

STEPHENSON COUNTY COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT
STEPHENSON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

THRESHOLD CRITERIA

1. **Applicant Eligibility:**

Stephenson County is an incorporated municipality of the State of Illinois and has the authority to enter into a cooperative agreement with the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

2. **Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority:**

Stephenson County has received a letter of acknowledgement from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. (Please see Appendix 1: Letter of Acknowledgement)

3. **Site Eligibility and Property Ownership Eligibility:**

Not Applicable. An eligibility determination matrix will be submitted for each of the sites selected for assessment upon the award of this Community-Wide Assessment Grant.

RANKING CRITERIA

1. **COMMUNITY NEED:**

a.) **Health, Welfare, and the Environment:**

i.) Stephenson County is a rural northwest Illinois county covering approximately 568 square miles. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 48,989 people reside in Stephenson County. The County Seat is located in the City of Freeport, which is also the largest community in the County with a population of 26,443. Ten other communities make up the incorporated areas of the County. There are numerous unincorporated areas throughout the County – most located along either a waterway or a former railroad line. Since Stephenson County’s proposal is community-wide, the assessment work we plan to conduct will be all-inclusive, incorporating each municipality within the County.

Stephenson County is deeply and proactively committed to addressing brownfield sites that pose risks to both the environment and our residents’ health. The County is also fully committed to addressing sites that hinder vital redevelopment and economic revitalization in our communities. Unfortunately, our County contains numerous brownfields sites, approximately eighty-three (83), due to our historically industrial-based economy. Due to our advantageous location near major highways, several prominent rail lines, proximity to the cities of Rockford and Chicago, the Pecatonica River, and availability of desirable land, Stephenson County’s economic growth was facilitated by industrial and manufacturing activity. This was true especially of the City of Freeport, where many major manufacturers chose to locate. Throughout the late 1800’s and the early 1900’s, Freeport was a manufacturing powerhouse. Several companies set up shop throughout both the downtown and along the outskirts of the City. Some of these companies included: H.D. Bentley Company, Dirksen Filigree, Journal Block, Henney Buggy/Henney Motor Company, Fairbanks Morse, King Seeley Thermos, Arcade Toys, Burgess Battery, W.T. Rawleigh Company, Furst McNess Company, Stover Manufacturing Company, S.N. Swan & Sons, and the Union Dairy Company. As time went by, prominent manufacturers such as Honeywell, Newell/Rubbermaid, and the Titan Tire Company chose Stephenson County as the location for their company’s Headquarters or major divisions. While Freeport was prospering with manufacturing activity, the other communities within the County were thriving as well. The other municipalities were self-sufficient communities that played host to several small, successful factories that manufactured such items as toys, cheese, bricks, wool, and furniture. Aside from manufacturing interests, the County’s other economic focus was agriculture-related. Approximately 31% of Stephenson County’s population resides in the rural and agricultural areas of the County. From the early days of initial settlement; mills, coal yards, stockyards, and grain elevators contributed to commerce throughout the County.

As a primarily rural County, we have watched our businesses struggle to meet global changes and to adjust with the ever-evolving economies of scale. In an attempt to stay afloat, these large and small manufacturers and agri-businesses moved to larger communities outside of the County. The long-time, high-employee Fortune

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500 Companies that once relocated their major divisions and headquarters within the County decided to either drastically downsize, close, or move out completely, placing hundreds of high wage-earning employees out of work. Unemployment in Stephenson County hit a 13-year high in 2003, ranging from 7-9% per month, which is considerably higher than state and national averages.

Currently, the incorporated villages and towns located within Stephenson County are characterized as bedroom communities as most of the villages do not have significant commercial interests that support measurable numbers of employees. The abandoned factories, agri-businesses, and commercial enterprises throughout the county have been virtually ignored for redevelopment. There is a hesitancy to develop on these abandoned sites because of fears of environmental contamination. The unincorporated and rural areas of the county, due to the lack of jobs in close proximity, house a disproportionate number of low-to-moderate income households. The added blight contributed by the abandoned facilities leads more affluent county residents to more attractive locales. In this way, the cycle is perpetuated. The townships, villages, and residents where these abandoned properties are situated, bear the brunt of the lack of attention. Public infrastructure lies dormant and the sites pose environmental threats to the health and safety of the community in lieu of development in environmentally pristine areas. There is unease among the county residents whose homes, schools or businesses are located adjacent to these potentially contaminated sites. Concerns over groundwater contamination, in particular, have been the impetus for informal gatherings of concerned citizens over the past several years.

To date, we have successfully identified approximately eighty-three (83) sites throughout the County that may potentially contain contamination based upon their historic uses. We have identified these sites with previous US EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant funds, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the County's Brownfield Redevelopment Advisory Committee (BRAC), and historic information from Sanborn Fire Insurance maps and Polk Directories. The impacts of these sites upon our County affect our economy and most importantly, the health of our residents and our environment. We can attest to the following impacts of these sites on the County:

Economic Impacts: Brownfields have proven to be a definite obstacle to overcome in initiating the revitalization of the County's economy. Reinvestment throughout the County is hindered due to concerns of perceived environmental contamination of sites based upon their historical uses. Developers are hesitant to redevelop abandoned factories, agri-businesses, service stations, and commercial enterprises throughout the County. Stephenson County once had a thriving economy with the City of Freeport and the Village of Lena as the commercial and industrial centers for the County. The County is now characterized by devalued property, economic stagnation, poverty, and blight. The value of homes throughout the County is much less than the median home value of both the State and the nation as a whole. The median home value in the County ranges from 28.0 – 32.0% lower values than that of the median home value in both the State of Illinois and the United States (US Census Bureau, 2000).

Health Impacts: The residents of Stephenson County are very familiar with the impacts upon their health that can result from exposure to hazardous substances brownfields contamination. In 1999, the United States Environmental Protection Agency was called on to respond to an emergency response for a freestanding mercury incident involving two boys in one of the abandoned manufacturing facilities in Stephenson County. This incident heightened awareness within our County of the importance of identifying and reducing threats posed by brownfields. In addition, citizens of the City of Freeport formed the East Side Environmental and Health Task Force due to their concern over the health disparities of residents that may be linked to environmental contamination. Jeff Todd, the Administrator of the Stephenson County Health Department at the time, was a key member of this Task Force and was able to provide assistance from the Illinois Department of Public Health toxicologists and epidemiologists.

