

STEPHENSON COUNTY COMMUNITY-WIDE REVOLVING LOAN FUND PROPOSAL  
STEPHENSON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

**Threshold Criteria**

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**A. Applicant Eligibility:**

Stephenson County is an incorporated municipality of Illinois and has the authority to enter into a cooperative agreement with the U.S. EPA.

**B. Description of Jurisdiction:**

Stephenson County will award RLF funds only to eligible sites within the county limits of Stephenson County.

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

Please see attached a Letter of Acknowledgement from Mr. Gary King, Division of Remediation Management, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Bureau of Land.

**D. Cleanup Authority and Oversight Structure:**

1. Stephenson County has the legal authority to perform the actions necessary to manage the relevant cleanup activities. Pursuant to that authority, Stephenson County has the power to protect the public health, safety and welfare of its citizens and to enter into loan agreements involving the cleanup of contaminated property and to access and secure such properties in the event of an emergency or default of the contractual agreements or non-performance under such agreements as required by the U.S. EPA grant program and cooperative agreements. Preference will be given to projects that are enrolled in IEPA's Site Remediation Program (SRP). Stephenson County will, however, consider loaning or subgranting funds to projects enrolled in other appropriate state programs, but will require that all cleanups conducted outside of the SRP will be protective of human health and the environment and that applicants show that technical expertise has been sufficiently demonstrated prior to beginning cleanup activities. Stephenson County will seek environmental and engineering services from the Stephenson County Health Department, the Illinois Department of Public Health, IEPA, U.S. EPA, or from a certified professional consultant, and will consult directly with U.S. EPA to ensure the appropriate remedial responses are both planned and implemented. When the County does acquire technical expertise from a non-governmental source, it will comply with the competitive procurement requirements of Stephenson County and the State of Illinois.

2. Stephenson County has the legal authority to access and secure sites in the event of an emergency or default of a loan agreement or non-performance under a subgrant. A legal opinion to support this statement is attached.

**E. Cost Share:** Stephenson County anticipates that the match for the RLF will be provided by the applicant requesting either a loan or subgrant under this program. The County understands that the source of the 20% cost share provided by the applicant will vary on a project-by-project basis and that the funds may be from a variety of sources. However, acceptable matches for these projects will be provided either in the form of hard dollars (through existing available funding resources, such as TIF financing, general fund revenue, or even private sector contributions) or in the form of an in-kind match toward project-eligible and allowable expenses provided by County staff. Stephenson County is not requesting a hardship waiver for this RLF.

**F. Legal Authority to Manage a Revolving Loan Fund:**

A Legal Opinion that demonstrates the County's authority to perform the actions necessary to manage a revolving loan fund has been provided by Mr. John Vogt, Stephenson County States Attorney.

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**Ranking Criteria**

**A. RLF Grant Proposal Budget**

Stephenson County proposes to operate a \$1,000,000 Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) for sites affected by hazardous substances and petroleum.

<b>PROJECT TASKS FOR LOANS – HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE</b>						
<b>BUDGET CATEGORIES</b>	<b>TASK 1: ESTABLISH RLF</b>	<b>TASK 2: MARKET RLF</b>	<b>TASK 3: OPERATE RLF</b>	<b>TASK 4: LOAN FUNDS</b>	<b>TASK 5: PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
TRAVEL						
EQUIPMENT						
SUPPLIES						
CONTRACTUAL						
OTHER/LOANS						
COST SHARE						
SUBTOTAL						

<b>PROJECT TASKS FOR SUBGRANTS – HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE</b>						
<b>BUDGET CATEGORIES</b>	<b>TASK 1: ESTABLISH RLF</b>	<b>TASK 2: MARKET RLF</b>	<b>TASK 3: OPERATE RLF</b>	<b>TASK 4: LOAN FUNDS</b>	<b>TASK 5: PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
TRAVEL						
EQUIPMENT						
SUPPLIES						
CONTRACTUAL						
OTHER/LOANS						
COST SHARE						
SUBTOTAL						

<b>PROJECT TASKS FOR LOANS – PETROLEUM</b>						
<b>BUDGET CATEGORIES</b>	<b>TASK 1: ESTABLISH RLF</b>	<b>TASK 2: MARKET RLF</b>	<b>TASK 3: OPERATE RLF</b>	<b>TASK 4: LOAN FUNDS</b>	<b>TASK 5: PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
TRAVEL						
EQUIPMENT						
SUPPLIES						
CONTRACTUAL						
OTHER/LOANS						
COST SHARE						
SUBTOTAL						

