



**Narrative Information Sheet**  
**U.S. EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant Application**

1. Applicant Identification  
TOWN OF ATHOL, MASSACHUSETTS  
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT  
584 Main Street  
Athol, MA 01331
2. Funding Requested
  - a. Assessment Grant Type
    - i. Community-Wide Assessment
  - b. Federal Funds Requested
    - i. \$500,000.00
    - ii. Not applicable
3. Location  
Town of Athol, County of Worcester, State of Massachusetts  
Second Massachusetts Congressional District
4. Target Area and Priority Sites/Property Information
  - a. Target Area: Downtown and Millers River Riverfront Area
  - b. Census Tract: #25027703100
  - c. Identified Priority Sites:
    - i. Parcel 023-105 : 62 Canal St
    - ii. Parcel 023-184 : 84 South St
    - iii. Parcel 030-237 : 467 Main St.
5. Contacts
  - a. Project Director  
Eric R. Smith, AICP  
Director of Planning and Development  
Town of Athol  
584 Main Street,  
Athol, MA 01331  
(978) 721-8500 ext. 517

b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Elected Official

Shaun A. Suhoski  
Town Manager  
584 Main Street,  
Athol, MA 01331  
(978) 721-8451

6. Population: As of the 2020 Census the population of Athol is 11,945

7. Other Factors Checklist

<b>Other Factors</b>	<b>Page #</b>
Community Population is 10,000 or less	NA
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian tribe or United States territory.	NA
The priority site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land	NA
The priority site(s) is adjacent to a body of water (i.e., the border of the priority site(s) is contiguous or partially contiguous to the body of water, or would be contiguous or partially contiguous with a body of water but for a street, road, or other public thoroughfare separating them).	1-2
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	1-2
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	2
The reuse of the proposed cleanup site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	2
The proposed project will improve local climate adaptation/mitigation capacity and resilience to protect residents and community investments	3
30% or more of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities, as described in Section I.A., for priority site(s) within the target area.	NA
The target area(s) is located within a community in which a coal-fired power plant has recently closed (2013 or later) or is closing.	NA

8. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority:

Please see attached letter from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) .

9. Releasing Copies of Applications

The Town of Athol gives permission to release all of the information in our application for the public.



Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

# Department of Environmental Protection

100 Cambridge Street Suite 900 Boston, MA 02114 • 617-292-5500

Maura T. Healey  
Governor

Kimberley Driscoll  
Lieutenant Governor

Rebecca L. Tepper  
Secretary

Bonnie Heiple  
Commissioner

November 3, 2023

*Via Email*

Attn: Eric R. Smith, Director of Planning and Development  
Town of Athol  
584 Main Street, Room 29  
Athol, MA 01331

**RE: STATE LETTER OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT**  
***Town of Athol***  
***Brownfields Community-Wide Assessment Grant***

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing to support the application submitted by the Town of Athol under the Fiscal Year 2024 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfield Assessment Grant Program. We understand that the Town is currently undertaking several assessment projects to promote redevelopment in the target areas focused on the Downtown and Riverfront areas. EPA funding will facilitate Brownfields redevelopment by providing resources to assess properties, conduct cleanup planning and redevelopment planning at properties where actual and perceived contamination exist that inhibit potential future development within these target areas.

In Massachusetts, state and federal agencies have developed strong partnerships and work together to ensure that parties undertaking Brownfield projects have access to available resources and incentives. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), through our regional offices, provides technical support to Brownfield project proponents when regulatory issues arise. If this proposal is selected, MassDEP will work with our state and federal partners to support the Town of Athol to help make this project a success.

We greatly appreciate EPA's continued support of Brownfield efforts in Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

David Foss, CPG, LSP

Statewide Brownfields Coordinator, Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup

cc: Dorrie Paar, US EPA  
Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager  
John Ziegler, MassDEP Western Regional Office  
Caprice Shaw, MassDEP Western Regional Office

