor mitigation system. Photo credit: Lumber One and GC Real Estate Partners



MPCA Brownfield staff

For more information about the MPCA Brownfield Program, visit our [Brownfield redevelopment](#) webpage.

Staff	Phone	Email
Ebertz, Jessica (Section Manager)	651-757-2328	jessica.ebertz@state.mn.us
Kromar, Karen (Program Coordinator)	651-757-2508	karen.kromar@state.mn.us
Voluntary Investigation Cleanup (VIC) Program		
Hadiaris, Amy (Supervisor)	651-757-2402	amy.hadiaris@state.mn.us
Guertin, Amanda	651-757-2369	amanda.guertin@state.mn.us
Knight, David	651-757-2857	david.knight@state.mn.us
Nichols, Andrew	651-757-2612	andrew.nichols@state.mn.us
Ryser, Rebecca	651-757-2015	rebecca.ryser@state.mn.us
Scheer, Madison	651-757-2821	madison.scheer@state.mn.us
Schmitt, Shanna	651-757-2697	shanna.schmitt@state.mn.us
Smokovitz, Jacob	651-757-2321	jacob.smokovitz@state.mn.us
Wrobel, Youmi	651-757-2597	youmi.wrobel@state.mn.us
Petroleum Brownfields Program (PBP)		
VanPatten, Stacey (Supervisor)	651-757-2425	stacey.vanpatten@state.mn.us
Crawford, Alana	651-757-2691	alana.crawford@state.mn.us
Hammond, Jayme	651-757-2615	jayme.hammond@state.mn.us
Henoa, Victor	651-757-2204	victor.henao@state.mn.us
Johnson, Holly	651-757-2124	holly.e.johnson@state.mn.us
Krueger, Chuck	651-757-2077	chuck.krueger@state.mn.us
Peters, Ian	651-757-2142	ian.peters@state.mn.us
Umholtz, Mark	651-757-2308	mark.umholtz@state.mn.us
Community Outreach and Engagement Unit		
Faust, Martha (Supervisor)	651-757-2275	martha.faust@state.mn.us
Adade, Jane	651-757-2390	jane.adade@state.mn.us
Martin, Shannon	651-757-2874	shannon.martin@state.mn.us
Mogenson, Crystal	651-757-2283	crystal.mogensen@state.mn.us

Additional resources

Learn more about brownfield sites, planning, assistance, and the brownfield process:

- [Brownfields in your community \(MPCA\)](#)
- [EPA Brownfields](#)
- [Minnesota Brownfields](#)
- [Kansas State University - Technical Assistance to Brownfields \(KSUTAB\)](#)
- [Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials \(ASTSWMO\) Brownfields](#)
- [Land Revitalization Tool Kit \(EPA\)](#)
- [Climate Resiliency \(EPA\)](#)

Learn more about a given property and what potential impacts could be in the area:

- [What's in my neighborhood \(MPCA\)](#)
- [Institutional Controls in Minnesota \(MPCA\)](#)
- [Minnesota groundwater contamination atlas \(MPCA\)](#)
- [Vapor Intrusion Mitigation in Minnesota \(MPCA\)](#)
- [Search for superfund sites where you live \(EPA\)](#)
- [Minnesota Well Index \(MDH\)](#)

For sites enrolling in the MPCA's Brownfield Program, it's important to provide accurate information on the Brownfield Program application and in site documents. The following resources provide property identification number, current property ownership and date of last sale, legal description of property, accurate legal name of a business entity, and other helpful information:

- [Minnesota county parcel maps \(MN Geo\)](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Revenue -Property Search](#)
- [Minnesota Secretary of State - Search Business Filings](#)