Maine’s Rural Brownfields: Economic development opportunities and challenges to revitalization

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# Abstract

Maine’s rural communities have a proud legacy of developing around manufacturing mainstays including lumber, paper, and textile mills. With the closure of many of these businesses over the last five decades, towns have become burdened with degrading industrial infrastructure in addition to the loss of their economic base. This paper will explore how these communities have addressed these facilities utilizing funds from federal and state Brownfields programs. Leveraging data from EPA’s Clean-ups in my Community (CIMC) database and the database of remediated sites from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, we will compare the site and grant profiles of Maine’s urban and rural brownfields to determine the unique challenges faced by rural communities on the path to revitalization and redevelopment. We will then sketch out a research agenda that explores how these challenges may be overcome and the economic development opportunities provided by successful revitalization.