

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES**  
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

**DATE:** July 7, 2026

**TO:** Budget and Finance Committee  
Honorable Katy Yaroslavsky, Chair  
Honorable Bob Blumenfield, Vice Chair  
Honorable Heather Hutt, Member  
Honorable Tim McOsker, Member  
Honorable Eunisses Hernandez, Member

**FROM:** <sup>FOR</sup> Sarai Bhaga, Interim Director and General Manager *Alex E. Helou*  
LA Sanitation and Environment

**SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO INSTRUCTION OF COUNCIL FILE: 26-0383  
REGARDING LA SANITATION AND ENVIRONMENT (LASAN) CITYWIDE  
BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM STAFFING AND RESOURCES**

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On April 22, 2026, the Los Angeles City Council adopted motion [Council File 26-0383](#) instructing the Bureau of Sanitation (LASAN) to report back on staffing and resources needed to support the operations of the Citywide Brownfields Program.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL ACTION:**

1. **REINSTATE** one (1) Management Analyst (MA) and one (1) Environmental Specialist II (ES II) position within the Bureau of Sanitation (LASAN) Citywide Brownfields Program in the Fiscal Year 2026-27 Budget to restore the program's ability to deliver environmental due diligence, remediation oversight, grant administration, and technical assistance for City redevelopment projects.
2. **INSTRUCT** the City Administrative Office and Chief Legislative Analyst to identify funding to upgrade one (1) Administrative Clerk to a Senior Administrative Clerk within the Citywide Brownfields Program in the FY 2026-27 budget to sustain and optimize the program's operational capacity.
3. **INSTRUCT** the City Administrative Officer (CAO) to report back with a recommendation establishing ongoing, secure funding to sustain the Citywide Brownfields Program.

**BACKGROUND**

The Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment (LASAN), Solid Resources Citywide Recycling Division (SRCRD), Citywide Brownfields Program (Brownfields Program) provides technical and on-call assistance to combat challenges associated with abandoned, idle properties that may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant (i.e., Brownfields). The Brownfields Program assists with the due diligence process by managing environmental site assessments, investigations and the remediation process of contaminated sites throughout the City. The due diligence process consists of a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (Phase I ESA), which utilizes site visits, stakeholder interviews, and historical records to evaluate previous land use and identify potential environmental concerns. If these initial findings suspect contamination, the program coordinates a Phase II ESA. This phase involves targeted sampling and analysis of soil, groundwater, and soil gas to confirm the presence and extent of any hazardous materials. Once the site is fully characterized, a tailored cleanup strategy is developed in compliance with state and federal regulations. This strategy undergoes a community engagement process before moving forward into active remediation. Depending on the specific project, the program also assists with applying for and managing state and federal brownfields grants.

Blighted and contaminated land harms the vitality and health of a community, while remediation and redevelopment of Brownfields can restore economic and environmental health. For instance, a property may have been previously occupied by a gas station, dry cleaner or another type of business utilizing hazardous or petroleum pollutants that may have spilled onto the ground or leaked from underground storage tanks. These substances may still be present in the soil and/or groundwater and must be removed or treated before the property can be safely redeveloped for its intended use. Successful Brownfields redevelopment promotes sustainable communities and provides economic benefit to the City. Revitalizing underutilized sites may lead to a host of additional benefits.

The redevelopment of these underutilized brownfields can:

- Stimulate local economies by creating new jobs, generating tax revenues, and attracting new businesses and residents.
- Improve public health and safety and reduce pollution.
- Enhance quality of life and increase property values.
- Promote sustainable development through use of existing infrastructure, reduce urban sprawl, and preserve green spaces.
- Leverage private investment, public funding, and partnerships to achieve community benefit goals.

There are over 3,000 recorded brownfield sites in the City of Los Angeles. Navigating the Brownfields redevelopment process can be a complex endeavor, especially for those unfamiliar

with the required due diligence and cleanup process. The Brownfields Program plays a crucial role in addressing environmental challenges for sites with known or suspected contamination.

The Brownfields Program provides on-call assistance to the Mayor's Office, Council Offices and City departments to conduct Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESA) and Phase II ESAs, as well as to provide project management of a Brownfield site. For example, when the City is considering the acquisition or redevelopment of a property, environmental due diligence is an essential safeguard that helps identify potential environmental concerns and liabilities that could impose significant cleanup costs and allows the City to assess land use risks and negotiate acquisition terms accordingly. This proactive approach ultimately reduces liability and enhances the feasibility of successful redevelopment. The Brownfields Program also offers cleanup management and oversight, including coordination with regulatory agencies as well as applying for and managing various State and Federal grants.