## **1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION**

### **a. Target Area and Brownfields**

#### **i. Background and Description of Target Area**

The Town of Athol is a small community located in the north-central part of Massachusetts. For over 140 years, the L.S. Starrett tool company and other industries was the worldwide producer of precision tools, measuring instruments, and saw blades, giving Athol its nickname “Tool Town.” More than ten different factories and fulling mills were scattered throughout the banks of the Tully and Millers Rivers. Similar to other New England mill towns, Athol experienced the economic shock of industry relocation and closure. Many of these mills and factories ceased operations, which resulted in job loss and left behind blighted and contaminated sites. Based on the Town’s recent inventory, there are about seventeen brownfield sites of which more than half are related to factory and industry operations. Due to Athol’s industrial history, these brownfield sites have the potential to contain harmful pollutants impacting the health and vitality of the surrounding community. Our target area includes Athol’s Downtown and Riverfront (Block group 250277031001), which is primarily a low-income community. Our target area was selected according due to the high need of the community, proximity to water and priority for redevelopment. With the financial assistance of this grant, the Town hopes to assess, and consequently, cleanup and redevelop its brownfield sites with the ultimate goal to support its community by increasing housing opportunities and incentivizing small businesses.

#### **ii. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s)**

Based on the brownfields inventory, the Target Area includes six brownfield sites, within close proximity to local residences and the river. we have selected three sites as priorities based on the extent of the contamination and the potential for redevelopment. The **former York Theatre** located at 467 Main St is one of the most historic places in Athol. Originally built in 1930, the theater has been a central place for the community to gather and is of sentimental value to Athol’s residents. The theater closed sometime in the 1960’s, then was used as a bowling alley and now is vacant for over 10 years. The Town of Athol owns this property as of July 2023, based on delinquent taxes. To our knowledge, there is no previous environmental investigation conducted at the site and the presence of hazardous building materials is suspected due to the age of the building. The building is known to be in poor condition.

Within the same area, **Microphotonics** is a former industrial property that was built in the 1920s and occupies about 1.7 acres of land. Formerly known as the Athol Machine Foundry Company which produced world renowned tools, specifically vises, some of which are still in use in buildings around Athol. Located at 84 South Street, the property is an eyesore to the community. The building is in a rough shape with the roof caved in. Given the age of the building, a hazardous building materials assessment is needed while its location on the Millers River floodplain makes it a priority for assessment and cleanup to prevent the migration of contaminants downstream. In addition, the site is adjacent to residential housing to the south and east.

The **Former Cass Toy Factory** is located at 62 Canal St within our target area. This vacant property was the former manufacturer of wooden toys and wooden and paper boxes and later on a sandblasting company. A large fire in 2012 destroyed the factory building, and with EPA’s assistance, the debris and rubble from the former building that remained in piles were removed in late 2020. The former Cass Toy Factory property was subdivided in 2011 with the Town now owning a 1.3-acre lot that is located off of Canal Street. Based on the 2021 Phase II Site Investigation (which followed a Phase I in 2020) of the Town-owned property, heavy metals were identified in the soil and groundwater, and acenaphthene in the groundwater. The

geophysical survey showed several anomalies which indicate the presence of underground storage tanks. Additional investigation is required to fully delineate the extent of the contamination at the site and the presence of storage tanks in the subsurface before the remediation of the site. The Town has applied to the EPA Targeted Brownfields Assessment Program for further assessment of any potential underground storage tanks. To date there's been no assessment work of the privately-owned 2.21-acre riverfront parcel.

**iii) Identifying Additional Sites**

The Town will utilize the June 2022 “Brownfields Inventory and Prioritization List for the Town of Athol” Report, prepared by the UConn TAB Program as the basis to expand the list, identify and prioritize any additional sites for any remaining assessment funding. Priority criteria will include proximity to residential properties and water, potential for redevelopment, and input from the community as described in the Community Engagement section.

**b Revitalization of the Target Area**

**i. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans**

The Town of Athol has struggled to find investment in its downtown area over the last few decades, with closed businesses and vacant storefronts dotting Main St. The town seeks to revitalize itself by investing in its brownfield redevelopment program to promote green space development, ecotourism, and the business that comes with increased traffic in the downtown area. The 2002 Athol Master Plan includes Economic Development goals to “promote the vitality of the downtown area” and “provide an environment in which local companies can succeed and expand.” Housing goals from the 2023 Housing Production Plan were “to provide safe, comfortable, and affordable housing for current and future residents of Athol”. The Downtown Housing Study conducted in Athol in 2020 found that there was limited low-income and multi-family housing despite steady demand.

