

# Brownfield Study Begins in Appomattox Town Corridor

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**What and Why a Brownfield\* study in Appomattox?** If you are not familiar with the "Brownfield", term, a common, practical definition of "Brownfield" is: **a place where people once were--but aren't anymore.**

We usually see them as old stores, factories, and landfill areas that are still standing--but no longer in much use. They are found in every small town, medium, and large city in the United States.

**Brownfield Background:** The rapid decline of American manufacturing in the 1970s-90s era, shuttered countless buildings and factories all over America. Many of those facilities were built in the 1950s-60s when the dangers of materials like asbestos and lead-based paints were poorly understood but commonly used in construction. Similarly, various manufacturing processes that took place in those facilities sometimes used persistent

chemicals, that may still remain on the premises and may present some danger if disturbed, altered, or enter the water system.

In fact, **not all buildings described as "Brownfield" contain any pollutants or contamination.** However, because construction records from that time period are rarely available or detailed, the buildings frequently "**earn**" a **reputation as "contaminated"** and **become difficult to sell, lease, or re-purpose--without a formal technical study of the premises.**

The **cost of these formal studies typically ranges from \$6,000 to \$40,000!** For many property owners, **the study costs alone** leave them very few practical options with respect to selling, placing the building back in operation, or re-purposing the facility/land for a new use.

Fortunately, state and federal governments have recognized the impact of **implementing new regulations on old building owners** to the extent that in many cases there is **grant funding available to communities for assisting local property owners** to determine:

1. What/**if any** contaminants are present and
2. How to proceed with clean-up if required,
3. Practical options to consider for re-use/repurposing their facility as quickly as possible

**Appomattox is receiving exactly those type grant funds from the Central Virginia Planning District Commission (CVPDC-Lynchburg) in this Brownfield Appomattox Business Corridor Study.** The funds for this project are **available at no cost to any property owner that:**

1. Is confirmed as a Brownfield study site by the core study group (consultants and town staff members).
2. Authorizes the consultant team access and permission to conduct the study on their property.

## **AND THEN WHAT...**

...**FOR THE PROPERTY OWNERS**...once the study is completed, findings/recommendations as well as other grant or low interest loan opportunities (if needed) are provided directly to property owners. The owners are **under no obligation to take further action**. Moreover, **no environmental enforcement actions will be initiated against the property owner** for participating in the study. The objective of the grants are to **help property owners create new and better opportunities to bring their dormant properties back into a productive use**.

On 13 November, architects, planners, and chemist consultants from SGA\*\*\* began their analysis of the **Appomattox Brownfield Business Corridor outlined by Confederate Boulevard, Court Street, Main Street, and Church Street**. The first property identified to receive funding for an **EPA Phase I** study is the **old Appomattox Hardware Store** located on Church street.

The Phase I study technically **describes what/where, if any, contaminants (e.g., fuel oil, asbestos insulation/flooring, etc.) are likely to be found on site and may make a recommendation for a Phase II study** which is a more thorough and conclusive study. Phase II typically includes activities like chemical analysis, core drilling soil, and collection of water samples.

Initially, the Core Study Group (Consultants, Town Staff, Property Owners) identified 15 sites that may fit the "Brownfield" criteria. Additional areas may be added and identified areas can be removed as needed.

...**FOR THE TOWN OF APPOMATTOX**...in addition to the Phase I and II studies that primarily impact property owners, the town will receive consulting services directed at **creating a blended, general appearance, essence, spirit, and use of common and right-of-way areas** defined in the corridor. In our case, ***Appomattox owns a rich and enduring history of true friendship and genuine reconciliation.*** The study recommendations will highlight those qualities and work with the Town Council/Staff to ***deliver plans that celebrate our history and prepare Appomattox for a productive and prosperous future.***

Generally these studies complete in 10 -14 months. We expect the final report and recommendations near the end of 2024.

### **Notes:**

**#1\***The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines a "Brownfield" site as **any real property**, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the **presence or potential presence** of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties protects the environment, reduces blight, and takes development pressures off greenspaces\*\* and working lands.

**#2 \*\***Greenspace: **“An area of grass, trees, or other vegetation set apart for recreational or aesthetic purposes in an otherwise urban environment.”**

**#3 \*\*\***SGA Stromberg Garrigan & Associates, Inc., (**SGA-PHILADELPHIA**) is a multi-discipline **landscape architecture** and urban design firm with an affiliated practice in architecture.