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Environmental Impacts: In addition to economic and health impacts, brownfields, of course, make an environmental impact upon the areas in which they are located. The Pecatonica River is in close proximity to many of the abandoned and potentially contaminated manufacturing facilities in the County. This close proximity provides for a fragile hydrogeological setting of a shallow aquifer within sands and gravels. Combined with the previously identified historical property uses, the threat of migrating contaminants throughout the County is highly elevated. In fact, impacts to the Pecatonica River have been evidenced at other brownfields sites in the City of Freeport that have undergone cleanup, including Burgess Battery, CMC Heartland, and the Bordner Superfund site. In addition, the shallow groundwater that flows toward the river, when not influenced by well pumping, makes the river very susceptible to contaminant impact. Contamination flowing to the river from the groundwater could impact the ecological condition of the river. As part of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Site Remediation Program (SRP), surface water bodies are identified and evaluated to determine their impact from soil and groundwater contamination.

ii.) The unincorporated and rural areas of the county, due to the lack of jobs in close proximity, house a disproportionate number of low-to-moderate income households. The larger communities, such as the City of Freeport, also contain a higher percentage of low-to-moderate income households. These areas in particular are significantly impacted by brownfields sites, presenting an issue of environmental justice. Poverty exists in each Township of Stephenson County. However, a wide gap exists in poverty rates by race and ethnicity. 7% of whites are poor as compared to 31% for blacks and 24% for Hispanics (US Census, 2000). The County's disparity exceeds the national gap. Poverty and low income levels are contributing factors for various issues regarding the well-being of Stephenson County, including: teen births, mental health, substance abuse, crime, domestic violence and abuse, and academic achievement.

In 2004, the Stephenson County Health Department released the "Stephenson County 21st Century Healthy Communities 2004" assessment. An analysis of the assessment demonstrates significant public health concerns within Stephenson County associated with minority populations and persons living in poverty. Most startling, 53% of African-Americans die prematurely (before age 65) in Stephenson County compared to 19% of whites. This percentage increases to 73% for African-American males. The planning committee for the assessment identified this as one of the top health issues to be addressed in the County. Additionally, this study identified that African-Americans have 5% higher death rates for heart disease and 28% higher death rates for cancer than whites in the County. (US Census, 2000) The City of Freeport, Stephenson County's economic center and County Seat, has the highest concentration of African-Americans. The health problems that were identified as priorities in the assessment showed that many of them link to economic factors. The issue of economy and unemployment/underemployment was cited as a risk or contributing factor to: health care access, health disparities, mental health, and substance abuse.

b.) Financial Need

i.) Being a small, rural County, Stephenson County's municipal resources are much more limited for reinvesting in brownfields redevelopment than other larger counties and communities. Our financial resources are already spread extremely thin. Unemployment continues to run higher than the state and federal rates. Our median household income is consistently lower than the state and national median dollars. As the commercial center of the County, Freeport's economic numbers also display these declining trends. In addition, Stephenson County has been a Presidentially-Declared Disaster Area on two (2) occasions within the past year. The first occurrence, in August 2007, was due to extreme flash flooding. The second occasion was in February 2008, due to heavy snowfall and severe winter weather conditions. These occurrences further stretched our fiscal and personnel resources to the limit. After examining our demographics, it is apparent that the County is need of this funding.

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DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	CITY OF FREEPORT	STEPHENSON COUNTY	STATE OF ILLINOIS	UNITED STATES
Population	26,443	48,979	12,419,293	281,421,906
Minority %	18.2%	10.7%	26.5%	24.9%
% Families Below Poverty Level	9.9%	6.5%	7.8%	9.2%
Unemployment Rate	5.0%	4.1%	3.9%	3.7%
Median Household Income	\$35,399	\$40,366	\$46,590	\$41,994
Per Capita Income	\$18,680	\$19,794	\$23,104	\$21,587
% Vacant Housing Units	10.0%	8.9%	6.0%	9.0%
% Female Households	12.6%	9.5%	12.3%	12.2%
Median Home Value	\$71,600	\$81,400	\$130,800	\$119,600

(SOURCE: US CENSUS, 2000)

Almost one in ten (9%) Stephenson County residents live in poverty. One quarter of the County's population earns an income of less than 20% of the poverty level. Poverty exists in every Stephenson County township. A wide gap exists in poverty rates by race and ethnicity. 7% of whites are poor as compared to 31% for blacks and 24% for Hispanics (US Census, 2000). The County's disparity exceeds the national gap. Poverty and low income levels are contributing factors for various issues regarding the well-being of Stephenson County, including: teen births, mental health, substance abuse, crime, domestic violence and abuse, and academic achievement.

County unemployment and underemployment was most recently documented in a Northwest Illinois Workforce Investment Board labor shed study that found that the Stephenson County area has a pool of approximately 12,000 unemployed people and an additional pool of about 19,600 workers that are currently underemployed. Unemployment in Stephenson County has exceeded state and national figures since 1998. The 2003 unemployment rate, ranging from 7-9% per month, represented a 13-year high for the County. Unemployment among Stephenson County black workers (23%) was four fold the white rate (6%) in 2001 (US Census, 2000).

Stephenson County has been hit hard by economic downturns in manufacturing. Even in light of recent economic shifts, manufacturing continues to be the County's primary industry, accounting for 27% of all employed workers in 2000. Manufacturing's dominance is far greater in Stephenson County than statewide (16% of workers) or nationally (14%). Manufacturing, which once had a strong-hold on the economy of northwest Illinois for several decades, has since drastically declined. Stephenson County has been impacted considerably by the downturn of manufacturing jobs, which resulted in the loss of over 50,000 jobs in the State of Illinois in the last four years (Illinois Department of Employment Security). Please see the table below that fully illustrates the impact of the decline of manufacturing in the regional area:

EMPLOYMENT IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY BY COUNTY			
COUNTY	1990	2000	2005
Stephenson	27.5%	23.1%	20.3%
Ogle	30.4%	22.6%	20.6%
Whiteside	27.1%	23.8%	19.8%
Jo Daviess	17.6%	15.2%	13.5%
Carroll	9.0%	14.4%	12.3%

(SOURCE: Northern Illinois Market Facts 2006)

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As illustrated in the table above, you can see that manufacturing, a once thriving industry in Northwest Illinois, has taken a sharp drop over the past 15 years – a drop of 7.2% for Stephenson County. This decline continues today with several large employers cutting jobs, moving their operations, or closing down altogether. These companies include Honeywell, Newell/Rubbermaid, and the Titan Tire Company. This dependence on manufacturing, which was once strength of the region, is now a significant weakness of the economic vitality of the County. This makes the County extremely vulnerable in today's global economy.

