

Brownfield cleanup should move forward

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Editorial

Greene County Industrial Development Authority is compiling a list of what are called brownfield sites. For the uninitiated, brownfields are former industrial or commercial lands that could be difficult to redevelop because of possible contamination by hazardous materials.

A meeting of GCIDA last week was attended by local officials who identified properties they felt could be included on the list of sites that might qualify for funding in preparation for reuse. GCIDA manager Crystal Simmons explained a committee, going by the name Greene County Brownfield Redevelopment Advisory Committee, was being created as part of its application for a \$400,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The committee will help the authority identify possible brownfield sites and provide information that will be used to prioritize the sites to be assessed, Simmons explained. The committee will be made up of local officials who are deeply familiar with their communities.

It was what some of these officials and community residents said at the meeting that gave us pause.

It's a surprise to learn how many sites within the county could qualify for reuse because of contamination issues.

Consider the following:

- A resident of Cumberland Township, Dave Vrana, spoke of several abandoned gas stations in the Carmichaels area, including one on Route 88 near the drive-in theater that still has buried storage tanks.
- Commissioner Blair Zimmerman, a former Waynesburg mayor, said he believed the borough's former midtown auto lot on Greene Street could possibly be reused, but it is known to have buried fuel tanks. He also cited a number of abandoned mine sites throughout the county.
- Rick Tekavec, a Jefferson supervisor, said his township would like to know what can be done about a 3-acre slate dump along Ten Mile Creek near Pitt Gas. The township is developing property adjacent to the site for a park and wanted to know what can be done to clean up the former mine property.
- Monongahela Township Supervisor Bill Monahan said the township would like to see something done with a parcel of property along the river owned by Duquesne Light Co.
- Franklin Township Supervisor Reed Kiger also spoke of former mining properties and several other sites, including a former gasoline station on Rolling Meadows Road that may still have buried fuel tanks.

These sites have not remained undeveloped because of apathy; they remained undeveloped because no money was available to remove potentially hazardous conditions.

These sites – and we would guess there are more – have been sitting around untouched for years. It's encouraging to see something is finally being done to address these brownfields.

Let's hope any progress does not get mired in bureaucratic haggling.