<b>PROJECT TASKS FOR SUBGRANTS - PETROLEUM</b>						
<b>BUDGET CATEGORIES</b>	<b>TASK 1: ESTABLISH RLF</b>	<b>TASK 2: MARKET RLF</b>	<b>TASK 3: OPERATE RLF</b>	<b>TASK 4: LOAN FUNDS</b>	<b>TASK 5: PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
TRAVEL						
EQUIPMENT						
SUPPLIES						
CONTRACTUAL						

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OTHER/LOANS					
COST SHARE					
SUBTOTAL					
<b>TOTAL PROJECT</b>					

*Task 1: Establish Revolving Loan Fund:* Preparation of the loan/subgrant guidelines, procedures and other legal documents. The County will involve various legal sources in establishing legally binding documents that meet with both County and U.S. EPA guidelines.

*Task 2: Market Revolving Loan Fund:* Development of marketing materials, an informational brochure, link on the County’s website, and other outreach activities. The County will promote the availability of the funds through citizen and agency outreach activities as well as through formal marketing efforts. The County will promote the program on its web site and through news releases sent to the local media. **Members of the newly formed RLF Steering Committee** will compile a list of local and state organizations to target and will ask those organizations to assist with information dissemination. Property owners of the sites included in the U.S. EPA-funded brownfield inventories will also be notified of the availability of the RLF through individual letters. The County will hold an RLF public meeting for interested property owners and developers to kick off program. At this meeting, County officials will provide copies of the RLF application and will walk through the application and program process step by step.

*Task 3: Operate Revolving Loan Fund:* Loan and subgrant processing, preparation of financial and monitoring reports, management of the loans and grants, screening of applicants, and all other operational functions. The County will operate the RLF with the assistance of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has agreed to administer the Revolving Loan Fund, if awarded. Stephenson County will work with IEPA to solicit fund participants, evaluate applications based on brownfield cleanup, fiscal eligibility, and ranking criteria. IEPA will then process the loan/subgrant paperwork, distribute and collect payments, and complete all financial reporting activities for the County.

*Task 4: Loan and Subgrant Funds:* Awarding of loans and subgrants. Once the loans and/or subgrants are awarded, the cleanup and remediation activities will commence. The County will follow all federal, state, and local competitive procurement requirements to contract with a qualified environmental consulting firm that will perform remediation oversight activities on behalf of the County to ensure that the borrower/grantee is fulfilling their commitment for effective and environmentally responsible cleanup activities. The County’s environmental consultant will perform general remediation oversight to ensure activities compliance with all applicable environmental regulations. Stephenson County’s cooperative partner, IEPA, will perform administrative functions such as reviewing invoices and claims that have been made based upon environmental activities to decide when to authorize payment.

*Task 5: Programmatic Activities:* Stephenson County anticipates using a portion of the Revolving Loan Fund grant for eligible programmatic activities, including but not limited to: Work Plan development, preparation of site-specific eligibility determination forms, quarterly and fiscal reporting, coordination with U.S. EPA, and travel and related expenses for County staff and/or elected officials’ attendance at national and state brownfields conferences. [INSERT IEPA’S ROLE]

**B. Community Need**

1. Stephenson County is deeply committed to addressing brownfield sites that pose risk to both our environment and our residents’ health as well as those sites that hinder vital redevelopment and

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revitalization in our communities. Stephenson County is a rural northwest Illinois county covering approximately 568 miles and located approximately 106 miles northwest of the City of Chicago. According to the most recent Census, 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 as follows:

MUNICIPALITY	POPULATION	MUNICIPALITY	POPULATION
Ridott	159	Cedarville	719
Rock City	313	Orangeville	751
Winslow	345	Pearl City	780
German Valley	481	Lena	2,887
Dakota	499	Freeport	26,443
Davis	662	Other	14,940

The incorporated villages and towns may be classified as bedroom communities as most of the villages do not have commercial interests that support measurable numbers of employees. The City of Freeport and the Village of Lena are the hubs of industry in the County. There are numerous unincorporated areas throughout the County – most located along either a waterway or a former railroad line. Aside from manufacturing interests in Freeport, the County’s primary economic focus is 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 dominated commerce throughout the County. The small municipalities were once thriving, self-sufficient communities that hosted small factories which manufactured such items as toys, cheese, bricks, wool, and furniture. As economies of scale evolved, these small manufacturers moved to the larger communities in the County – specifically Freeport. The economies of scale that affected the small communities in the past have touched on the once thriving Freeport community. Unemployment continues to run higher than the state and federal rates and 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.