ii.) Since we are a small, rural County, our funds are extremely limited for brownfields redevelopment. Due to our population, we don't qualify for important programs, such as HUD's Community Development Block Grant entitlement funding, which often serves as a significant pool of funding for larger communities. In addition, Stephenson County has been a Presidentially-Declared Disaster Area on two (2) occasions within the past year. The first occurrence, in August 2007, was due to extreme flash flooding. The second occasion was in February 2008, due to heavy snowfall and severe winter weather conditions. These occurrences further stretched our fiscal and personnel resources to the limit. In 2005, Stephenson County was awarded US EPA brownfields assessment funds. With these funds, we have successfully identified approximately eighty-three (83) sites throughout the County that potentially contain contamination based upon their historic uses. To date, we have conducted five (5) Phase I Environmental Site Assessments, seven (7) Phase II Environmental Site Assessments, and enrolled three (3) sites into the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Site Remediation Program (SRP). Stephenson County is seeking additional funding to continue these vital assessment activities at these identified sites so we can return to them to a productive and effective end use. If we are awarded this \$400,000 grant, it will be a major contributor to overcoming our funding gap. We are facing an extremely critical juncture at this point in our program. US EPA funding is essential to continue any redevelopment progress that we've made thus far through the program.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND FEASIBILITY OF SUCCESS:

a.) Project Description:

i.) Stephenson County intends to use this grant funding to further the progress that they have made with their previous assessment grant funding, as well as to expand their assessment activities to other vital properties within the County. The County will continue to prioritize potential sites that have been identified by a review of historical directories, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, and historic images of the County. Once the sites are prioritized, eligibility determination information will be prepared and submitted to the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency when applicable. Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments will be conducted and remedial planning will commence for sites that have been identified as contaminated. We will also allocate funds to allow for County officials to have the opportunity to attend the National Brownfields Conference.

This proposal describes the use of grant funding to accomplish the following seven (7) tasks:

Task 1: Site Prioritization & Eligibility Determinations: This task consists of prioritizing potential brownfields sites that have previously been identified as well as any additional sites that have been brought to the attention of the County or the Brownfields Redevelopment Advisory Committee (BRAC). Once the sites have been prioritized, eligibility determination will be prepared and submitted to US EPA and IEPA when applicable.

Task 2: Health and Safety Plan and Quality Assurance Project Plan: An overall Health and Safety Plan (HASP) will be prepared for Phase II Environmental Site Assessment Activities. Site specific plans will be developed that refer to the general Health and Safety Plan. A Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) will also be prepared by the contracted brownfields consultant in accordance with US EPA's guidelines.

Task 3: Phase I Environmental Site Assessments: This task involves researching the historic significance of the properties that have been identified as potential brownfield sites and prioritized by the County's BRAC. All

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Phase I Environmental Site Assessments will be conducted in accordance with all regulatory requirements. The Phase I Environmental Site Assessment will indicate whether contamination was identified as Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs) to a particular property and whether a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment should be initiated.

Task 4: Phase II Environmental Site Assessments/Remedial Planning: Phase II Environmental Site Assessments will be conducted at Phase I Environmental Site Assessment sites where Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs) have been identified. The purpose of a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment is to investigate the RECs identified in the Phase I Environmental Site Assessments to determine if contamination is indeed present. The assessments will determine what contaminants are in fact present and what levels of contamination are apparent on the sites. If contamination is identified, then we will enroll the impacted sites into the Illinois EPA's voluntary Site Remediation Program (SRP) for further investigation and remedial planning.

Task 5: IEPA Expense: The County will enroll sites where contamination is discovered as part of the Phase II Environmental Site Assessment activities into the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Site Remediation Program. This program requires the remedial applicant to pay for Illinois Environmental Protection Agency project management fees.

Task 6: Community Involvement: The County has already held several public meetings for their previous US EPA Brownfields Assessment grant to gather input from citizens and community leaders. We will continue to encourage and facilitate community involvement in the development of the strategic plan for reuse of the identified properties. Community participants will include community residents, government officials and private-sector representatives. Because Brownfields Projects are partnerships between the private and public sectors, industrial, financial and community representatives will benefit from the collaborative planning regarding potential investment and development opportunities. In certain cases, public meetings related to specific sites have been held to seek input from residents in the proximity of the sites. We anticipate these types of efforts to continue and are in need of additional grant funding to facilitate follow-up meetings. The County will also continue to distribute quarterly reports or newsletters on the progress of the brownfields projects and describe any milestones.

Task 7: Program Development

Coordination with the United States Environmental Protection Agency, preparation of requisite agency reports, facilitating the Brownfields Redevelopment Advisory Committee (BRAC) meetings, project management team meetings, and the travel expense for attendance of our County Board Chairman John Blum and/or County staff at brownfields conferences are all included in the program development budget category.

b.) Budget for EPA Funding and Leveraging Other Resources:

i.) The following table provides information on the anticipated costs to conduct the various tasks needed to transition the stagnant County to vibrant redevelopment.

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COMMUNITY-WIDE HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES PROJECT TASKS								
BUDGET CATEGORIES	Site Prioritization & Eligibility Determinations	Health and Safety Plan/ Quality Assurance Project Plan	Phase I Environmental Site Assessments	Phase II Environmental Site Assessments/ Remedial Planning	IEPA Expense	Community Involvement	Program Development	Total
Personnel								
Travel							\$3,000	\$3,000
Equipment								
Supplies								
Contractual	\$7,500	\$2,500	\$17,000	\$129,500	\$30,000	\$5,500	\$5,000	\$197,000
Other								
USEPA Grant Total	\$7,500	\$2,500	\$17,000	\$129,500	\$30,000	\$5,500	\$5,000	\$200,000
In-Kind								
Project Total	\$7,500	\$2,500	\$17,000	\$129,500	\$30,000	\$5,500	\$8,000	\$200,000

COMMUNITY-WIDE PETROLEUM PROJECT TASKS								
BUDGET CATEGORIES	Site Prioritization & Eligibility Determinations	Health and Safety Plan/ Quality Assurance Project Plan	Phase I Environmental Site Assessments	Phase II Environmental Site Assessments/ Remedial Planning	IEPA Expense	Community Involvement	Program Development	Total
Personnel								
Travel							\$3,000	\$3,000
Equipment								
Supplies								
Contractual	\$7,500	\$2,500	\$17,000	\$129,500	\$30,000	\$5,500	\$5,000	\$197,000
Other								
USEPA Grant Total	\$7,500	\$2,500	\$17,000	\$129,500	\$30,000	\$5,500	\$5,000	\$200,000
In-Kind								
Project Total	\$7,500	\$2,500	\$17,000	\$129,500	\$30,000	\$5,500	\$8,000	\$200,000

