



Advancing research and debate  
on housing, neighborhoods,  
and urban policy

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## **Report: NYU Furman Center Releases New Analysis of City's Brownfield Cleanup Program**

*Policy brief provides detailed report on program used to remediate hundreds of brownfield sites  
in New York City.*

**New York, NY**— A new policy brief by the NYU Furman Center examines how New York City's Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP) is being used to redevelop hundreds of brownfield sites in the city. The VCP is the city's primary brownfield remediation program, providing oversight and support for developers to clean up properties with actual or potential contamination. The policy brief released today, [\*Making Dirty Land Clean: An Analysis of New York City's Voluntary Cleanup Program \(VCP\)\*](#), sheds light on this city program to incentivize remediation and redevelopment of contaminated sites.

Based on research and interviews with government officials, program participants, and other experts, the policy brief provides a detailed overview of how the program works and the incentives it provides to property owners to enroll. The brief also analyzes data the NYU Furman Center pulled from over 1,000 documents from the Office of Environmental Remediation (OER). It reports the number and location of sites that have participated in the VCP, the uses that are expected to follow site cleanup, and demographic and housing market conditions in the neighborhoods where the sites are concentrated.

The brief finds that VCP sites are very concentrated in certain neighborhoods—over 66% are located in 10 community districts, and Greenpoint/Williamsburg alone is home to 24.6% of sites. The concentration of VCP sites in certain areas of the city suggests that their redevelopment may be part of larger trends or changes in those areas, though this research only reports correlation between site remediation and these trends, and does not assess causal relationships. For example, of the 10 community districts in the city with the most VCP sites, five of them (Williamsburg/Greenpoint, Bedford Stuyvesant, Mott Haven, Astoria, and

Morrisania) are on the list of “gentrifying neighborhoods” identified by the NYU Furman Center in its 2016 report, based on rapid rent growth in previously low-income neighborhoods. The brief also finds that the neighborhoods with the most VCP sites have experienced a relative increase in median household income since 2010, compared to other neighborhoods in the city.

The policy brief also makes recommendations to strengthen the program and discusses the implications of the research for other states and localities considering similar programs. Recommendations include strengthening liability protections for the program’s enrollees, having comprehensive inventories of the brownfields in the jurisdiction, and assessing whether cleanup programs are spurring redevelopment.

“The cleanup of contaminated sites is important for the health, safety, and vitality of communities,” explains NYU Furman Center legal fellow and study author Luis Inaraja Vera. “While more work is needed to understand the effect that the city’s VCP is having on redevelopment rates in the city, our research shows that the program does a good job attracting owners to participate, which is one important measure of a program’s success.”

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Read the brief: [\*Making Dirty Land Clean: An Analysis of New York City’s Voluntary Cleanup Program \(VCP\) \(PDF: 200.08 KB\) >>\*](#)

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**About the NYU Furman Center:** The NYU Furman Center advances research and debate on housing, neighborhoods, and urban policy. Established in 1995, it is a joint center of the New York University School of Law and the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. More information can be found at [furmancenter.org](http://furmancenter.org) and [@FurmanCenterNYU](https://twitter.com/FurmanCenterNYU).