In 2021, the Town commissioned a visioning study of the area that identified the two properties at 84 South Street and 62 Canal Street as a prime location for residential redevelopment and a riverfront park and playground. New construction at those two properties, which abut each other across from Mill Brook, will incorporate modern energy efficient construction and offer solar energy opportunities (both rooftop on the new housing units and ground-mounted solar arrays). A Charrette facilitated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ Urban River Visions in 2002 showed earlier similar riverfront recreation ideas for these sites. The study shows proposed reuse of the Cass Toy Factory as a park, and as part of the Millers River Greenway. For the York Theatre property, the Town sees opportunity for additional municipal parking and a small pocket park at this location.

**ii. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy**

With the Brownfield grant funding, Athol will be able to spur redevelopment of the identified sites and take a major step forward in the process of revitalizing the town. With the development of commercial lodging, tourism will increase. With increased housing and additional tourism from the proposed Cass Park, Millers River Greenway and Riverwalk projects that will be made possible from Brownfield redevelopment grant funding, there will be increased business opportunities Downtown. As all these projects come to fruition property values downtown will increase. The Greenway is part of a larger ecotourism, recreation and revitalization plan that will connect the downtowns of Orange and Athol via a bike and pedestrian via paths traveling through natural and man-made green spaces along the route. Along the Millers River, the Riverwalk is being developed with a section already completed behind the town hall and library. As discussed,

the project will incorporate energy efficiency designs, and green infrastructure design needed for climate mitigation given the location of the project on the riverfront.

Through redevelopment of the York Theater property the downtown will have a new parking lot and pocket park designed to reduce the urban heat island effect. By providing additional parking behind the cluster of buildings along the Main Street will a) provide any loss of public parking due to the 43-housing unit development on the former parking deck property and b) provide more off-street parking to Main Street that has over 12,000 vehicles per day and encourages pedestrian exploration.

**c. Strategy for Leveraging Resources**

**i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse**

The Town of Athol has a plan to gather all required resources to complete the project and foster redevelopment of our targeted properties. The Town will partner with MassDevelopment, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ economic development financing agency, for brownfield clean-up funding via their Brownfields Redevelopment Fund. The Town is considering adoption of an Urban Center Housing-Tax Increment Financing (UCH-TIF) District to further Downtown housing development. There currently is a permitted 43-unit housing development at a former Town-owned parking deck, which is located to the rear of the York Theatre building. All of our subject parcels in the Downtown area are in the Federally-approved Opportunity Zone area. We are also planning to use CDBG grant funds for improvements in the South Street Neighborhood, which will directly improve access to and benefit redevelopment opportunities 62 Canal Street and 84 South Street.

**ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure**

The priority sites are all located within our Downtown, which is serviced by town water, sewer and stormwater drainage systems. We are looking to upgrade this infrastructure in the target area via CDBG grant funds. In 2022, the Town paid \$113,000 for surveying and engineering services in the South Street Neighborhood, which includes Canal Street & South Street. That work led to the preparation of a CDBG grant application in March 2023 for \$1.35 million towards infrastructure improvements in that neighborhood, focusing on Canal Street and Lumber Street. The Town was subsequently awarded a CDBG grant of \$1.2 million from the MA Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities in July 2023; the Town will contribute the additional funding, which will lead to new pavement on Canal and Lumber, improved sidewalks and water, sewer, and drainage infrastructure. We expect it will take two or three rounds of CDBG funding to complete the project across the entire South Street neighborhood.

**2. COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**a. Community Need**

**i. The Community’s Need for Funding**

Athol has a **small, stagnant, and aging population** base of 11,945 (2020) that limits its annual municipal budget and it relies heavily on partnership grant funding in order to plan and implement economic development projects. Athol is not a CDBG entitlement community, which requires our CDBG grant funding to come through a competitive application process. Pressures to keep local tax burdens low, partly based on low wages and declining quality of life, limit Athol’s funds for economic development. Athol does not have the capacity to fund environmental assessment given the amount of legacy industrial sites located within the downtown area. The median household income for Athol is \$57,667, 32.1% compared to Massachusetts median household income of \$84,835. Furthermore, the town has a relatively low per capita income of \$28,717, in

comparison to the state per capita income of \$45,555. 11.5% of the town's population are at the poverty level compared to 9.4% for the state of Massachusetts, this makes it very difficult to raise taxes on residential properties. The town is therefore reliant on outside funding to make improvements. The target areas are all within census tract 703100 and are of **low-income population (41%), ranking at the 70th percentile when compared to the national average.** The town's underprivileged financial situation indicates that there are no extra funds available for the clean-up and redevelopment of brownfields. The unemployment rate for this tract is 16% (EJ SCREEN) compared to the national rate of 3.7% and Massachusetts rate of 3.6%. (ACS).