Task 1: Site Prioritization & Eligibility Determinations

Eighty-three (83) sites were identified as possible brownfields sites using 2005 grant funds. Public meetings were held to solicit citizen and leader input from throughout the County. Input was gathered from these meetings about numerous sites throughout the County. A Brownfields Redevelopment Advisory Committee (BRAC) was then formed to provide input and guidance to our brownfields consultant who facilitated the prioritization process. The BRAC worked with our brownfields consultant to develop site prioritization criteria

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that met the needs of our communities and citizens. Two general categories were developed: redevelopment criteria and environmental criteria. After several BRAC meetings, the redevelopment criteria selected was abandonment, viability of area where the site is located with respect to redevelopment, proximity to existing infrastructure, location relative to floodplains or floodways, and whether the site was in a TIF or Enterprise Zone. We charged our environmental consultant with providing a cursory review on the environmental condition of the sites. The criteria were ranked. A redevelopment score and an environmental score were then calculated. A composite score was also developed. These scores were then used by the BRAC to make final decisions for prioritization. Eligibility determination information was then gathered and submitted to US EPA Project Manager Keary Cragan. The same process will be used for any additional sites that will be identified. Additionally, lower ranking sites from the original site prioritization may become a higher priority in the future. If that is the case, eligibility determinations will be conducted.

Task 2: Health and Safety Plan and Quality Assurance Project Plan

An overall Health and Safety Plan (HASP) will be prepared for Phase II Environmental Site Assessment activities. Site specific plans will be developed that refer to the general Health and Safety Plan. A Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) will also be prepared by the contracted brownfields consultant in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency's guidelines.

Task 3: Phase I Environmental Site Assessments

This task involves a study of the historic significance of the properties that have been identified and prioritized. The Phase I Environmental Site Assessment involves research of the historical uses and activities of the site as well as:

- Inspecting the property
- Identifying past owners and property use
- Review of governmental records to determine past use and/or disposal of hazardous substances
- Interviewing past property owners or employees
- Reviewing aerial photographs of the site
- Reviewing state and federal databases that list contaminated sites
- Review adjacent properties to evaluate potential sources of off-site contamination

All Phase I Environmental Site Assessments will be conducted in general accordance with ASTM 1527-05 Standard which addresses the standard to the All Appropriate Inquiry (AAI) requirement of the 2002 Small Business Liability Relief and Revitalization Act. AAI regulations will be used for all Phase I Environmental Site Assessments. The Phase I Environmental Site Assessment will indicate whether contaminants are identified as Recognized Environmental Conditions (REC's) to a particular property and whether a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment should be initiated. Because our need is greater for Phase II Environmental Site Assessments and remedial planning based on work conducted with our previously awarded grant funds, we anticipate conducting only three (3) to five (5) Phase I Environmental Site Assessments under this grant, if awarded. The typical cost on small sites for a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment is approximately \$2,500, with larger, more complex sites ranging in costs from \$3,000 to \$10,000.

Task 4: Phase II Environmental Site Assessments/Remedial Planning

We anticipate conducting approximately three (3) to five (5) Phase II Environmental Site Assessments at Phase I Environmental Site Assessment sites where Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs) have been identified. Costs on a per site basis will vary widely based on site specific conditions, but we anticipate the costs will range from \$25,000 to \$75,000. Collected samples would be the Target Compound List (TCL) parameters needed for possible enrollment into the IEPA Site Remediation Program as a "Comprehensive" site investigation compared to a "Focused" investigation. The purpose of a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment

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is to investigate the RECs identified in the Phase I Environmental Site Assessments to determine if contamination is indeed present. The assessments will determine what contaminants are in fact present and what levels of contamination are apparent on the sites. The results of the Phase II Environmental Site Assessment work will be compared to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Tiered Approach to Corrective Action Objectives (TACO) to evaluate contaminants and provide a baseline for comparison. If contamination is identified, then we will enroll the impacted sites in the Illinois EPA's voluntary Site Remediation Program (SRP) for further investigation and remedial planning as Comprehensive sites where the TCL analytical testing is required. We anticipate the enrollment of two (2) to three (3) sites into the SRP. Additionally, one (1) site is currently enrolled into the SRP where a Site Investigation Report (SIR) will be completed with current funding. The preparation of a Remedial Objectives Report (ROR) and Remedial Action Plan (RAP) will also be funded with this grant. This is critical to finishing the work that has been started on these sites. There is also one site that is being run through the IEPA Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) program. The current and future grant funds will be used for this work. The County will access the LUST Fund to seek reimbursement for expended US EPA grant funds for additional brownfields work, thus leveraging fund that would not otherwise be available.

Task 5: IEPA Expense

The County will enroll sites where contamination is discovered as part of the Phase II Environmental Site Assessment activities into the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Site Remediation Program. This program requires the remedial applicant to pay for Illinois Environmental Protection Agency project management fees. There is also an initial application fee of \$500 per site enrolled. While IEPA fees vary, we anticipate that \$10,000 in IEPA on average could be incurred for the enrolled SRP sites.

Task 6: Community Involvement

As stated previously, public meetings have been held since the County received their first US EPA Assessment grant to gather input from citizens and community leaders. We will continue to encourage and facilitate community involvement in the development of the strategic plan for reuse of the identified properties. Community participants will include community residents, government officials and private-sector representatives. Because Brownfields Projects are partnerships between the private and public sectors, industrial, financial and community representatives will benefit from the collaborative planning regarding potential investment and development opportunities. In certain cases, public meetings related to specific sites have been held to seek input from residents in the proximity of the sites. We anticipate these types of efforts to continue and are in need of additional grant funding to facilitate follow-up meetings. The County will also continue to distribute quarterly reports or newsletters on the progress of the brownfields projects and describe any milestones.

Task 7: Program Development

Coordination with the United States Environmental Protection Agency, preparation of requisite agency reports, facilitating the Brownfields Redevelopment Advisory Committee (BRAC) meetings, project management team meetings, and the travel expense for attendance of our County Board Chairman John Blum and/or County staff at brownfields conferences are all included in the program development budget category.

ii.) Leveraging Additional Resources:

Stephenson County is requesting \$400,000 in Assessment grant funds. \$200,000 will be allocated for the assessment of hazardous substances sites and \$200,000 will be allocated for the assessment of petroleum sites. Stephenson County is realistic in realizing that the \$400,000 will not fund all of the goals set for the assessment and redevelopment phases of this overall project. Public and private dollars will be sought to offset the shortfall in costs. We will place an emphasis on obtaining local funds to assist with our assessment and redevelopment

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efforts. In fact, several of the Phase II Environmental Site Assessments that have been performed had Phase I Environmental Site Assessments that were financed either privately by the property owners or through other public funds. Stephenson County and the City of Freeport worked collaboratively on assessment activities to position several properties for cleanup and redevelopment. Stephenson County has several communities that contain Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts as well as State Enterprise Zones. Funding from these sources will be sought within the respective municipalities to avoid using the very limited general funds available to them. In addition to hard-dollar contributions to the project, we anticipate continuing to contribute in-kind services for this project. Staff time, particularly in the compilation of the Stephenson County Board Chairman and County Administrator will be significant.