As a primarily rural County, we have watched our businesses struggle in meeting global challenges. Long-time, high-employee companies have closed or moved their operations out of the County, placing hundreds of high wage-earning employees out of work.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	VILLAGE OF RIDOTT	CITY OF FREEPORT	STEPHENSON COUNTY	STATE OF ILLINOIS	UNITED STATES
<b>Population</b>	159	26,443	48,979	12,419,293	281,421,906
<b>Minority %</b>	0%	18.2%	10.7%	26.5%	24.9%
<b>% Families Below Poverty Level</b>	2.9%	9.9%	6.5%	7.8%	9.2%
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	1.7%	5.0%	4.1%	3.9%	3.7%
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$41,875	\$35,399	\$40,366	\$46,590	\$41,994
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	\$16,846	\$18,680	\$19,794	\$23,104	\$21,587
<b>% Vacant Housing Units</b>	8.8%	10.0%	8.9%	6.0%	9.0%
<b>% Female</b>	4.8%	12.6%	9.5%	12.3%	12.2%

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<b>Households</b>					
<b>Median Home Value</b>	\$58,100	\$71,600	\$81,400	\$130,800	\$119,600

(SOURCE: US CENSUS, 2000)

<b>UNEMPLOYMENT DATA</b>				
	<b>August 2004</b>	<b>August 2005</b>	<b>August 2006</b>	<b>August 2007</b>
<b>Stephenson County</b>	4.6%	5.1%	4.6%	5.4%
<b>City of Freeport</b>	7.5%	6.1%	5.4%	6.3%
<b>State of Illinois</b>	6.1%	5.7%	4.5%	5.4%
<b>United States</b>	5.5%	5.1%	4.7%	4.6%

(SOURCE: Illinois Department of Employment Security)

There has been little new development in Stephenson County. An ethanol plant was developed outside Lena on agricultural land and a business park was developed on the outskirts of Freeport on former agricultural land. The abandoned factories and commercial enterprises in the rural portions of 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 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 a growing unease among the county residents whose homes, schools or businesses are 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.

The towns of Lena, Pearl City, Winslow, Dakota, Orangeville and Freeport have public schools with combined enrollment exceeding 7,600 (Illinois Board of Education). While an excellent amenity to offer prospective developers, the proximity of these schools to potentially contaminated sites in the communities pose a threat to the health and safety of the students in attendance. 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 targeted in this application, leads more affluent county residents to more attractive locales. In this way, the cycle is perpetuated. A map of Stephenson County is found in Appendix D.

The economic benefits to the county will be immeasurable with the implementation of these grant funds. The properties addressed with the funds from this County Wide Brownfields Assessment will be transformed into marketable assets, spurring much needed development in the disenfranchised portions of the county. County officials have tentatively identified three areas of focus for attention in the assessment process. The identification of these areas does not preclude other potential sites from receiving benefit from the assessment process, but rather gives the county direction as they commence the Brownfields Assessment project.

The Northwest Illinois Workforce Investment Board has completed a regional labor shed study for their 5-county service area including Stephenson, Carroll, Jo Daviess, Ogle, and Whiteside counties. The data from the labor shed study indicates that the Stephenson County area has 37,500 available workers for new or expanding businesses. Stephenson County has a pool of approximately 12,000 unemployed people and an additional pool of about 19,600 workers that are currently underemployed.

