

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) City of Belfast, Maine Brownfields Assessment Program

The following are frequently asked questions along with answers for the City of Belfast's Brownfields Assessment Program:

Q1: What areas of the City are covered under the Brownfields Assessment Program?

A1: The Brownfields Assessment Grant awarded to the City of Belfast is for City-wide assessments. All Brownfields sites located within the City limits may be eligible. However, the City has identified the Downtown and Waterfront as initial target areas.

Q2: What does a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) typically cost?

A2: The cost of a Phase I ESA depends on the complexity of the site; however, typically, a Phase I ESA costs \$2,000 to \$5,000. Eligible Brownfields sites within the City of Belfast may be eligible for environmental assessment at no cost to the property owner or interested party through the City of Belfast's Brownfields Assessment Program.

Q3: Can environmental assessment activities be completed for a public building?

A3: Yes, environmental site assessments are often completed for public buildings, such as schools, on behalf of the municipality or private developer. These environmental assessments may also include hazardous building materials such as asbestos, lead-based paint, and other universal wastes that may need to be abated prior to building renovation or demolition.

Q4: Will most banks want a Phase I and a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) for property transactions?

A4: At a minimum, banks will want a Phase I ESA to identify recognized environmental conditions (RECs) associated with a property in order to assess the potential for environmental impacts of the property. Whether or not a Phase II ESA will be necessary is dependent on the results of the Phase I ESA.

Q5: What liability does a property owner have if an underground utility (such as an underground electric line) is damaged during the completion of a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA)?

A5: Risks of encountering unknown underground utilities exist any time subsurface exploration work is planned at a site; however, the environmental consultant and their subcontractors take several steps to minimize this risk for safety and economic reasons. The environmental consultant and their subcontractors conducting the Phase II ESA are required to notify Dig Safe. The consultant also works with the property owners to review available utility plans and conduct interviews to identify locations of potential underground utilities. In addition, geophysical surveys (electromagnetic and ground

penetrating radar surveys) are conducted, as needed, to further evaluate subsurface conditions and provide clearance for proposed Phase II activities.

Q6: If cleanup activities have been completed on a property in the past, is the property eligible for assessment?

A6: Possibly; this depends on what activities were completed for the property and whether cleanup activities were conducted through the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MEDEP) Voluntary Response Action Program (VRAP).

Q7: What is the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MEDEP) Voluntary Response Action Program (VRAP)?

A7: In 1993, the Maine Legislature established the Voluntary Response Action Program (VRAP). The VRAP allows applicants to voluntarily investigate and cleanup properties to the Department's satisfaction, in exchange for future liability protections from Department enforcement actions regarding the identified environmental issues. The VRAP is intended to encourage the cleanup and redevelopment of contaminated properties within the state.

Q8: What if environmental issues are identified on my property during the assessments?

A8: When environmental issues are identified on a property, our environmental consultant, in coordination with the property owner, MEDEP, and US EPA, develops cost-effective, real-world cleanup options and cost estimates for addressing the issues. The owner and/or developer may potentially be afforded environmental liability protections through the MEDEP VRAP program. In addition, several possible funding mechanisms are available to complete cleanup activities and the consultant and City will work with the property owner to identify and apply for potential cleanup funding.

Q9: What funding is available for environmental cleanup activities?

A9: The City of Belfast and their environmental consultant will work with property owners to identify and apply for potential cleanup funding when needed. Examples of possible funding mechanisms include US EPA site-specific cleanup grants, MEDEP Brownfields grants and groundwater insurance funds, Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) subgrants and low-interest loans, and other economic development funding mechanisms, such as Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, Tax Increment Financing (TIFs), Historical Tax Credits, County Bonding, Maine State Housing Authority funding, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding, and Riverfront & Trails Grants, to name a few.

Q10: What information and/or documents relative to a Brownfields Site and/or owner/developer are public information?

A10: Business and personal information deemed "confidential" about a Brownfields project, redevelopment plan, business plan, or personal

information, such as personal financial documents, may be withheld from the public and maintained as confidential in accordance with the Confidentiality of Business Information provisions under the Brownfields Law, 40 CFR 2.203 and 2.204, and as permitted by Maine Law, Maine Revised Statutes: 5 MRS 13119 et seq. However, environmental assessment, investigation, and/or cleanup information and reports and their associated environmental data for a specific Brownfields site, that were prepared using Federal Brownfields Assessment and/or Cleanup funding, must be made public, once finalized.