Our assessment and redevelopment efforts will continue to avail itself of other sources of State and Federal Grant funds to ensure that cleanup and restoration is achieved at our selected, priority project sites. In particular, we will pursue funding from the following:

- ***Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) Municipal Brownfields Redevelopment Grant Program (MBRG):*** This funding will be pursued by specific municipalities in the County to address any funding gaps and to fund the cleanup of priority sites that we have assessed with United States Environmental Protection Agency funding.
- ***Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) Grant Program:*** This funding will be sought after to acquire and develop open, green, or recreational space within the County.
- ***Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Recreational Trail Program:*** This funding would be pursued for the development of recreational trail that would wind throughout the County, particularly along the Pecatonica River, and connect to established trails such as the Jane Addams Trail and the Grand Illinois Trail
- ***Private Investment:*** Our brownfield sites will be prioritized for cleanup based upon its redevelopment potential. This will make it much easier to obtain considerable private investment for the redevelopment of those properties

While we are optimistic about being successful in obtaining a plethora of leveraging resources for this project, as a small, rural County, we do not have the capacity, tax base, or funding to meet the challenges that this brownfields assessment project requires without US EPA assistance. Without the support of US EPA, these environmental issues would remain, further impacting human health and safety, and the economic viability of the County.

c. Programmatic Capability:

i.) Stephenson County has previously received US EPA Brownfields Funding. In 2005, the County was awarded two FY2006 Brownfields Assessment Grants: \$200,000 for hazardous substances assessment and \$200,000 for petroleum assessment. We have demonstrated success in the management of our previously awarded grants and would continue utilizing this effective system with any future US EPA funding. Demonstrations of the successes we have achieved to date with FY2006 US EPA funding include the following key accomplishments:

- Identification of eighty-three (83) contaminated or potentially contaminated properties
- Prioritization of the eighty-three (83) potential brownfields sites by the County's Brownfields Redevelopment Advisory Committee (BRAC)
- Completion of five (5) Phase I Environmental Site Assessments

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- Completion of seven (7) Phase II Environmental Site Assessments. (3 were completed in cooperation with the City of Freeport's Brownfields Program at a time when the City did not have funding available to conduct assessment activities)
- Enrollment of Three (3) Sites into IEPA's Site Remediation Program (SRP)
- Enrollment of One (1) Site into the IEPA LUST (Leaking Underground Storage) Program
- Reuse Study Completed for Tutty Baker Park and Former Mortuary Site
- Development of a successful, cooperative brownfields effort with the City of Freeport
- Redevelopment of Four (4) Properties
 - Former Milk Creamery in the Village of Pearl City is now an Industrial Lift Manufacturing Business
 - Former Hank's Town Pump in the Village of Pearl City is now a car wash
 - Former Tutty Baker Park/Mortuary site in the City of Freeport is in the process of redevelopment, with plans for a recreational site or a retail/housing unit
 - Former Lena Depot site in the Village of Lena is poised to become a Depot Station again, serving as a trailhead, visitors center, and museum

With both of the FY2006 Brownfields Assessment Grants that were awarded, Stephenson County has demonstrated diligent grant management, submitting quarterly reports, property profile forms/ACRES, and annual financial status reports on time. In addition, the County has adhered to the work plan, schedule, and all terms and conditions required by US EPA. As illustrated above, the County has worked hard to achieve and accomplish their FY2006 Work Plan tasks successfully. Both FY2006 Assessment Grants have a minimal fund balance, with under \$10,000 remaining in each grant. The remaining balance is to cover the IEPA Site Remediation Program expenses, while the sites are finishing the full enrollment process.

County Board Chairman John Blum will continue to serve as the County's project manager and he will be supported by the County Administrator and County Treasurer in tracking grant expenditures and ensuring appropriate use of grant funds. As it relates to remedial activities, we will require qualified consultants and contractors to perform remediation and will work directly with IEPA's Site Remediation Program's experienced project managers to oversee and approve those activities. Federal procurement requirements will be applied when outsourcing for any consulting assistance associated with this assessment grant.

Stephenson County has an exceptional record in the management of federal funds. Since 2005, Stephenson County has been working with US EPA on the implementation of their Community-wide Assessment Grants without any issues. Stephenson County has never had any adverse audit findings from an OMB Circular A-133 audit, an audit conducted by a federal, state, tribal, or local government inspector general, or audits conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Stephenson County has never been required to comply with special "high risk" terms and conditions under agency regulations implementing OMB Circular A-102.

ii.) Not Applicable. Stephenson County has previously been awarded US EPA Brownfields Grants.

3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

a.) Stephenson County is submitting a community-wide application so any community outreach/involvement activities will target the entire County. When properties are selected for assessment, the County will work with local neighborhood organizations and citizens groups to communicate the assessment and remedial action plans for the property to affected residents and businesses. The County will allow for local residents, neighborhood organizations, and citizen's groups to have the opportunity to express their concerns, identify their needs, and provide input on redevelopment plans. Immediately following award announcement, we will hold a public meeting to overview the goals of the Assessment Grant and its process. A public comment period will follow

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the public meeting allowing for the residents, especially those located near contaminated properties, and other stakeholders to express their comments and concerns. Representatives for the residents and businesses from the target area will be extended an invitation to join the existing Brownfields Redevelopment Advisory Committee (BRAC), since their input will be extremely valuable to cleanup decisions and reuse planning ideas.

Stephenson County has facilitated various community involvement activities over the course of our Brownfields Program. One activity in particular was the Community Meeting that was held at the Tutty Baker Park and Former Mortuary Sites in the City of Freeport in July of 2007. The County hosted a Community Meeting on the actual, physical sites where they provided food and beverages to all that attended and sought direct input from the residents about what they would like to see developed and what the community had a need for. This was a very successful community outreach effort for the County.

We made our pursuit of Brownfields funding public initially in April of 2007 when the County Board Chairman announced it in his "State of the County Address." The public was updated on the success of the County's current Brownfields Program and notified that further funding would be pursued to maintain and expand upon the successful program. Our Brownfields proposal has also been discussed at various meetings over the past year. The proposal has been discussed at the Planning & Development Committee meetings and County Board meetings. On October 14, 2008 Stephenson County posted our draft brownfields proposals for review and public comment on the County's website. Hardcopies of the draft proposal were available upon request. The public comment period lasted 31 days, from October 14, 2008 to November 13, 2008. All comments were taken into account for the preparation of the final proposal. We plan to integrate the comments received by the public into the proposal prior to submission. If possible, we will ensure that the individual who provided the comment will receive a final copy of the proposal that includes their comment or suggestion.