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Manufacturing, which once had a strong-hold on the economy of northwest Illinois for several decades, has since drastically declined. Please see the table below that illustrates the impact of the decline of manufacturing on a 5-county regional area:

<b>EMPLOYMENT IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY BY COUNTY</b>			
<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>
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)

As illustrated in the table above, you can see that manufacturing, a strong-hold in Northwest Illinois, has taken a sharp drop over the past 15 years – a drop of 9.8% for Ogle County, 7.3% for Whiteside County, a 7.2% drop for Stephenson County, a 4.1% drop for Jo Daviess County, and a 3.3% drop for Carroll County. This decline continues today with several large employers closing down or moving their operations, including Honeywell, National Manufacturing, Lawrence Hardware, Tyco, the Savanna Army Depot, Newell/Rubbermaid, and others. The manufacturing sector is responsible for over 26% of all wealth created in the 5-county region, compared to 17% for the State of Illinois as a whole. This dependence on manufacturing, which was once strength of the region, is now a significant weakness of the economic vitality of the County.

2. By receiving funding assistance from the US EPA that will assist in performing the assessment work at these properties, the potential risks to human health and the environment can be identified, quantified, and redevelopment plans devised to eliminate, minimize, or mitigate against these risks, while returning the properties to a beneficial use. Not only will the sensitive populations of our area directly benefit from the health risk identification and potential reduction of threats to the community, the redevelopment of these properties will help Stephenson County turn the corner on economic revitalization. Through our Brownfields Program, the County is working toward bridging the economic gaps between the significantly disadvantaged populations in the County and lesser impacted communities in the County.

Cleaning up and redeveloping 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:

- a. Reducing risks to human health and the environment by identifying and cleaning up contamination that is potentially impacting our soil, groundwater, and the Pecatonica River
- b. Stimulating economic growth throughout the County by removing development apprehensions due to perceived contamination and creating opportunities for new businesses and jobs
- c. 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
- d. Encouraging the expansion and maintenance of recreational development and the ecological restoration of the Pecatonica River
- e. Promoting use of the Pecatonica River as a County-designated Water Trail

3. Economic Impacts:  
Health Impacts:

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Environmental Impacts:

**Business Plan for RLF Program**

1. Business Concept: With \$1,000,000 available to implement a Revolving Loan Fund program, Stephenson County plans to fund a variety of hazardous substance and petroleum-contaminated cleanup projects community-wide. These projects will be determined based on a critical selection process that will look at environmental impact, public health and safety, economic development, community benefit, and neighborhood revitalization. Any public or private entity with control or access to a brownfield site will be eligible for a loan or subgrant from the County if the property is located within the limits of Stephenson County and both the property and borrower meet IEPA and US EPA eligibility requirements.

We anticipate disbursing the initial funds within the first 36 months of the five-year program. The County expects to issue \$600,000 in low or no-interest loans through the program, with a maximum loan amount of \$200,000 per site. Interest rates will vary between 0% and 2%, depending upon the length of the loan as follows: 0% interest rate for a 0-36 month loan term; 1% for a 37-60 month loan term; and 2% for loan terms greater than 61 months, up to a maximum of 10 years. The County fully understands the significance of establishing a strong RLF program as a permanent source of financing for brownfield redevelopment projects in the County and will consider loan repayment terms as a factor in determining loan awards.

The County is also anticipating allocating approximately 40% of the RLF program funds to subgrant projects. Plans for subgrant applications and projects will be finalized based upon the overall number and quality of applications received by the County.

Stephenson County's additional incentive programs:

- Enterprise Zone
- TIF
- Economic Development District (?)
- Tax waivers, etc.

2. Market Analysis/Target Market: With the support a 2005 U.S. EPA community-wide hazardous substances brownfields assessment grant and a 2005 U.S. EPA community-wide petroleum brownfields assessment grant, the County has developed a comprehensive community-wide inventory of potential brownfields sites. This community-wide inventory serves as a basis for determining target properties that would directly benefit from the resources of the RLF program. These sites vary in size, contamination components, ownership, and historical uses. Sites such as the former Mortuary, Tutty Baker Park, the Lena Depot, and abandoned gas/service stations located within the County are prime examples of projects that will be marketed under this new RLF Program.

Due to the location and condition of many of Stephenson County's brownfields sites, the County believes that many of these properties will be redeveloped as commercial or industrial/manufacturing uses. As a component of the County's marketing strategy, Stephenson County will notify current property owners of the availability of the County's RLF program and will seek to connect property owners with prospective developers and businesses.

[INSERT work with FAEDF on marketing of properties]

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3. Project Selection Process: Stephenson County will evaluate applications for the consideration of providing financial assistance to public or private entities with control of or access to brownfield sites within the County limits, provided that they meet both IEPA and US EPA eligibility requirements. The County will administer an ongoing competitive application process for property owners and developers and will proactively engage property owners to seek RLF program assistance.

