

Broome County Environmental Management Council
Brownfields Committee

Draft Site Ranking Methodology Summary

(10/23/02, rev. 1/9/04)

The EMC's Brownfields Committee (BFC), formerly a subcommittee of the Natural Resources Committee, after reviewing the site ranking and prioritization approaches of other EPA assessment pilot program localities throughout the U.S. (see Figure 2), decided to use similar ranking factors, but with important differences.

First, because decision-makers and other stakeholders have differing needs, the BFC did not wish to provide only a blended ranking, reflecting a wide range of site attributes all melded together. Instead, it was decided that separate rankings would be provided for each of three categories of attributes - (1) Environmental and Health factors; (2) Legal and Financial factors; and (3) Land Use and Zoning factors - so that site-related decisions could be related to the factors of greatest relevance in the context of the particular decision.

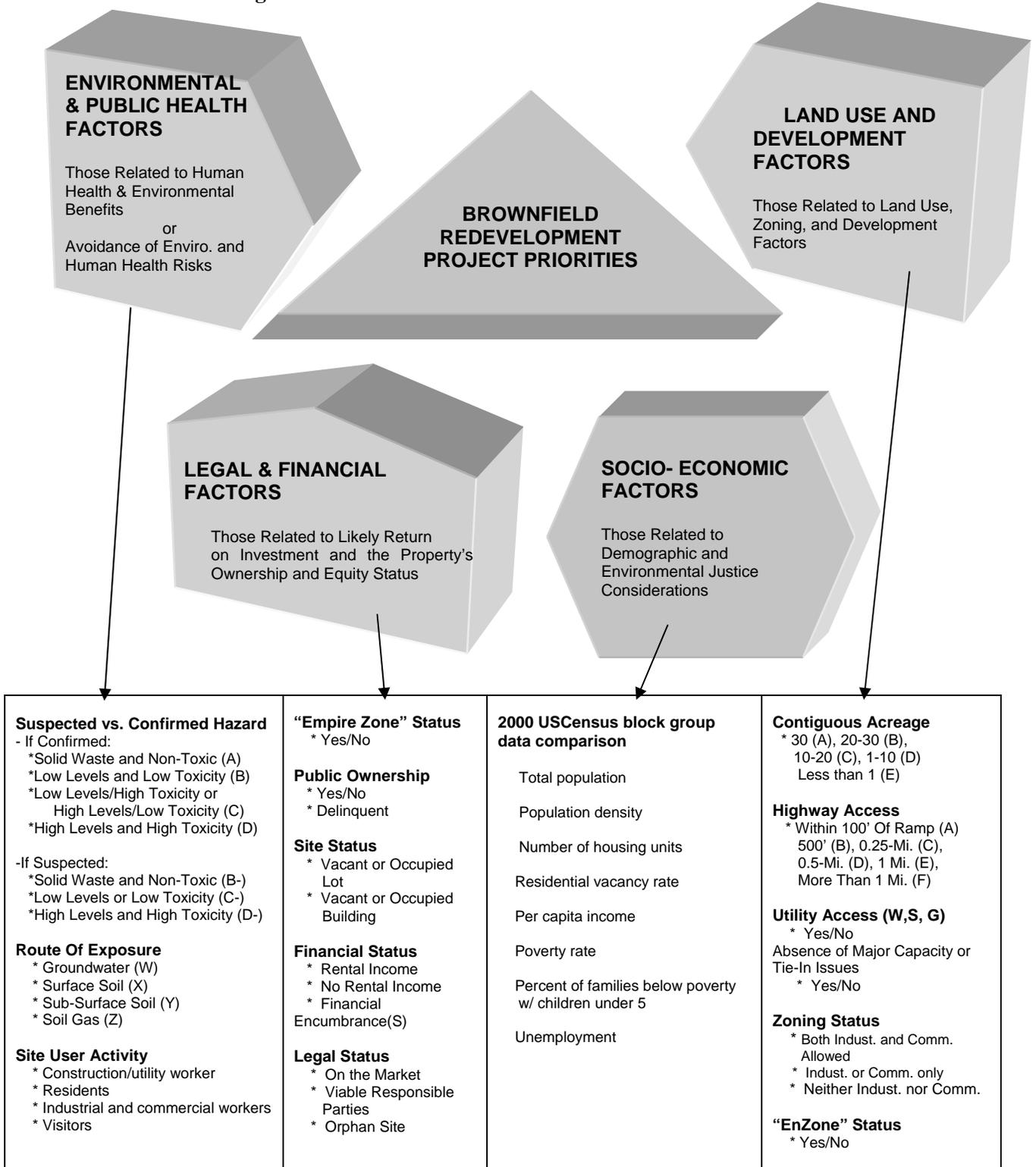
Second, it was decided to avoid numerical rankings, which give a misleading sense of mathematical precision. Instead, the "rankings" in each category would yield a list of "top twenty" sites, presented as co-equal and not in any rank-order. In addition, it was decided to do two separate "rankings" in the category of Environmental and Health factors because sites with contamination issues tend to be approached from two diametrically different perspectives. Regulatory officials and neighbors tend to be primarily concerned with the degree of contamination and with cleaning up the most contaminated (or the most risky) sites first. Prospective purchasers and redevelopers tend to be interested in sites with the lowest levels of residual contamination and associated cleanup costs and liabilities. Two lists of "top twenty" sites in the Environmental and Health category will, therefore, be generated: one will reflect the sites that are *most* in need of the cleanup; the other will reflect the sites facing the *fewest* environmental cleanup risks.