ii. Threats to Sensitive Populations

(1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations

Our low-income, unemployed, and elderly populations are disproportionately affected by environmental health hazards. With one of the highest percentages of elderly populations, which rank at the 78<sup>th</sup> percentile both at the state and national level (EJ SCREEN), our community's sensitive populations are disadvantaged and face socioeconomic and environmental health burdens. Within our target census block group, we have one of the higher percentages of low-income populations which ranks at the 88<sup>th</sup> percentile compared to the Commonwealth of MA and the 73<sup>rd</sup> percentile compared to the US (EJ SCREEN). Unemployment rates rank at the highest percentiles within the state and the nation; 94<sup>th</sup> and 92<sup>nd</sup> percentiles, respectively. Educational levels are also an indicator of the community's welfare issues; our community ranks at the 84<sup>th</sup> percentile in the state and 78<sup>th</sup> percentile in the nation for populations with less than a high school education. In addition to the socioeconomic stressors, these communities live in close proximity to many of the brownfield sites, while critical services are lacking in the Town. Athol is designated a food desert by USDA's Food Access Research Atlas while the Town has one of the highest vulnerability indexes (top 4<sup>th</sup>) within the Commonwealth (CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index 2020). By conducting environmental assessments, the Town will better be able to address the blight and contamination affecting its sensitive populations.

(2) Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions

Several incidences of health conditions are present in our community that are much higher than the national average. The incidence of cancer in our target area is more than 15% higher than the national average, with an estimated crude rate of 8.3 for our target census tract (25027703100) whereas the national prevalence is 7.1 (CDC National Environmental Public Health Network). Our target area also has a high prevalence of asthma for adults, with a 31% higher crude prevalence compared to the national prevalence (CDC National Environmental Public Health Network). Old housing with the potential of presence of lead-based paint is evident across the Town; EJ SCREEN's lead paint indicator ranks at the higher percentiles (85<sup>th</sup> percentile compared to the state and 93<sup>rd</sup> percentile compared to the nation) and as a result, lead poisoning rates in children are almost 5 times higher compared to the rest of the state (50.3 per 1000 children for Athol compared to 13.3 for the state level). In our census tract, heart disease is also at the highest percentiles compared to the nations (estimated at the 78<sup>th</sup> percentile) and low life expectancy (at 87<sup>th</sup> percentile). Our brownfield sites could only exacerbate the adverse health effects our populations face through exposure to hazardous substances such as heavy metals and asbestos. By getting an assessment grant, Athol would be able to identify pollutants that pose environmental health threats to our populations and catalyze the process of removing these substances and revitalizing its Downtown.

(3) Promoting Environmental Justice

**a. Identification of Environmental Justice Issues**

Our target area is a designated environmental justice community defined by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts based on income, estimated at 41.4 % of the MA median income. Our block group ranks higher than the 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for 6 EJSCREEN Environmental Justice Indicators both compared to the state and the nation (EJ Index for lead paint, RMP facility proximity, underground storage tanks, hazardous waste proximity, wastewater discharge, and traffic proximity). The high ranking of the EJ indexes indicates a significant disparity in exposure and proximity to contaminants, and the magnitude of economic disadvantage and environmental justice associated with our target sites emphasizes the need of this community.

**b. Advancing environmental justice**

Without this grant, our disadvantaged community does not have the capacity to cover the assessment and cleanup activities of their community. Promoting environmental justice through the sustainable redevelopment of the brownfield sites in the community will lead to an increase in job opportunities, improve property values, and improve the quality of life of our sensitive populations. The assessment grant will act as a catalyst for revitalization which in turn will reduce local blight, economic growth, property value increase, and a reduced health burden. The target uses of the sites include mixed type housing, which ensures that current residents of the low income area will not be displaced from downtown as a result of gentrification. Local businesses will be prioritized for commercial development and community input will be sought to ensure that end uses are in line with the vision of the local residents. The Town does not anticipate any displacement to residents and/or businesses from our redevelopment plans.

