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Turning brownfields into green space in the City of Toronto

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Abstract

Since the mid-1980s, policy makers and planners in North America and Europe have been paying significantly more attention to measures designed to foster sustainable development and improve the quality of life in urban areas. One issue that has received widespread political support has been the cleanup and redevelopment of under-utilized brownfield sites in urban areas. In Canada and the US, the focus of policy-making and redevelopment efforts has been on redeveloping brownfield sites for industrial, commercial, or residential uses that provide economic benefits through tax revenues and/or jobs. However, there has been a growing recognition among community groups and environmental organizations that brownfields hold enormous potential for "greening" city environments, through the implementation of parks, playgrounds, trails, greenways, and other open spaces. The objectives of the current research are to examine the issues, obstacles and processes involved in remediating potentially contaminated urban brownfield sites and converting them into green spaces, to identify the benefits that these green spaces can bring to the community and culture, and to

the benefits that these green spaces can bring to the community and culture, and to understand the specific planning processes that it involves. Data for this study were collected through a review of 10 pertinent "greening" case studies and personal interviews with relevant stakeholders. Toronto's brownfield-to-green space redevelopment experience has implications for cities across North America undergoing brownfield planning and seeking to enhance urban quality of life.



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Keywords

Brownfields; Green space; Urban environment; Planning

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Christopher A. De Sousa is assistant professor of geography at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He received his PhD in geography from the University of Toronto in 2000. His research activities focus on various aspects of urban brownfield redevelopment in Canada and the United States. He is also actively involved in community work involving urban environmental management, brownfield redevelopment and sustainability reporting.

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