

Executive Summary

US EPA 2016 Brownfields Grant Proposal

City of Dothan, Alabama

"Inside the Circle": Dothan Alabama's Brownfields Assessment Program for Revitalization of the Urban Core

US EPA has made available the opportunity for qualified entities, such as the City of Dothan, to apply for funding to assess the environmental condition of former industrial and commercial sites which are currently idle, abandoned, and otherwise contributing to the decline of surrounding neighborhoods.

As the city of Dothan Alabama (population 65,446) expanded outward, its historical core declined. The once active downtown retail center surrounded by quaint, and densely populated neighborhoods has transitioned to a less active, and less desirable segment of the City. Many commercial and residential structures have deteriorated from lack of use and upkeep. In addition, Dothan's historical core once featured a robust industrial production corridor. Neighborhoods once dependent upon that corridor for jobs have suffered due to extinction of certain industries, closures, consolidations and other economic factors. Loss of blue collar jobs associated with those former industries resulted in poverty for many citizens living in underserved segments of the historical core.

For this grant, the City's focus is "inside the circle", where numerous abandoned, vacant and dilapidated properties exist. New retail, commercial, and residential growth has located upon previously undeveloped lands that surround the City. Ross Clark Circle encloses the historical core and denotes a boundary between it and the City's vibrant and rapidly growing suburbs. Outward growth has also left the historical core with remnants of previous industrial and commercial operations, most containing environmental challenges which impact their redevelopment potential.

With public input and engagement, the City completed an initial brownfields inventory resulting in approximately 25 priority sites, the majority clustered in an area of Dothan where poverty and unemployment are extreme. Based upon our knowledge and research of past land uses, all sites placed in the inventory have probable environmental contamination issues. Those former land uses include: a peanut processing factory, several dry cleaners operations, a latex processing plant, a textile processing plant, and several former gas stations.

The grant application's targeted community contains significantly higher rates of poverty and unemployment than other segments of the City, suggesting a correlation between brownfields

and undesirable living conditions. Addressing brownfields properties will provide the necessary foundation for encouraging the transition of those sites to support new economic uses and quality of life interventions for the surrounding neighborhoods; a key step toward improving neighborhoods near brownfields sites. Accordingly, this grant will provide needed funding to help mitigate environmental justice issues impacting the targeted community.

Community outreach activities designed to engage and educate citizens regarding brownfields and the needs of affected neighborhoods are well underway. With citizen participation and the invaluable support of our local institutional and community-based partners, we are optimistic, that if awarded, this assessment grant will provide brownfields property owners with valuable due diligence assistance regarding their property's environmental matters. That in turn provides motivation for brownfields property owners to either sell or prepare those properties for new uses, catalyzing revitalization and redevelopment "inside the circle" of Dothan, Alabama.

Dothan's grant funding request is for a total of \$400,000; divided into segments of \$200,000 for petroleum substance assessments and \$200,000 for hazardous substance assessment. The grant application process was fully completed and submitted to US EPA on December 17, 2015. The agency will conduct a review and analysis of proposals from across the United States. That process will take approximately four to six months. EPA will then announce the 2016 brownfields assessment grant award recipients.

Questions and comments can be directed to the project point of contact:

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