**b. Community Engagement**

i. and ii. Project Involvement and Project Roles:

The Town will involve community groups and other interested stakeholders in the planning and decision making process of the Brownfield assessment project and undertake public education and outreach. The Town of Athol will utilize an Athol Brownfields Advisory Committee (ABAC) to consist of representatives of the North Quabbin Community Coalition (the NQCC, a community-wide alliance committed to improving the quality of life and supporting redevelopment efforts for all those living and working in the North Quabbin region, which includes Athol; The Town also propose to fund a Community Liaison position as a stipend to NQCC), the North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce (whose mission is to promote and improve the business environment, stimulate a vibrant local economy and produce a cooperative effort through outstanding community leadership to elevate the overall quality of life in the North Quabbin Region to its highest potential), the Millers River Watershed Council (MRWC’s mission is to protect and enhance the health of the Millers River and its watershed for the long-term benefit of its human and non-human residents), as well as the Town’s Economic Development Industrial Commission. Our partners include the following:

Name of organization/ group	Point of Contact (name, email & phone)	Specific involvement in the project or assistance provided
North Quabbin Community Coalition (NQCC)	Heather Bialecki-Canning, Executive Director, <a href="mailto:heather@nqcc.org">heather@nqcc.org</a> , (978) 249-3703	Assist with outreach to low-income and underrepresented populations in the Target Areas. participation in ABAC; community organization; support redevelopment efforts



North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce	Melissa Eaton, Executive Director, <a href="mailto:melissa.eaton@northquabbinchamber.com">melissa.eaton@northquabbinchamber.com</a> , (978) 249-3849	Site solicitation & prioritization member to the Committee. participation in ABAC; conduct outreach to local businesses
Athol Bird and Nature Club	David Small, President and Acting Executive Director, <a href="mailto:dave@dhsml.net">dave@dhsml.net</a> , (978) 413-1772	Athol-based organization that advocates for protection and access to open spaces, including the Millers River; community organization
Millers River Watershed Council	Ivan Ussach, Director, <a href="mailto:ivan@millersriver.net">ivan@millersriver.net</a> , (978) 248-9491	Advocate for cleaning up properties along the Millers River and furthering river-based recreational opportunities; community organization
Economic Development Industrial Commission (EDIC)	Keith McGuirk, Chairman, [REDACTED], (978) 544-9000	Town of Athol committee charged with furthering economic development

**iii. Incorporating Community Input:**

We will conduct semi-annual public education and information meetings that will be held within our identified Priority Target Area during the assessment and reporting phases, as well as at the remedial and reuse planning phase. There will be a total of eight (8) Athol Brownfields Advisory Committee (ABAC) meetings over the 4-year duration of the grant. Project stakeholders are to include site owners, abutters, developers, community and citizen groups, lenders, EPA, MassDevelopment and the MA DEP. Additional meetings will be held as needed to provide updates on our assessment, cleanup planning, and reuse planning efforts. Public meetings will be conducted in-person with an option to attend virtually to accommodate any COVID-19 related restrictions and be recorded for playback for those persons unable to make it at the meeting time.

Community outreach will be done in various formats. We will utilize the Town’s Facebook account and then spread awareness via local media, including the Athol Daily News and Athol-Orange Public Access TV (AOTV) as well as the AOTV’s 105.9 FM community radio station, the monthly NQCC newsletter and the Town of Athol’s, NQCC’s and the North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce’s websites. We will utilize these sources of communication to provide updates to the public regarding the site assessments and redevelopment planning for the sites. Stakeholder input will be collected during public meetings and subsequently via email or writing via mail. All input will be incorporated into the decision-making for the brownfield properties. The public will have 14 days from any meetings to provide for any comments. Town Planning Staff will respond to any public comments within a subsequent 14 days.

**3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS**

**a. Description of Tasks and Activities**

i. – iv. Project Implementation, Anticipated Project Schedule, Task Lead and Outputs

<b>Task/Activity 1: Project Management</b>
i. Project Implementation: <u>EPA-funded activities</u> : Up to three (3) Town Staff will attend one National Brownfields Conference and participate in one regional conference (Q1- Q16). <u>Non-</u>