If these grants funds are awarded, we will hold a two-week public comment period on our draft work plan and announce the availability of the plan through a press release to local media. As we move forward with the assessment program, we will develop fact sheets on the status of brownfields assessment activities at important junctures, but semiannually at a minimum. We will post these fact sheets on our webpage, distribute them at the courthouse and the library, and mail them directly to our project partners and directly affected residents. Lastly, we will continue to hold monthly BRAC meetings to ensure community oversight of our brownfields initiative.

In addition, we will immediately reinstate work with the existing Stephenson County Brownfields Redevelopment Advisory Committee (BRAC) that will provide us with input and guidance on site selection from key stakeholders in our community. We will conduct a series of community involvement meetings to seek input from our community members. We will gather information related to the brownfield sites and find out what is important to the members of our community, as we have done with our previous assessment funds. Examples may be blight removal, increased greenspace/recreation space in certain locations, contaminant removal, and job creation to name a few possibilities. This list of values identified by our citizens will be taken to our BRAC. Just as we did with our previous assessment funds, the BRAC will then work with a qualified Brownfields consultant to develop a set of criteria that are specific to our community. There will be two categories of criteria. The first category will be related to redevelopment potential and the second category will be in regards to blight removal and environmental contamination of the properties. The first would be for criteria that are related to the redevelopment potential of a site. Additional criteria may be added by the BRAC based on specific expertise and insight that the group will provide. We will commission a qualified brownfields consultant to provide insight on the second category of criteria, which is related to the identification of environmental contamination and its impacts upon the selected sites. The BRAC will then develop a numeric rank system for each criterion. A redevelopment score can then be developed along with an environmental

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score. The scores can then be summed to provide an overall score. The scoring will not be used as an absolute by the BRAC to rank the sites, but merely as a guide.

We do not foresee any access issues but should a property be privately owned, a written access agreement will be obtained from the owner by the County. No property owner will be coerced into participation in the County's brownfields assessment activities. We will openly communicate to these property owners the intent of this program, which is to take abandoned and underutilized properties that have identified or perceived contamination and work to clean them up. This funding will be used as a catalyst for redevelopment. We are fully aware of the issues that can arise with site access and we will rely on our BRAC and selected Brownfields consultant to assist with this issue.

As our brownfields assessment continues, we will be sure to remain in regular, transparent communication with our residents. Communication will take place in various methods: web, print, radio, direct mailings, and meetings. While we do not intend to translate all project information, we will be sure to offer the translation of project information and documents to those individuals and households that request us to do so. Our community involvement program will be composed of the following:

- Quarterly newsletters or Fact Sheets will be prepared to relay the progress of our brownfields projects as they continue along. These documents will be posted on the web, distributed at County Board meetings, and mailed directly to stakeholders, community organizations, and BRAC Committee Members.
- Public meetings will be held at milestone points in our project to further develop the appropriate orientation and development of our brownfields projects.

We have not translated our proposal or any other documents into other languages as our largest linguistically isolated group, Spanish-speaking households, only makes up less than 1% of our population (U.S. Census 2000). If we are awarded this grant, we will utilize diverse notification methods to ensure that we reach a broad audience. It will also be a priority for us to ensure that we are describing our activities and progress in ways that are easily understood by our residents who will most likely be unfamiliar with environmental and scientific terminology.

b.) Stephenson County has worked with various organizations in their efforts thus far to ensure that once these sites are assessed, we have created appropriate and sustainable redevelopment plans. The County has an exceptional relationship with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the Stephenson County Health Department, and the Stephenson County Soil and Water Conservation District. IEPA has been extremely involved in our groundwater contamination identification and reduction efforts. They will be critical partners in our brownfield cleanup and redevelopment efforts as they will oversee the cleanup of our sites through their Site Remediation Program (SRP). The Stephenson County Health Department will continue to work with us to identify potential health threats to the residents. They will be an asset to us in our efforts to effectively relay information to the County residents. The Stephenson County Soil and Water Conservation District will provide a vital partnership in dealing specifically with our groundwater and soil contamination issues. They will ensure that we develop plans to involve the community in reducing groundwater and soil contamination and focus on educating our residents on these issues.

c.) Key community-based organizations that will be beneficial to the County's Brownfields Program include (Please see Appendix 2: Community Partner Letters):

Northwest Illinois Development Alliance (NIDA): Cheryl Kneubeuhl, Executive Director (815)235-4038
NIDA concentrates on the retention and creation of jobs in the primary sector, in addition to the service and retail markets. They work collaboratively with the Chambers of Commerce, the City of Freeport, Stephenson

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County and other local and area governmental units and other groups to improve business expansion and the well-being of the community. As an economic development organization, NIDA will use their best efforts to market the County as an economically, environmentally, and socially healthy place to retain existing business and attract new enterprises.

Freeport/Stephenson County CVB: Connie Sorn, Executive Director (815) 233-1357 The Freeport/Stephenson County CVB works to promote the Freeport/Stephenson County area as a desirable place to visit. The CVB understands the importance of revitalization, economic development, and wellness to the success of our County, as well as to the success of our tourism efforts. The CVB will work with the County as a Community Partner to promote the County as a healthy, sustainable environment that will be attractive to visitors and residents alike.

Neighborhood Housing Services of Freeport (NHS): Deb Elzinga, Executive Director (815)232-6197 The mission of NHS of Freeport is to advance home ownership, home improvement and community-building activities designed to strengthen neighborhoods and improve the lives of people. Neighborhood Housing Services of Freeport is a community-based nonprofit organization, committed to improving our neighborhoods and the lives of people in our community. As a Community Partner, NHS will provide valuable insight into reducing the blight and inhibited positive investment throughout our community's neighborhoods. NHS has already provided valuable insight into the County's current brownfields program and the County is looking to continue this successful relationship.

Stephenson County Soil & Water Conservation District (Earth Team): Randy Grunder, District Chairman (815)235-2161 The District's main goal continues to be the protection and enhancement of our county's soil and water resources. Volunteers have been the cornerstone of the soil and water conservation movement. The District's volunteers become part of the *Earth Team Volunteer Program* who work to help people conserve, improve, and sustain our resources and environment. As a Community Partner, the Soil & Water Conservation District will provide their immeasurable technical and educational skills regarding soil and water contamination. The Soil & Water Conservation District will also work with the County to develop their *Earth Team Volunteer Program*, potentially using their services on assessment and community involvement activities.

