

“Stakeholder Views on the USEPA Brownfields Program”

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Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I'm George Carico, Director of the WV Brownfields Assistance Center at Marshall University, located in Huntington, WV. I'm here today to offer our experience in the value and importance of redeveloping brownfield properties and show our support for continuation of the Brownfields Program and offer some input on how this valuable program can be strengthened. Our Brownfields Assistance Center works in conjunction with the Brownfields Center at West Virginia University. These two Centers were established in 2005 by State legislation to assist communities and organizations across WV in redeveloping brownfield properties for new and productive use. We've seen first-hand the importance of EPA Brownfields funding, how these investments have resulted in strengthening of local and regional economies while adding new community vibrancy and resiliency in our cities and towns. Reutilizing brownfield properties for new commercial and industrial businesses, residential, government use, and recreational use has been quite prosperous for several communities in WV, and it's our goal to see more successes, especially in our smaller communities and rural areas.

WV is like most States, with thousands of brownfield properties, found in all sizes and conditions. These properties can be quite challenging to redevelop, primarily due to the environmental hazards they contain, or are perceived to be present. Properly assessing and, if needed, remediating environmental hazards is vital to transforming these properties into new, productive use while ensuring the future safety of human health and the environment. EPA Brownfields funding is providing this vital component.

Since 2005, our WV Brownfields Assistance Centers have seen a wide variety of successful brownfield projects. EPA states they have invested approximately \$41M in brownfield funding in WV, resulting in an estimated \$1.6B in leveraged funds, and creating about 5,400 jobs. I estimate more than 300 properties have been impacted by these funds. I believe actual project examples are the best way to show how successful the Brownfields Program has become. While I can provide numerous examples, I'll provide a few different but equally important projects to illustrate this success.

1. Shepherdstown Library – Shepherdstown, one of the oldest Towns in WV, was in dire need of a new library, as the old library building was far too small and there was inadequate parking. The most suitable location that could provide enough space for the new building and associated parking was identified at the edge of town that decades ago was the former town dump. The site was fully assessed, and corrective actions conducted. In July of this year the Town celebrated the opening of its new library.
2. Huntington Fire Station – this brownfield site consisted of a former gas station and dry cleaner facility. Brownfield funds were utilized to assess the property and identify hazardous contaminants in the soils and groundwater. The site was entered into the WV Voluntary Remediation Program, and recently a Certificate of Completion was issued. Now, a new and strategically located fire station is under construction.
3. Beech Bottom Industrial Park – A steel mill operated here for decades along the Ohio River. After closure and sitting vacant for many years, brownfields funding was used to assess and remediate the site. In August of this year, it was announced that an electric pontoon boat manufacturing company will be the first tenant on part of the property, providing 100 new jobs and investing \$5M into the facility.
4. Golden Girls Group Home – A vacant property with an unknown history was identified in the Town of Ceredo for locating the Golden Girls Group Home, a safe place for young women that come from horrendous family situations to live, seek counseling, and obtain educational assistance and pursue employment. A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was conducted, at an estimated cost of only \$4,000, which determined the site had no recognized environmental conditions. This jump-started the process for this facility to be constructed, with funding coming from various companies, individuals, and private foundations. The facility is now in operation.
5. Grand Patrician Resort – The Morris Memorial Hospital was built in the 1930's to treat polio victims and was later used for a medical treatment facility and for senior citizen housing. The Town of Milton obtained the 180-acre property and extensive environmental assessment work was conducted using EPA Targeted Brownfields Assessment funds. The site was later selected for the Grand Patrician Resort, which will include an upscale hotel, conference center, and multi-sports recreational complex, a \$30M investment. The facility is currently under construction, with the first recreational phase of the Resort recently opening.

These are just a few of many examples of projects in our State where EPA Brownfields investments have played a critical role. If this funding were not available, most of these projects would not have happened. This funding gets environmentally impacted properties ready for new use, clearing the way for other funding streams to be utilized that result in successful projects.

While we have a lot of success stories, we have many more brownfield sites that still need attention, especially in our smaller communities and rural areas where the number of brownfield properties may be less but are equally important. Due to limited capacity and resources, it's much more difficult for these smaller communities to compete against the larger cities and more urban areas. Successfully applying for Brownfield grant funding and meeting all the requirements can be a daunting challenge for these communities, and they're often at a disadvantage to successfully compete. Some simply don't believe they can handle such a complex grant program, and don't apply for funding.

In closing, the EPA has numerous programs that are of tremendous importance to the country, but we, like many others, consider their Brownfields Program to be their crown jewel. Some changes to the competitive process should be considered to make it easier for smaller and more rural communities to compete against the larger cities and urban areas, but the EPA Brownfields Program is definitely a true champion.

Thank You