Applicants will be required to complete a pre-application form to demonstrate program eligibility and identify initial project information, including a site address and map, evidence of current and historical site ownership or control, summary of environmental investigation and cleanup plans, and a detailed project summary (estimated project cost, information necessary to determine cleanup eligibility and fiscal viability, type and size of development, preliminary site plan, and identification of available assets for the project). The application will include specific questions to verify that the project is in compliance with federal brownfield laws, including that the borrowers and subgrantees will not use an RLF loan to pay for cleanup costs at a brownfield site where a borrower is potentially liable under CERCLA 107 and for entities that are currently suspended, debarred from receiving federal funding, or are otherwise declared ineligible.

The County Board Chairman, the County's Planning and Development Committee, the County Administrator, and the Stephenson County Brownfields Redevelopment Advisory Committee (BRAC) will determine project eligibility. Full applications will be requested of preliminarily-qualified projects. These full applications will require significantly more project and financial information, along with thorough financial and environmental reviews by the County Treasurer's Office and the County's hired environmental consultant. Favorable loans will be presented to the Stephenson County Board for approval. Upon successful award, the County will enter into a contractual agreement with the applicant.

Applicants will be required to provide a contribution of at least 20% to the overall project cost. Applications will be prioritized for funding by the County, its environmental consultant and the BRAC based on, but not limited to the following:

[INSERT RLF PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA]

4. RLF Management and Operational Teams:

- Russell Mulnix, County Administrator, Stephenson County
- Steve Colantino, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
- Local Bankers
- Bob Skurla, Freeport Area Economic Development Foundation
- John Vogt, State's Attorney, Stephenson County
- BRAC/Revolving Loan Fund Committee
- Environmental Consultants

**C. Sustainable Reuse of Brownfields**

1. Pollution prevention and the reduction of resource consumption are important goals of our Brownfields Program. Pollution will be addressed with the environmental site assessments conducted at each eligible site. The primary goal of Stephenson County is to reduce the threat to human health and the environment facing the residents of our County. Conducting assessment activities that will lead to future cleanup, remediation, and redevelopment of the site all contribute to the removal of pollution in the targeted areas. The abandoned or underused properties that are selected for assessment activities are anticipated to lead to redevelopment, which will reuse the existing infrastructure already in place.



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Stephenson County also recognizes the importance of “green building” and is committed to implementing “green” solutions to these redeveloped properties. 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 brownfields sites in our communities that pose any threat to the quality of the drinking water.

2. The economic benefits of this project will primarily be the expansion of the County’s tax base for properties that will be remediated, redeveloped, and returned to an effective, productive end use. The County anticipates that this program will encourage and inspire existing companies to consider expansion and return faith 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. The creation of jobs and economic opportunities for the communities within the County will be endless.

3. This RLF program will promote a vibrant community by revitalizing the County and focusing on the health and safety of both the public and the environment. The Pecatonica River and various green and open spaces will be created following the cleanup of these contaminated properties. The Freeport and Stephenson County Greenways and Trails Plan will be successfully implemented and considered in the redevelopment of these properties.

**D. Creation and/or Preservation of Greenspace/Open Space or Nonprofit Purpose**

If awarded, these grant funds will facilitate the development of greenspace or open space at sites that have been identified as contaminated and where the best reuse option would be the development of such. While plans have yet to be developed, there is an intention to include or develop greenspace throughout the County through one of the following options: [INSERT GREENSPACE OPTIONS]. 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 by the local Park District.

**E. Pre-Award Community Notification**

1. Once the decision was made that we, Stephenson County, would pursue further Brownfields Assessment grant funding from U.S. EPA, we have made every effort to ensure that we were notifying the County as a whole of our intentions. We have made formal notifications to the public through various methods which are summarized in the list below:

- a. Formal Public Notification of Pursuit of Grant Funding
- b. Discussion of the Grant Proposal at County Board Meetings
- c. Approval of submission of Grant Proposals at September 12, 2007 County Board Meeting
- d. Discussion of the Grant Proposal at County Board Committee Meetings
- e. Public Notification via Public Television (local cable channel??)
- f. Notification of Grant Availability for Public Comment
- g. Follow-up Newspaper Articles

2. Since our proposal is community-wide, the focus of our notification program was community-wide. The appropriate notification methods that we used were newspaper articles, radio announcements, web publishing/posting, County Board meetings, County Committee meetings, and the availability of the meetings through television channels viewed by the public. We did not translate our proposal or press releases into other languages but, if the need arises following the public comment period, we will do so.