Lastly, it was recognized that socio-economic and other demographic considerations also needed to be considered—from the standpoints both of (1) identifying those sites the cleanup and redevelopment of which will result in the greatest economic revitalization benefits; and (2) ensuring that brownfields redevelopment projects do not have disproportionate negative impacts on economically disadvantaged and minority residents. Such "environmental justice" considerations are currently the focus of EPA and DEC policies at the federal and state levels. Relevant socio-economic data are still being collected and digested—so it is not yet clear exactly how such data will be utilized in the site evaluation process. If, in fact, such data are not incorporated into a freestanding ranking methodology, they will at a minimum be incorporated into the County's computerized database of brownfield sites—so that relative demographic information is accessed whenever a particular site is called up.

The overall process of site ranking and evaluation, as it has been developed by the BFC, is portrayed schematically in Figure 1.

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Figure 1: Schematic of Brownfield Prioritization Process



BROWNFIELDS (SUB)COMMITTEE
 Broome Environmental Management Council – Natural Resources Committee

Figure 2: Potential Site Ranking Criteria (11/16/00)

Criterion*	Used By	Commentary
Marketability (near-term redevelopment potential) [LP]	Buffalo, Knoxville, Rhode Island	
Potentially interested developers [LP]	Worcester (MA), Bridgeport (CT)	
Size of contiguous site , size of existing building(s) if reusable [LP]	Buffalo, Rochester, Knoxville, Worcester (MA)	
Available or planned infrastructure [LP]	Buffalo, Knoxville, Worcester (MA)	
Proximity to transportation, workforce and utilities [LP]	Rochester	
Site access [LP]	Worcester (MA)	
Zoning [LP]	Knoxville	
Geotechnical suitability [LP]	Rochester	May not be readily apparent.
Community need for revitalization [LP]	Buffalo, Rochester [for EZ sites]	Probably a given throughout this area.
Waterfront revitalization potential [LP]	Rochester	
Site ownership status (private vs. public, etc.) [L/F]	Buffalo, Knoxville, Worcester (MA)	
Anticipated level of owner cooperation [L/F]	Bridgeport (CT)	
Site has viable business [L/F]	Knoxville	
Site acquisition costs [L/F]	Buffalo	
Potential for active local government role in direct funding or ownership [L/F]	Rochester	
Income potential from future leasing (or sale) [L/F]	Worcester (MA)	
Assessed value [L/F]	Rochester	
Site financial condition (in arrears, foreclosure, etc.) [L/F]	Buffalo, Wisconsin	
In economic development zone? [L/F]	Buffalo	
Availability of financial incentives for assessment, cleanup [L/F]	Rochester	
Site characteristics vs. available funding sources	EMC Brownfields Subcommittee (meeting of 11/16/00)	
Amount of existing environmental data [E]	Buffalo	May be difficult to assess
Threat posed to human and/or environmental health [E]	Buffalo	May be difficult to assess
Presence of viable owner and potential for private cleanup [E]	Rochester, Worcester (MA)	
Existing focus of regulatory attention? [E]	KK	Found to be of low risk vs. regulatory target?

*LP = land use planning and development; L/F = legal/financial; E = environmental/public health

EPA Brownfield pilot site projects were reviewed for ones that included ranking or prioritization elements. The factors addressed in the ranking process were tabulated by locality and classified into the three indicated categories (LP, L/F, and E).