<p><u>EPA-funded activities</u>: Town Staff will oversee the cooperative agreement, assist in prioritizing other brownfield sites in conjunction with the Committee, and manage the project including procurement of a QEP (Qualified Environmental Professional, including development of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a QEP) and legal services (Q1); Select a QEP and legal services through a competitive bid process and finalize agreements. Selection of the QEP and any subcontractors will be in compliance with the fair and open competition requirements in 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 1500.19 (Q2); Submit quarterly reports (including final closeout) and requests for reimbursement (Q1-16); Submit MBE/WBE reporting (Q's 4, 8, 12, and 16); and updating the ACRES site inventory database quarterly.</p>
<p>ii. Anticipated Project Schedule: Months 1-48; three (3) months for the procurement process to hire the QEP/LEP; project management over the 48 months, including quarterly reports, continuous ACRES updates, and semi-annual meetings.</p>
<p>iii. Task/Activity Lead(s): Town Staff</p>
<p>iv. Output(s): Sixteen (16) quarterly reports and MBE/WBE reporting; Procurement and contracting with QEP; Brownfield committee meetings; ACRES reporting; Closeout report; and Attendance at one National Brownfields Conference for up to three (3) staff</p>
<p><b>Task/Activity 2: Outreach and Community Involvement</b></p>
<p>i. Project Implementation: <u>EPA-funded activities</u>: Conduct Athol Brownfields Advisory Committee (ABAC) meetings semi-annually over the course of the Grant, which are to be open to the public (eight total ABAC meetings). The Town and the QEP/LEP will develop marketing materials, notify residents, site adjacent landowners, key community members, community partners, and the ABAC of assessment public meetings and schedules; hold public meetings to inform, educate and update the target area(s), Town Staff, the Community Liaison, and community partners will help advertise all public meetings and solicit input from the community. We will prepare informative posters and signs for posting in the community and selected project properties. Meetings may be held at the Athol Town Hall, Public Library or Senior Center (all within the Downtown Target Area). Write press releases regarding success stories or stories alerting public to public meetings or charrettes as needed; Maintain brownfields assessment program webpage and outreach materials as needed; Conduct meetings and charrettes with neighborhood project advisory committees and general public as needed; Communicate regularly with the general public and key stakeholders (sharing information, seeking input, planning &amp; strategizing) through meetings, mail, e-mail and phone as needed; Integrate brownfields program into Town's municipal, environmental and economic development planning programs. We propose to fund a Community Liaison position as a stipend to NQCC</p>
<p>ii. ii. Anticipated Project Schedule: Semi-Annual ABAC meetings (eight meetings over Q1-Q16); Community Outreach to be ongoing; Other meetings to be scheduled for updates on assessment, clean up planning and reuse planning.</p>
<p>iii. Task/Activity Leads: Town Staff, ABAC and Community Partners, with QEP assistance</p>
<p>iv. Outputs: 16 Athol Brownfields Advisory Committee meetings; 16 newsletter articles; 16 meeting postings on Town website and other social media; 16 press releases; Updated webpage and outreach materials; informational posters and two large signs; one local radio spot; series of public meetings with the general public, local elected officials, community organizations and/or private brownfield owners/prospective purchasers; Letters and e-mails relating to community engagement.</p>
<p><b>Task/Activity 3: Site Assessments</b></p>
<p>i. Project Implementation: <u>EPA-funded activities</u>: Determine site eligibility with assistance from USEPA and MassDEP as needed; Prepare Site Eligibility forms; Coordinate with site</p>

owners/prospective purchasers and other stakeholders on scopes of work; Prepare work plans; Conduct and complete Phase I ESAs; Complete All Appropriate Inquiries (AAI) forms for Phase I ESAs; Prepare Site Specific QAPPs, Phase I and II ESAs, Hazardous Building Materials Assessments (HMBA) as warranted.
ii. Anticipated Project Schedule: months 2-16: Phase I in priority sites: months 3-9, Phase II/III in priority sites: months 9-24, Phase I/II in non-priority sites: months 25-48
iii. Task/Activity Lead(s): QEP
iv. Output(s): 10 Phase I ESAs and AAI Forms, 5 Phase II ESAs, 2 HMBA, and 5 SSQAPPs.
<b>Task/Activity 4: Reuse Planning</b>
i. Project Implementation: EPA-funded activities: Complete Analyses of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives (ABCAs), Market Study and Remedial Action Plans (RAPS); Coordinate with site owners, USEPA, and stakeholders on ABCAs, site reuse assessments, community visioning, and market studies.
ii. Anticipated Project Schedule: Q6 through Q16: 4 ABCAs, 2 RAPS, 1 community visioning session, and 1 Market Study
iii. Task/Activity Lead(s): QEP <b>Town of Athol</b>
iv. Output(s): 4 ABCAs, 2 RAPS, 1 community visioning session, and 1 Market Study

**b. Cost Estimates**

i. and ii.: Development and Application of Cost Estimates

All estimates below are derived from costs related to the Town of Athol and assume four years of full programming. Mileage rates are used at \$.655/mi. Town of Athol and the Community Liaison rates are budgeted at \$50/hour and QEP rates are an average of \$120/hour.