Freeport Area Chamber of Commerce: Kim Grimes, Executive Director (815)233-1350 The Chamber provides leadership and value-added services to businesses through communication, networking, advocacy and education to ensure business retention, continuous improvement and an environment of economic growth and prosperity for the community. As a Community Partner, the Chamber can provide valuable insight to the County on how to ensure business retention, continuous improvement, and an environment of economic growth and prosperity for the County.

Freeport Park District: Jack Carey, Executive Director (815)235-6114 Known for its foresight in preserving open space and land for public parks and recreation, the District was organized with a mission to promote the use of recreation and generate an exciting, dynamic quality of life for its community by providing the highest quality facilities and programs to meet the ever-changing needs and interests of individuals of all ages and abilities. As a Community Partner, the Freeport Park District can assist the County in promoting the use of recreation for County residents and visitors of all ages and abilities. They can also provide valuable insight for the development and maintenance of green and open space for various recreational purposes.

Stephenson County Health Department: Craig Beintema, Administrator (815)235-8271 The Stephenson County Health Department is guided by a profound sense of personal and professional duty and responsibility; an abiding respect and compassion for others; a commitment to the principles of equity and social justice; an appreciation for diversity; a passion for excellence; and a spirit of cooperation. The County will work directly with the Health Department in the elimination of environmental contamination and the impact of contamination on our residents. The Health Department will also lend their expertise to create specific brownfields-related health studies or host brownfields educational sessions in the early phase of the County's grant.

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4. PROJECT BENEFITS:

a.) Welfare and/or Public Health

Our primary objective in obtaining US EPA grant funding is to identify and reduce threats to human health and the environment posed by brownfield sites. Local, shallow groundwater is the sole source of drinking water for our communities so the protection of our water resources is extremely important to us. With this funding, we intend to directly address brownfield sites in our communities that pose any threat to the quality of the drinking water. We have already taken an important and proactive approach to identifying threats by identifying potential brownfield sites with assistance from the County's previous Assessment Grant, Stephenson County's established BRAC (Brownfields Redevelopment Advisory Committee), and from historical information extracted from Sanborn Fire Insurance maps and Polk Directories by an environmental consulting firm.

Abandoned industrial facilities are among the worst environmental issues facing the County. In the mid-1990's, two local boys entered the abandoned Rawleigh Complex, the former facility of the W.T. Rawleigh Corporation, located in Freeport, Illinois. The boys went on to gather mercury from thermostats and thermometers left in the abandoned facility. The boys contaminated themselves and their homes with dangerous levels of mercury. This incident triggered a US EPA emergency response. EPA came to the City of Freeport to decontaminate the two houses and to remove the remaining mercury from the abandoned industrial complex. To prevent this type of event from ever happening again, the County is requesting this funding to strengthen their proactive approach to brownfields assessment and cleanup.

The hydrogeologic setting of Stephenson County is characterized by shallow bedrock. The uppermost bedrock is dolomite and shale of the Galena-Platteville group. Below is the St. Peter Sandstone that is a major source of potable drinking water in the County. Releases of dense non-aqueous phase liquids (DNAPL) is of particular concern in our County. The dense non-aqueous phase liquids can sink and migrate in the fractured bedrock that historically was perceived to be protective of contamination, but has been proven not to be. Contamination in the bedrock from DNAPL is a very real issue in our County. Alluvial deposits along the Pecatonica River are also highly susceptible to contaminant impact. A City of Freeport municipal well has had detections of chlorinated solvents above drinking water standards that required the installation of an airstripper to treat the water from the well. At present, this well has been shut down. Several sites that are not abandoned Brownfields sites have already been enrolled in the Illinois EPA Site Remediation Program for DNAPL contamination. The number of other sites that could be contaminated with DNAPL in a shallow bedrock setting is not fully known. While great strides have been made with our current grant funds, we cannot continue this vital work without these additional assessment funds.

The associated health and environmental risks will be characterized during our evaluation process, with sites that pose the most impact being given more priority to be fully characterized and remediated. With potential sites already identified, the funds provided with the award of this grant will reduce threats to human health and the environment. The funds will be used for Site Prioritization & Eligibility Determinations, creation of a Health and Safety Plan and Quality Assurance Project Plan, conduction of Phase I and Phase II Environmental Assessments, Enrollment of Sites into Illinois EPA's Site Remediation Program, and Community Involvement and Program Development activities. The sites that will be determined as contaminated will be enrolled into the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Site Remediation Program (SRP), which is the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's voluntary cleanup program. Remediation and cleanup efforts will continue at the site until the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency issues a "No Further Remediation" letter for the site. Our efforts will focus on both existing underutilized sites and sites that formerly operated as businesses and may have released contaminants to subsurface. Our brownfields assessment efforts will compliment the County's existing Brownfields Program and progress that has been made thus far.

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The proposed end use of these brownfield sites will be targeted primarily for commercial and greenspace development. This end use will inevitably lead to cleanup activities as part of the redevelopment process. Once these properties have been cleared of perceived contamination or have gone through remediation, developers will not be apprehensive of obtaining and redeveloping the site. Our objective is to obtain and maintain high quality businesses that will revitalize and enhance the County's economic vitality, while sustaining environmental well-being.

We are specifically interested in using brownfields redevelopment as a springboard for greater involvement by the County in promoting the long-term health and restoration of the Pecatonica River. The Pecatonica River is one of the greatest untapped recreational resources in Stephenson County. Due to the recent increased popularity of the Pecatonica River for recreational purposes, Stephenson County passed a Resolution designating the Pecatonica River as a Water Trail on March 15, 2006. The establishment of the Water Trail will substantially add to the quality of life of the County's residents as well promote recreational and tourism opportunities within the County. As we work to redevelop brownfield sites along and near our riverfront, we will work to fully characterize impacts of brownfields on our rivers and seek remedial approaches that restore and enhance these precious resources.

We have developed a strong working relationship with both the Stephenson County Health Department and will work with them to discover any potential links between this brownfields project and area health issues. Building on this partnership will enable the County to achieve our goals of restoring the environment and protecting the health of our citizens. The assistance and cooperative efforts of the County Health Department and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has proved invaluable to the County in resolving the immense task ahead of us. Throughout our project, we will carefully consider potential health risks to our residents. If specific contaminants are identified through our assessment activity, we will share our data with the Stephenson County Health Department officials to discuss human health and environmental concerns. The potential contaminants that we are concerned about or believe to be present based upon historic use are chlorinated solvents, metals, semi-volatile organic compounds, asbestos, lead-based paint, and controlled substances. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency will be a vital partner in overseeing the assessment and redevelopment of brownfield sites in our county, particularly the Site Remediation Program Project Managers. The sites that will be determined as contaminated will be enrolled into the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Site Remediation Program (SRP), which is the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's voluntary cleanup program. Remediation and cleanup efforts will continue at the site until the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency issues a "No Further Remediation" letter for the site.