Furthermore, the Brownfields Program can provide on-call assistance to private developers to navigate the brownfield redevelopment process, though this is limited by staff capacity. Currently, it is voluntary for private developers to seek the Brownfields Program assistance. If developers choose to work with the Brownfields Program team, they will follow the due diligence and remediation process as outlined above for City-owned sites.

## DISCUSSION

### **1. Recommendation: Restore Program Capacity**

The Environmental Specialist II and Management Analyst positions were eliminated during the FY25-26 budget. Because these positions are critical for the program's effectiveness in managing Brownfield projects, it is suggested to evaluate the reinstatement of both roles to restore the program's operational capacity. The loss of these positions has negatively impacted the City's ability to provide technical support for a growing number of complex projects, including grant-funded projects. Reinstating these roles is essential for sustaining program capacity, ensuring thorough oversight, and maintaining the institutional knowledge required to effectively manage environmental investigations and cleanup. Currently, the program is limited to a small team, and without restoring these vacancies, the unit may be forced to minimize its workload. See Appendix A (Program Performance, Key Project Portfolio, and Grant Awards)

### **2. Recommendation: Sustain and Optimize the Program's Operational Capacity**

To ensure long-term success, an upgrade of an Administrative Clerk position to a Senior Administrative Clerk is needed to provide the necessary higher-level administrative support, fiscal oversight, and organizational service that an Administrative Clerk is not appropriately qualified to perform. The Senior Administrative Clerk would be responsible for delivering essential administrative support to the Brownfields Program.

Key duties would include performing intranet and internet research to find necessary information for program staff, management, and departmental liaisons. The role would involve gathering and organizing data for project tracking, on-call contracts, and grant-related reporting. Additionally, the Senior Administrative Clerk would be tasked with creating and managing electronic records for brownfields inventories and reports, as well as assisting in the maintenance of public notifications on the program's website. Financial responsibilities would include tracking expenditures, maintaining simple financial records, and updating relevant databases. The Senior Administrative Clerk would also prepare documentation for state and federal grant reporting and processes reimbursement requests based on staff data. Finally, the position would provide direct assistance to both internal and external stakeholders by helping them complete various forms and paperwork.

### **3. Recommendation: Establish a Secure Funding Source**

Establish a secure and permanent funding source for the Brownfields Program to ensure long-term success and stability. There are a limited number of available brownfields grants, and not every site meets specific grant criteria. Currently, the program is facing challenges to addressing City projects proactively. Furthermore, LASAN can no longer provide front-funding for reimbursement-based grants. Securing a stable funding stream would enable the program to manage urgent cleanup projects that pose significant health and safety threats to the local community. Starting in FY 2026-27, the [City Administrative Officer \(CAO\)](#) will integrate a Climate Budget process to ensure that funds for land remediation and green infrastructure are prioritized in disadvantaged communities.

LASAN has submitted recommendations for development of a fee structure for development projects that require brownfield clearance under a separate report back in response to Council motion (Hernandez - Price - Harris-Dawson), CF# 24-1521.

## **CONCLUSION**

Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment's (LASAN) Brownfields Program is a critical City asset for tackling the environmental and economic challenges posed by over 3,000 contaminated sites. However, the program's effectiveness is currently constrained by staffing reductions, insecure funding, and a reactive, rather than proactive, role in the City's property development pipeline. The Brownfields program is not sustainable long term, given the lack of staffing and funding resources.

The program plays a vital role in fulfilling Mayor Bass' Climate Action Plan objectives, which include improving public health and environment through the elimination of toxins and pollutants from contaminated sites, expanding green spaces, and fostering the development of

affordable housing. To sustain the program and be able to meet the Mayor's Climate Action Plan (Objective 8) to clean up sites so land can be safely reused for housing, parks and community benefits, it is essential to reinstate the Environmental Specialist II and Management Analyst positions eliminated in the FY25-26 budget and to upgrade one Administrative Clerk position to a Senior Administrative Clerk to provide the necessary higher-level administrative support. Establishment of a secure, ongoing funding source would enable the program to proactively address remediation needs, identifying environmental liabilities, mitigating land use risks, and continuing to leverage state and federal funding for sustainable community revitalization.

## APPENDIX

### Program Performance, Key Project Portfolio, and Grant Awards

The LASAN Citywide Brownfields Program is one of the largest brownfields programs in the State of California and over the years has successfully secured nearly 50 grants from various state and federal granting agencies for environmental assessment and remediation of contaminated sites. More recently, in the last five years, the program has been awarded upwards of \$12 million in assessment and cleanup grants. Additionally, the program will receive approximately \$11 million from various sources, including Community Development and Block Grants (CDBG), the Capital and Technology Improvement Expenditure Program (CTIEP) and the Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) to complete current cleanup projects.