<b>Task/Activity 1: Project Management</b>
Click here to enter text.Travel for three staff persons to attend one National Brownfields conference (\$2,000/person for airfare/lodging/meals: \$6,000) + 3 trainings x 150 miles round trip per training = \$294.75; Grand total for Task 1 = \$6,294.75
<b>Task/Activity 2: Outreach and Community Involvement</b>
Funding of Community Liaison position at \$50/hr. for 100 hours over the course of the project (\$5,000 total). Estimates for outreach and community involvement are at \$2,222.75 for flyers, posters, signs (two 4’x6’ large project signs), press releases and newspaper articles for the 4-year project. 200 QEP hours @ \$120/hr (\$24,000) + 20 trips x 75 miles round trip per meeting (\$982.5). Grand total for Task 2 = \$32,205.25
<b>Task/Activity 3: Site Assessments</b>
A Phase I is estimated @ \$4,700 each for a total of 10 (\$47,500). A Phase II is estimated @ \$55,000 each for a total of 5 (\$275,000). The HMBA is estimated @ \$10,000 each for a total of 2 (\$20,000). The SSQAPPs are estimated @ \$4,000 each for a total of 5 (\$20,000). These costs (\$373,500) are budgeted for the QEP with travel and supplies included in estimates.
<b>Task/Activity 4: Reuse Planning</b>
The ABCAs are estimated @ \$7,000 each for a total of 4 (\$28,000). The RAPS are estimated @ 10,000 each for a total of 2 (\$20,000). One community visioning planning session at \$10,000 and \$30,000 for Downtown Market Study. These costs (\$88,000) are budgeted to be paid to the QEP and any sub-contractors with travel and supplies included in estimates.

Budget Categories	Project Tasks (\$)
-------------------	--------------------

		Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Totals
<b>Direct Costs</b>	Personnel		\$5,000			\$5,000
	Travel	\$6,263.25				\$6,263.25
	Supplies		\$2,761.75			\$2,761.75
	Contractual		\$40,975	\$357,000	\$88,000	\$485,975
<b>Total Budget</b>		\$3,263.25	\$48,736.75	\$357,000	\$88,000	\$500,000

**c. Measuring Environmental Results**

The Town of Athol will track, measure and evaluate its progress on a quarterly basis based on the sixteen (16) quarter timeline described in Section 3a. Objectives will be determined for each activity, based on the number and types of outputs documented in this proposal and the preferred outcome of that activity as determined by the Town, the QEP, the ABAC, the brownfields owner/prospective purchaser, and key stakeholders. Using Excel spreadsheets and quarterly reports, we will track program milestones and site-specific progress including project expenditures in our quarterly reports. Project progress will be communicated through our ACRES database reporting. We will track project outputs including number of site assessments completed, Committee and other project-related meetings held, number of participants in outreach efforts and our media outreach efforts. Longer-term outcomes will also be monitored and tracked with respect to acreage of land assessed, remediated, and redeveloped including job creation, increased tax revenue and increased recreation and riverfront access opportunities.

**4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE**

**a. Programmatic Capability**

i.-iii. Organizational Capacity, Structure and Description of Key Staff

The Town of Athol and will work closely with its departments to administer the EPA grant. Key staff include Eric Smith, Director of Planning and Development, who has served in this role since April 2016. Mr. Smith has worked at either the municipal or regional planning agency level for over 20 years. His experiences have included the lead author of the Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC)'s successful EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant in 2010. The narrative from that grant application was provided by EPA Region 1 as one of their model applications presented in Fall 2010. Shaun A. Suhoski has served as Athol's Town Manager and Chief Procurement Officer since 2014 and has nearly 30 years of experience in local government including grants management, community economic development, and administration. He's served on the Montachusett Regional Brownfields committee for several years and has prior experience with EPA brownfields funding. Alyssa Moore is the Fiscal Manager of Grants and Contracts for the Planning and Development Department and has been in this position since May 2017. Her duties include maintaining files, records, reports, payment vouchers and reconciling bank accounts. Heidi Murphy was hired as the Assistant Town Planner/Grants Administrator in December of 2022. Heidi has over 22 years of experience working in municipalities or regional planning agencies. Hedi applied for and obtained and administered Brownfields Phase I site assessment grants for several properties in a municipality she worked in and provided statistical data and analysis to the Brownfields coordinator at MVPC. In addition, she has over approximately \$3.5 million applying for and administering grants as it relates to community development, economic development and long-range planning.

