

## **Brownfields:**

### **What Remediation Is, Who Pays, and Why It Matters**

**The Issue:** Some residents are unsure what it means to remediate a brownfield site, and who is responsible for the cost. Questions about environmental cleanup often create concerns about safety, long term impacts, and taxpayer exposure.

**The Fact:** Brownfield remediation is a standard, regulated process used across the United States to safely prepare long idle or contaminated sites for productive reuse. Cleanup costs are determined by the property owner and state programs, not by zoning decisions. The Cottage Housing Development ordinance does not approve any project and does not commit the Town to any remediation costs. Brownfield cleanup is handled separately under state law and environmental review.

#### **What a Brownfield Is**

A brownfield is land that was previously used for a purpose like a gas station, chemical factory, or industrial activity, and now sits vacant because the ground may contain old contaminants. These sites are common across the United States. When left unaddressed, brownfields usually:

- Depress nearby property values
- Attract dumping or nuisance activity
- Prevent productive reuse of key parcels
- Create a sense of blight at prominent gateways

Cleaning up and reinvesting in these parcels strengthens neighborhoods and supports economic development.

#### **How Brownfield Remediation Works**

Brownfield cleanup is a careful, regulated process overseen by state environmental agencies. It typically includes:

- Environmental testing by licensed professionals
- Removal of old fuel tanks or contaminated soil
- Installation of clean fill and protective layers
- Ongoing monitoring and reporting to regulators

The goal is to meet state standards for safe residential or mixed-use development. These steps are routine in communities nationwide and are required before any building permits are issued.

### **Who Pays for Cleanup**

Cleanup funding is always determined through environmental programs and the property owner, not through a zoning ordinance. The Cottage Housing Development ordinance does not authorize spending, require cleanup, or commit the Town to any financial obligation. In Georgetown, one example of this process is more-than-20-years vacant Market Street brownfield.

Its remediation is funded through:

- State brownfield grants, which support cleanup of previously contaminated properties
- Private investment committed by the property owner and project partners

This example shows how a property can be cleaned and prepared for reuse without a single penny paid by Georgetown's taxpayers.

### **Why Cleanup Matters for Georgetown**

Cleaning up brownfields benefits the Town in several important ways:

- Removes longstanding contamination from former industrial or commercial sites
- Replaces vacant or underused lots with opportunities for modest, stick-built homes
- Improves the appearance of key corridors and gateways
- Supports reinvestment within the Town core instead of pushing growth outward into rural areas

Brownfield redevelopment is widely supported across the United States because it turns environmental liabilities into community assets.

Brownfield redevelopment is widely supported as a best practice because it turns an environmental liability into a community asset.

### The Bottom Line

Brownfield remediation is a safe, regulated, and fully funded process that prepares underused sites for new life.

Cleaning up the long vacant Market Street brownfield is good for public health, good for the environment, good for neighboring property values, and good for Georgetown's future.

The result is a clean foundation for modest, stick-built homes that strengthen the community instead of leaving a contaminated lot for another 20 years.

**There are more than 35 comparable cottage housing developments across the United States. The oldest opened in 2003. Cottage housing is normal, safe, and mature.**

