

UNIFIED GOVERNMENT OF WYANDOTTE COUNTY/KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

BROWNFIELDS PROJECT



Community-Wide Hazardous Substance and Community-Wide Petroleum Grants

The Unified Government of Wyandotte County, Kansas (UG) Brownfields Program is made possible through \$400,000 in EPA grants to perform assessments and cleanup planning on properties that might have been contaminated with either hazardous substances or petroleum. The program will facilitate the redevelopment and/or reuse of potentially contaminated properties and all services are performed free of charge to the property owners.

EPA's Healthy Communities & Ecosystems program gives preference to projects in areas with high concentrations of poverty, minorities, and sensitive populations as well as to areas with known environmental issues. Therefore, the grant resources will be targeted to five areas of the county: Argentine, Armourdale, Discovery Point, Quindaro and State Avenue Corridor.

The UG is working with property owners, environmental contractors, community and civic groups, citizens and other partners to identify and prioritize brownfield sites, assess contamination, and create cleanup and redevelopment plans at high-priority sites. *The process is completely voluntary, comes at no-charge to the property owner and ultimately is designed to identify properties that provide legitimate, highly viable redevelopment opportunities.*

Key to this effort is community involvement in identifying potential properties, developing criteria by which to screen them, and recommend selected sites. The project is being guided by a Target Area Planning Team (TAPT), comprised of members of the public, developers and UG staff. The TAPT will serve as an advisory committee. assist with community outreach in identifying potential sites, identify local criteria by which to select the sites and help facilitate the assessment process.

At its first meeting, one of the TAPT's primary concerns was ensuring the community has a complete understanding of the program and the process. To that end, this publication with a brief description of the program and answers to frequently asked questions has been developed.

Brownfields Program Frequently Asked Questions

What are brownfields?

Brownfields are "real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant." Brownfields blight communities across the country, inhibiting economic development and contaminating the environment. Unproductive and abandoned manufacturing sites, service stations, industrial facilities, chemical processing plants or open space properties affected by hazardous wastes or petroleum products can all be brownfields. It is estimated that there are more than 450,000 brownfields properties in the United States.

What can the grant funds be used for?

Grant funds will be used for the following activities.

- **Site Inventory:** One of the first steps in the project is to identify and prioritize brownfield sites with petroleum and hazardous substances contamination. The UG will work with the TAPT and the entire community to provide input and nominate sites to create an extensive inventory potential properties.

- **Site Assessments:** Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) at high-priority brownfield properties can be conducted.
- **Cleanup and Redevelopment Plans:** The UG will work with stakeholder groups to create cleanup and redevelopment plans for the assessed properties.



Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

How will the inventory of potential sites be developed?

The staff and consulting team have started by evaluating properties currently owned by the Unified Government. The Target Area Planning Team is being asked to assist in identifying other properties that might be eligible. Lastly, any resident of the Unified Government can nominate a property for consideration.

Once identified, the property must meet federal and state guidelines before continuing in the process, including that the property owner is not responsible for the contamination. The TAPT is also in the process of identifying criteria specific to the UG brownfields program. Such criteria could include the location of the property, its redevelopment potential, and its contributions to the community in terms of jobs or additional tax revenue.

Explain the process for Phase I and Phase II ESAs.

A Phase I ESA is a preliminary look at brownfields sites that involves records research and an on-site visual inspection. There is some user provided information, but there is no testing.

A Phase II ESA is required if a Phase I ESA indicates a “recognized environmental condition,” which means there is an active known petroleum or hazardous substance that could damage a property’s value or the environment or have a negative affect on human health or the environment. A Phase II involves documents that provide more information about activities on the site, an analysis of environmental samples, and a decision as to whether remediation or site control is needed.

If contamination is found, is the property owner liable for clean up?

It depends on the level of contamination. If it’s below regulatory criteria, then clean up is not necessary. In general terms, property owners are not liable if they meet one of the following criteria.

- An innocent land owner, meaning they are *not* responsible for the contamination.
- An owner of property contiguous to the site in question but *not* responsible for the contamination.
- A bona fide prospective purchaser, which is someone who acquired the property after January 11, 2002, when certain amendments to the brownfields regulations were enacted.
- A state or local government not responsible for the contamination.

What are the benefits of a brownfields program?

Brownfields programs offer many benefits to communities, including:

- Increased property values;
- Increased predictability for developers, providing an inducement to invest in the community;
- Improved environmental quality;
- Increased competitiveness for other funding programs;

How can I get involved and learn more?

The Unified Government is actively seeking the involvement of community partners and citizens in the implementation of this project. Here’s how you can get involved.

- *Identify Sites* - Tell the UG of any potential brownfield sites in the area you know about. If you are an interested property owner and/or developer in Wyandotte County, you can nominate a site for Brownfields funding by filling out a ‘Brownfields Site Nomination Form’ located in the ‘Forms Section’ on the UG Brownfields website at <http://www.wycokck.org/InternetDept.aspx?id=28543>

Nomination forms can be submitted whether the nominating party owns the property or not. However, consideration of that property will not proceed unless the property owner is a willing participant.

- *Assist in Planning* - Share your vision for what should happen at the high-priority sites.
- *Stay Informed* - Keep up-to-date on project activities.

For more information on the UG’s brownfields project, contact:

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