To illustrate the importance of the program, the following outlines a few of the key projects that are currently underway that support housing efforts and open space parks.

#### *Key Active projects*

- Taylor Yard G2 (Council District 1): A 42-acre site located along the Los Angeles River is one of the City's most ambitious and environmentally critical redevelopment efforts. Decades of the site's former use as an industrial railyard have left the site with lingering hazardous substance contamination including lead, hydrocarbons, arsenic, asbestos, and other toxic substances that threaten public health and the surrounding ecosystem. The Brownfields program has successfully applied for and secured \$3 million US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant funding. The program has already utilized \$500,000 in EPA Cleanup Grant funding to address the contamination and is in the process of utilizing the \$2.5 million in grant funding.
- Spring Street Crosswalk (Council District 1): In response to an urgent Council District 1 request, the program is currently conducting an environmental investigation at the "Spring Street Crosswalk" within the public right of way, located near the intersections of North Spring Street with Ann Street and Mesnager Street. This soil assessment aims to identify potential contamination resulting from the nearby former Union Pacific Railroad-Cornfield Yard, providing necessary data for construction safety and the characterization of materials for off-site disposal.
- Former Lincoln Heights Jail Project (Council District 1): An approximately 4.8-acre cleanup project in Council District 1, located on the east bank of the Los Angeles River in Lincoln Heights is planned for affordable housing and open space. The Program

conducted several environmental assessments with federal grants and is actively pursuing cleanup funding.

- Sharp Lot (Council District 7) - This is a 2.3-acre City-owned lot in Council District 7 that has been vacant for numerous years and impacted with heavy metals that need to be removed prior to redevelopment of a community garden. The Brownfields Program conducted several grant-funded environmental site assessments to fully characterize the chemical contamination of the site, and is currently overseeing the remediation prior to the redevelopment as a community garden.
- 94th & Broadway Project (Council District 8): An approximately 2-acre cleanup project in Council District 8 will provide 180 units of housing and a grocery store to address food insecurity. The Brownfields Program conducted the environmental assessments, applied for a \$2 million EPA Cleanup Grant and leveraged the funds to start implementation of \$7.3 million in cleanup funding to remediate the site.
- Vermont Lot (Council District 8): In partnership with the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Brownfields Program is performing a supplemental environmental investigation at 10422 South Vermont Avenue. This 0.23-acre vacant lot, once the site of a gasoline service station, is currently being assessed using the program's EPA grant funding. The program is also coordinating phytoremediation efforts to continue testing the effectiveness of nature-based solutions. Once the site is fully remediated and safe for reuse, it will be transformed into a community garden.
- Slauson & Wall Project (Council District 9): The Brownfields Program is currently managing an approximately 7-acre cleanup project underway in Council District 9. The Brownfields Program secured over \$6.8 million in state grant funding to remediate lead, arsenic, volatile organic compounds, and other contaminants. Once the remediation is complete, this site will provide 300 units of affordable housing and 4-acre open space park. At the Slauson & Wall project, the Brownfields Program also led the first successful phytoremediation pilot projects in the City that demonstrated that plants can successfully remove harmful contaminants from the environment.
- Former Crocker Plating Works Project (Council District 9): The project consists of four parcels that are contaminated with heavy metals and volatile organic compounds that need to be remediated prior to redevelopment into affordable housing. The program secured various grants to conduct numerous environmental investigations and a \$500,000 EPA Cleanup Grant to remediate the site.

- Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Harbor Range (Council District 15): The program is currently leading the coordination efforts with the California EPA (CalEPA) Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) for the cleanup efforts at the LAPD Harbor Range in Wilmington.
- Area Wide Assessments (AWA) The Brownfields Program is also implementing a \$500,000 EPA Community Wide Assessment grant to conduct environmental investigations. Key project areas include but are not limited to sites located in Pacoima (CD 7), South Los Angeles (CD 8 and CD 9) and Wilmington (CD 15). The AWAs are area strategic environmental studies aimed at identifying potential contamination risks and supporting future land use planning.

To ensure the City can respond rapidly to environmental concerns, the Brownfields Program manages a Pre-Qualified On-Call (PQOC) list of eight expert environmental consultants. This list is a critical resource that allows the program to expeditiously mobilize technical experts to implement environmental assessments and cleanup projects.