

VOTE YES on House Bill 2734

Authorizes local governments to create land banks to facilitate brownfield cleanup and redevelopment

HB 2734 comes to you from the Brownfields Coalition, which includes more than 40 public, private and nonprofit organizations that joined together in 2014 to address the need for new tools to tackle the challenges associated with the 13,500 brownfield properties in Oregon.

Many brownfields have sat idle for years without the landowners investing in cleanup and redevelopment. These properties pose potential threats to human health and the environment and represent “dead zones” that undermine economic development, degrade community livability, and depress the value of neighboring properties. Cleanup of these sites can eliminate blight and health hazards, return these sites to productive use, create jobs and increase local and state tax revenues. However, local governments are reluctant to take responsibility for brownfields due to concerns about legal and financial liability.

One tool that can help to end the cycle of disinvestment in brownfields is the creation of a local land bank authority. As an independent public entity governed by a community-based board, a land bank authority could accept ownership of derelict brownfield properties without taking on the liabilities associated with pre-existing contamination that apply under state law. This would enable a land bank to take actions necessary to position these properties for redevelopment. (See reverse for more information.)

No single tool or approach, including this one, will work for all communities and all brownfields. HB 2734 is not a panacea. However, it offers local governments around the state a new, purely optional tool that can help in certain circumstances. We are unaware of any opposition in the lobby to this proposal and urge your support.

