



BROWNFIELDS

The subject of the noontime luncheon series in April was Brownfields. Our speaker was Pat Todd, a long-time member of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's (DNREC) Brownfields Committee. Committee meetings are stakeholders' gatherings of public officials, agency personnel, business trade's people and a few public members, held once every three months. What do we do? We help DNREC write the regulations for brownfield legislation and other matters dealing with brownfields. Brownfields are real property that may be vacant, abandoned or underutilized as a result of a reasonably-held belief that they may be environmentally contaminated. Some examples: a housing development with underground heating oil tanks (East Lake), a residential home with underground heating oil tank or outdoor above ground heating oil tank, a gas station, property along the Wilmington riverfront, a salvage yard, chemical industrial site, refinery, old landfill, a golf course, an orchard, farmland where

hazardous materials were dumped many years ago.

It is better to clean up these sites than develop pristine farmland and forests (greenfields) which are continually being used up in Delaware. A 2009 study conducted by the University of Delaware's Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research examined 119 brownfields properties in the Brownfields program during a 10 year period through 2008. The study found that remediation and redevelopment of the sites stimulated almost 700 jobs and added \$394M to the State's gross domestic product. Disposable income in Delaware grew \$105M from activities associated with site cleanups. The majority of the sites were in NCC. Half of the brownfields are scheduled for business use. Ten were being remediated for non-profit agencies such as homeless shelters and museums. DNREC has developed a step-by-step program to help those who own property or want to buy property that may be a brownfield. It covers the application, the investigation and remediation if this is needed. The applicant must use certified professionals in that line of work. The Committee has found that the majority of people in Delaware are unaware of the importance of the Brownfields Program. There are many advantages in redeveloping potentially contaminated properties such as increased tax revenue, use of existing infrastructure, removing eyesores that inhibit neighborhood or industrial park redevelopment, creating jobs and economic development, reducing health and environmental risks, reducing sprawl and promoting green space, and lowering purchase prices for residential, commercial and industrial property.

*Pat Todd
April, 2012*