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If we are awarded this grant, we will continue with the utilization of 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.

3. Our grant proposals were available for public review and comment for two weeks, from September 28, 2007 to October 12, 2007. We made our proposals available to the public by posting them on the County's website and making hardcopies available at the County Clerk and Recorder's Office and the Freeport Public Library. We encouraged public comment in various ways: (1) requesting public comments in our press releases issued September 28, 2007; (2) requesting comments from our brownfields partners by directly contacting each partner and providing them with a hardcopy of our proposal to review; (3) providing various comment mechanisms for the public: mail, email, fax, phone, and in person; and (4) identifying in the press release the contact information of staff at Stephenson County who would be available to accept comments during the comment period. The Freeport Journal Standard also published a Public Notice in their October 1, 2007 issue encouraging public comment on the grant proposals. We also had a constant notice posted on our website reminding and encouraging our residents to provide us with comments on the proposals.

4. 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.

**F. Ongoing Community Involvement**

1. Stephenson County is submitting a community-wide application so any community outreach/involvement activities will include the entire County. When properties are identified, the County will work with local neighborhood organizations and citizens groups on the cleanup and/or reuse plans for the property. 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 create and implement redevelopment plans. Immediately following award announcement, we will hold a public meeting explaining the Brownfields grant and its process. A public comment period will follow 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.

[INSERT INFO RE: newsletters, dates of County meetings discussing funding, etc.]

We made our pursuit of further Brownfields funding public in April of 2007 when the County Board Chairman discussed it in his annual "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. The County residents

2. 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 groundwater contamination identification and reduction efforts. They will be critical partners in our brownfield assessment efforts as they will oversee the

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assessment and 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. 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 community on these issues.

[INSERT INFO RE: REUSE PLAN/COMMUNITY OUTREACH]

3. As our brownfields assessments and redevelopment 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:

- a. Quarterly newsletters will be prepared to relay the progress of our brownfields projects as it continues along. This newsletter will be posted on the web, distributed at County Board meetings, and mailed directly to stakeholders, community organizations, and BRAC members.
- b. Fact sheets will be produced detailing the milestones of our project. These fact sheets will be posted on the web, available in the County Clerk's office, and at the Freeport Public Library.
- c. Public meetings will be held at milestone points in our project to further develop the appropriate orientation and development of our brownfields projects.

4. Key community-based organizations that will be beneficial to the County's Brownfields Program include:

- Stephenson County Soil & Water Conservation District (Earth Team)
- Stephenson County Health Department
- Freeport Park District
- Freeport Area Economic Development Foundation
- Freeport Chamber of Commerce
- Freeport Downtown Development Corporation
- Neighborhood Housing Service
- NICA
- Freeport Community Foundation

**G. Reduction of Threats to Human Health and the Environment**

1. One of our primary objectives in obtaining US EPA grant funding is to identify and reduce threats to human health and the environment posed by brownfield sites. 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

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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 has taken a proactive approach to brownfields assessment and cleanup.

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 identify threats to human health and the environment. The funds will be used to conduct Phase I Environmental Site Assessments and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments for sites with Recognized Environmental Conditions identified in the Phase I's throughout the County. To fully assess all potentially contaminated sites and health risks during our site characterizations, we will follow an EPA-approved Sampling and Analysis Plan, Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), and Health and Safety Plan (HASP). If it is confirmed that there is contamination at any of the identified sites, they 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 redevelopment efforts will only compliment the County's existing Brownfields Program and studies that have been developed over the past years.

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.

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.