Community-wide assessment grant funding will benefit County residents by reducing potential risks to human health and the environment and returning properties to a productive use, helping Stephenson County to turn the corner on economic revitalization. Through our Brownfields Program, the County is working toward bridging the economic gaps between the significantly disadvantaged populations and lesser impacted communities in the County. Assessing brownfields throughout Stephenson County will result in considerable benefits to our communities' economic, social, and environmental well-being. The expected benefits of assessing brownfields in Stephenson County include:

- Reducing risks to human health and the environment by identifying contamination that is potentially impacting our soil, groundwater, water resources like the Pecatonica River, and our municipal wells;
- Stimulating economic growth throughout the County by removing development apprehensions due to perceived contamination and creating opportunities for new businesses and job creation;
- Promoting reinvestment in the areas of the county that are characterized by lower home values and higher concentrations of low-income and minority residents than the County as a whole;

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- Encouraging the expansion and maintenance of recreational development and the ecological restoration of the Pecatonica River
- Promotion of expanded recreational development such as the creation of recreational trails/paths and the use of the Pecatonica River as a County-designated Water Trail

To protect public health during assessment activities being funded by this grant, the County plans to provide notice to neighborhood residents prior to the commencement of any activities that may have an impact on public health. These activities might include, but are not limited to, drilling or soil removal that may allow for airborne contaminants to be ingested or inhaled. The County will ensure that the sites are properly secured to prevent any type of exposure.

b.) Economic Benefits and/or Greenspace

i.) The primary economic benefits of assessing sites through this program will be the resulting job creation and expansion of the County's tax base both from the future redeveloped brownfield sites themselves and positively affected surrounding areas. The County anticipates that this program will encourage and inspire existing companies to consider expansion and return hope to the economy of the County. By encouraging the reuse of these contaminated properties, the County will retain existing business and benefit from their growth. These redeveloped properties will stimulate economic growth in the County, which has been stagnant and neglected for years.

Brownfields assessments will promote vibrant, equitable, and healthy communities through revitalizing contaminated and blighted sights and identifying threats to the health and safety of both the public and the environment. Specifically, the program will:

- Improve County-wide and regional greenspace amenities through remediation of sites identified for recreational use in the Freeport and Stephenson County Greenways and Trails Plan, including sites along the Pecatonica River
- Promote improved quality of life in neighborhoods most impacted by brownfields by positioning the sites and surrounding areas for reinvestment
- Advance Smart Growth goals and objectives by focusing on redevelopment to areas within designated urban growth areas and simultaneously discouraging wasteful development of our surrounding rich agricultural resources
- Promote redevelopment in an area targeted for a potential Amtrak rail station – strengthening our County's use of non-vehicular transportation

To prevent future brownfields we will use the approaches of code enforcement, property owner education, and business retention. Our municipal code includes provisions governing the proper disposal of all types of waste, including hazardous materials. We also work closely with IEPA's Rockford office to address potential violations. To prevent current industrial sites from being vacated, thus creating new brownfields, we proactively retain existing viable industrial businesses by partnering with the Northwest Illinois Development Alliance (NIDA). NIDA helps connect these businesses with a network of business development and retention services in our region to help keep quality jobs in the County. One economic arena that Stephenson County is very passionate about pursuing is renewable energy. The County, with the assistance of NIDA, is in the process of bringing renewable energy companies to the County, including Wind Farms, Ethanol Plants, and a Biodiesel Facility. Since Stephenson County is very rural and agri-business is an important component of the County's economy, renewable energy businesses will fit well into the County's sustainable, economic plan.

ii.) If awarded, these grant funds will facilitate the realization of one of Stephenson County's goals: balance urban space with greenspace and to strengthen connections to the Pecatonica River. While plans have yet to be

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developed, there is an intention to include or develop greenspace throughout the County through one of the following options: development of recreational trails that wind throughout the County and along the Pecatonica River, connecting to both the Jane Addams Trail and the Grand Illinois Trail; promotion of the Pecatonica River as a County-designated Water Trail; and the potential reuse of Tutty Baker Park –a site that was historically a filling station that was determined to be contaminated due to previous U.S. EPA assessment funds – as a neighborhood park or garden.

Brownfields redevelopment will expand Stephenson County’s network of open space by returning currently vacant riverfront properties into recreational areas that improve river access for our residents. Cleaning up and developing riverfront sites with environmental issues will enhance the Pecatonica River as a regional, recreational amenity. Friends of the River (FOR) is a local organization working to establish eight river paddling trails to promote the use of the Pecatonica. FOR has identified 2,500 registered canoes and kayaks in the region, demonstrating a need to further develop the Pecatonica River. We will work directly with the community Park Districts to develop any greenspace/openspace that will be created with these grant funds. The County and the local Park District will create an agreement that states that the space will be maintained long-term by the local Park District, encouraging its sustainability.

c.) Pollution prevention and the reduction of resource consumption are important goals of our Brownfields Program. Assessment of the abandoned or underused properties that are selected for assessment as part of our Brownfields Program will funnel investment at sites served by existing infrastructure, thereby minimizing consumption of local resources and reducing sprawl of a “Greenfield” site. Stephenson County also recognizes the importance of “green building” and is committed to implementing “green” solutions into any redeveloped properties. In addition, the County is an active proponent of re-establishing Amtrak service between Chicago and Dubuque, Iowa. If the Amtrak service is re-established, it would make a stop in Freeport, the County’s commercial center, bringing visitors from all over to the County.

d.) We understand the importance of identifying the outcomes and outputs that our Brownfield Project will achieve. Agencies that award federal grants funds require the reporting of these outcomes and outputs to help justify the use of their funds and to secure the future of their funding programs. We will demonstrate to U.S. EPA the important outcomes and outputs of our Brownfield Project by regularly updating the ACRES System for each site that is targeted for assessment. We will specifically identify the following:

Outcomes of Assessment Grant Funding:

- Acreage of land in which environmental threats have been characterized
- Acreage of land positioned for reuse
- Jobs leveraged
- Funding leveraged
- Acreage of greenspace created or preserved

Outputs of Assessment Grant Funding:

- Number of sites identified
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessments at three (3) to five (5) sites
- Phase II Environmental Site Assessments at three to five (3-5) sites (will vary depending on outcome of Phase I ESA’s).
- Number of community meetings held
- Enrollment of two (2) to three (3) sites into the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency’s SRP as “Comprehensive” sites, providing the greatest degree of protection with the final No Further Remediation (NFR) letter received at the end of the SRP process.