iv. Acquiring Additional Resources The Town is very experienced with hiring consultants and contractors to expand our existing staff capabilities and capacities as needed. The Town has extensive experience with bidding, selecting, awarding, and managing professional engineers, planning consultants and other specialists as required. Such resources would be acquired through a public bid and qualification process, as required under Federal and State procurement laws. In addition, the Town would promote any employment opportunities on our website, social media and the local newspaper.

**b. Past Performance and Accomplishments**

**ii. Has Not Received an EPA Brownfields Grant but has Received Other Federal or Non-Federal Assistance Agreements**

*(1) Purpose and Accomplishments*

The Town of Athol has successfully administered a number of State grants, including CDBG, with the funds awarded by the MA Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD); three Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grants from MA EOEEA, and multiple MA Department of Energy Resources Green Communities Energy Efficiency Grants. DHCD has awarded the Town of Athol a total of 7 CDBG grants during the period of 2016-2023, and another, which includes the CARES Act grant during the Covid-19 epidemic. The CDBG grants total +/- \$5.6 million during this timeframe, which have led to infrastructure improvements in our Downtown area, including reconstruction of Marble Street, Church Street, Walnut Street, and Canal Street (north of Main). The Town received MVP planning grant funding in 2019, which also included funding to update our local Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan. Subsequent to achieving MVP Designation, the Town received two MVP Action Grants, which focused on redevelopment of Lord Pond Plaza that includes reducing an identified heat island through planning and design to daylight a long buried steam and create new green space and tree plantings. The Town has received multiple Green Communities grants since 2010 that provided new LED lighting and weatherization improvements to a number of municipal buildings including Town Hall, Police Station, Fire Station, and DPW Garage.

*(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements*

The Town of Athol has never had any issues or negative findings with the administration of any of our awarded grants. We've been successful in all our reporting, both quarterly and final reports. In addition, we've been successful in all our audit reviews, which are required by DHCD for our CDBG program administration.

## **FY24 EPA Assessment Grant Application: Threshold Criteria**

### **1. Applicant Eligibility:**

a. The Town of Athol is a municipal corporation and is the governmental entity that governs the Town of Athol, MA.

### **2. Community Involvement:**

We will conduct semi-annual public education and information meetings that will be held within our identified Priority Target Area during the assessment and reporting phases, as well as at the remedial and reuse planning phase. There will be a total of eight (8) Athol Brownfields Advisory Committee (ABAC) meetings over the 4-year duration of the grant. Project stakeholders are to include site owners, abutters, developers, community and citizen groups, lenders, EPA, MassDevelopment and the MA DEP. Additional meetings will be held as needed to provide updates on our assessment, cleanup planning, and reuse planning efforts. Public meetings will be conducted in-person with an option to attend virtually to accommodate any COVID-19 related restrictions and be recorded for playback for those persons unable to make it at the meeting time.

Community outreach will be done in various formats. We will utilize the Town's Facebook account and then spread awareness via local media, including the Athol Daily News and Athol-Orange Public Access TV (AOTV) as well as the AOTV's 105.9 FM community radio station, the monthly NQCC newsletter and the Town of Athol's, NQCC's and the North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce's websites. We will utilize these sources of communication to provide updates to the public regarding the site assessments and redevelopment planning for the sites. Stakeholder input will be collected during public meetings and subsequently via email or writing via mail. All input will be incorporated into the decision-making for the brownfield properties. The public will have 14 days from any meetings to provide for any comments. Town Planning Staff will respond to any public comments within a subsequent 14 days.

### **3. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds:**

a. The Town of Athol is not a recipient of other EPA grants at this time.

### **4. Named Contractors and Subrecipients:**

a. There are no named contractors or sub-recipients.