2. We have developed a strong working relationship with both the Stephenson County Health Department and the Illinois Department of Public Health 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, the Illinois Department of Public Health, and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has proved invaluable to the County in resolving the immense task ahead of us. The Stephenson County Health Department has been very responsive and supportive in our efforts to gather information in regards to possible contaminants and their health effects, as well as groundwater contamination information. The Illinois

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Department of Public Health has worked with us to identify known and potential sites of contamination and has provided us with vital health statistics from the area that could assist us in linking this project with area health issues. Throughout our project, we will carefully consider potential health risks to our residents. If specific hazardous substances are identified through our assessment activity, we will share our data with both the Stephenson County Health Department and the Illinois Department of Public Health's respective health 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 environmental assessment, and ultimate cleanup, of brownfield sites in our county. If through our assessment activities, contamination is confirmed, the sites will be enrolled into the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Site Remediation Program (SRP), which is their voluntary cleanup program. As our work advances beyond this grant into cleanup activities, we will continue to work with the SRP until we acquire a "No Further Remediation" letter for the site.

**I. Leveraging of Additional Resources**

1. Stephenson County is requesting \$200,000 in Hazardous Substance Assessment grant funds. These funds will assist the County in:

- Site Selection & Eligibility Determinations
- Health and Safety Plan/Quality Assurance Project Plan
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessments
- Phase II Environmental Site Assessments/Remedial Planning
- Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Expenses
- Community Outreach
- Program Development

Stephenson County is realistic in realizing that the \$200,000 probably will not fund all of the goals set for the Brownfields Assessment phase 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 efforts.

[INSERT ANY TIF, EZ, etc. for the County]

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 County Board Chairman and County Administrator's endeavors, will be significant.

2. Our brownfields 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 to address any funding gaps and to fund the cleanup of priority sites that we have assessed with United States Environmental Protection Agency funding

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- *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) Illinois Trails Grant Program:* This funding would be pursued for the development of a recreational trail that would wind throughout the County 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 assessment based upon its redevelopment potential. This will make it much easier to obtain considerable private investment for the redevelopment of those properties

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

**J. Programmatic Capability**

1. We have demonstrated success in the management of previously awarded grants since the inception of our Brownfields Program and would continue utilizing this effective system with any future US EPA funding. We have also established successful and effective working relationships with a redevelopment and environmental consultant team. This team has assisted with our grant management through the facilitation of monthly Brownfield Project Management Team meetings to ensure that we are successfully meeting the established deadlines outlined in our Work Plan. Our consultants, who have developed expertise in US EPA grant reporting requirements, have helped us to consistently report our progress in a timely fashion and to seek US EPA assistance when needed to keep our project on track. Stephenson County maintains a computerized accounting system enabling us to accurately handle the financial aspects of the project. The County Administrator also assists in the management of the financial aspects of the project to ensure that all data is correct.

We will hire qualified environmental consultants to perform all environmental site assessments and remedial planning activities and will work with the Illinois EPA Site Remediation Program (SRP) to oversee and approve the work of these consultants. We will secure project consultants by following federal guidelines.

A demonstration of the successes we have achieved to date with US EPA funding includes the following key accomplishments:

- Identification of [INSERT # HERE] contaminated or potentially contaminated properties
- Prioritization of potential brownfields sites by the County's Brownfields Redevelopment Advisory Committee (BRAC)
- [INSERT # of PHASE I's COMPLETED]
- [INSERT # of PHASE II's COMPLETED]
- Reuse Study Completed for Tutty Baker Park and Former Mortuary Site
- Creating a successful cooperative effort with the City of Freeport
- Hank's Town Pump (LUST)
- Former Milk Creamery = creation of new business and jobs
- Tutty Baker Park = working with the Freeport Park District

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- Enrollment of sites into SRP (3)

In addition to these accomplishments, we have leveraged approximately \$\$\$ for our Brownfields Program.

2. 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 Community-wide Assessment Grants. 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.

3. Stephenson County was awarded two (2) \$200,000 Assessment Grants in 2005. These funds are almost completely depleted. Stephenson County’s Brownfields Program has completed and filed all necessary reports in an accurate and timely manner. A narrative of active projects is updated on a quarterly basis with a detailed report of the progress.

4. 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 the US EPA the important outcomes and outputs of our Brownfield Project by regularly updating the Property Profile forms 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 (from catalyzed redevelopment along the Corridor)
- Funding leveraged
- Acreage of greenspace created or preserved

*Outputs of Assessment Grant Funding:*

- Phase I Environmental Site Assessments at ten (10) to twelve (12) sites
- Phase II Environmental Site Assessments at five to seven (5-7) sites (will vary depending on outcome of Phase I ESA’s)
- Enrollment of two (2) to three (3) sites into the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency’s SRP