



Asociación de Residentes de La Margarita, Inc.
Registro núm. 448379
CD2 URB La Margarita
Salinas PR 00751
Email: asociacionlamargarita@gmail.com



IV.D. Narrative Information Sheet

R02-24-A-016

1. Applicant Identification:
Asociación de Residentes de La Margarita
CD2 Urb. La Margarita, Salinas PR 00751
(787)-508-6974
2. Funding Requested:
 - a. Assessment Grant Type: Community-wide Assessment Grant
 - b. Federal Funds Requested: \$401,000
3. Location:
 - a. Salinas
 - b. Salinas (La Margarita)
 - c. Puerto Rico
4. Target Area and Priority Site/Property Information:
 - a. Target Area: La Margarita
 - b. La Margarita is contained within **Census Tracts (72123953000 and 72123953100)** consists, primarily, of the southwest limits of downtown Salinas, located 0.5 of a mile north of the southern coastline, and extending 1.25 miles north to PR-52. La Margarita is a mix of residential, industrial development, and parks/recreational facilities.
 - c. Priority Sites Addresses:
 - i. Industrial Site – PR 701 Salinas, PR 00751
 - ii. Former Multifamily Residential Complex – PR 701 Salinas, PR 00751
 - iii. Former Supermarket – PR1, Salinas, PR 00751
 - iv. Abandoned Residential - PR 701 Salinas, PR 00751
 - v. Former Hospital – PR 701 Salinas, PR 00751
5. Contacts:
 - a. Project Director:
Wanda J Ríos Colorado, President
Asociación de Residentes de Las Margaritas
CD2 Urb. La Margarita, Salinas PR 00751
(787)-508-6974
[REDACTED]
 - b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Elected Official
Wanda J Ríos Colorado, President
CD2 Urb. La Margarita, Salinas PR 00751
(787)-508-6974
[REDACTED]
6. Population: Salinas – 25,789 (US 2020 Decennial Census)

7. Other Factors Checklist

Other Factors	Page#
Community population is 10,000 or less.	
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian tribe or United States territory.	
The priority site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	
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).	Page 2
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	Page 2 & 3
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	Pages 1-4, 6, 9
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	Page 3
The proposed project will improve local climate adaptation/mitigation capacity and resilience to protect residents and community investments.	Pages 1-6
At least 30% of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities, as described in Section I.B., for priority site(s) within the target area(s).	
The target area(s) is located within a community in which a coal-fired power plant has recently closed (2012 or later) or is closing.	

8. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority.

a. Letter from the Puerto Rico Department of Environmental and Natural Resources is attached.

9. The Asociación de Residentes de La Margarita is not making any claims for confidential, privileged, or sensitive information, in this application/document.



GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

- 8 NOV 2023

Ms. Wanda J. Ríos Colorado
Presidenta
Asociación de Residentes de
La Margarita, Inc.
CD2 Urbanización La Margarita
Salinas, PR 00751

Dear Ríos Colorado:

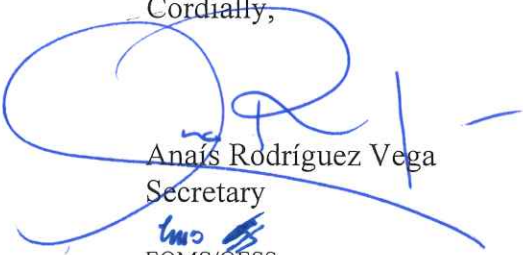
**ACKNOWLEDGMENT LETTER FOR THE INTENTION TO APPLY FOR FY-24 US
EPA BROWNFIELD'S PROGRAM FOR A COMMUNITY-WIDE BROWNFIELDS
ASSESSMENT GRANT AT THE COMMUNITY OF LA MARGARITA SALINAS,
PUERTO RICO**

The Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) Superfund Program has received a letter from the Community Organization Asociación de La Margarita, Inc. informing us of its intention to apply for a Community-Wide Brownfields Assessment Grant for FY 2024. DNER acknowledges and supports the initiative taken by the community.

The inventory development, assessment, cleanup and redevelopment of Brownfields sites will provide an opportunity to enhance the social, economic and environmental conditions in this community. DNER encourages the community to maintain open communication with federal and state agencies and to request any support needed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Edwin O. Malavet-Santiago, Environmental Emergencies Response Area Manager, at (787) 999-2200, extensions 5900, 5915 or by email at edwin.malavet@drna.pr.gov.

Cordially,


Anaís Rodríguez Vega
Secretary
EOMS/OESS

C Teresita Rodríguez, USEPA

1 Project Area Description & Plans for Revitalization, a. Target Area & Brownfields, i. Overview of Brownfield Challenges & Description of Target Area:

Established in 2020 as a 501(c)(3) (though organized as a community advocacy group since 2010), the Asociación de Residentes de La Margarita (ASRL) is a nonprofit in Salinas, Puerto Rico (PR) organized to represent, protect, and empower the La Margarita neighborhood by maintaining the recreational areas, improving economic opportunities for residents, and constructing a resilient recreation and emergency response center in the community. Situated in the southern PR, 38 miles southwest of San Juan, the Municipality of Salinas is a working-class community known for agricultural production, manufacturing, health, and educational services. Salinas’ economy was vibrant, in part, due to Section 936 (936 exemption) of the US tax code, which incentivized US companies to operate on the island through valuable tax exemptions. The US government eliminated this incentive in 2006, causing companies to leave PR for more tax-friendly countries. Household incomes stagnated – increasing 2.04%, compared to 22.2% inflation since 2017 (US Census & Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS]). Hurricanes (Maria-2017 & Fiona-2022) brought socioeconomic and financial pressures to Salinas. Hurricane-damaged properties released chemicals like lead paint, petroleum, and other environmental hazards. Since then, PR’s unstable economy and climate-change induced natural disasters contributed to the demise of Salinas’ commercial and residential vitality, driving our economy into a recession, leading to job losses and population decline as people left for the US for better employment. Past economic struggles brought brownfield challenges: abandoned buildings, legacy pollution (Table 1), blight, increased crime, and strain on public resources. Brownfields add to financial burdens (reduce income, increase poverty, lower tax revenue and wages, etc. – 2.a.i) and health disparities (higher cancer rates and infant mortality – 2.a.ii(2)) on our residents. Since the economic downturn, the federal government made a significant investment to facilitate redevelopment and resilience in PR, including the La Margarita, but much of these funds remain unusable until EPA grant funded environmental assessment and cleanup (if needed) is completed on the properties targeted for reuse. Once priority sites are redeveloped, our economy will no longer be influenced by the negative impacts of brownfields. The worst-hit area, where redevelopment investment has the greatest potential, is our target area, known as La Margarita.

Target Area: La Margarita (Census Tracts 9530 and 9531) lies in southwest Salinas. It is a mix of residential, industrial development, and parks/recreational facilities with an area of about 0.45 square miles. 85% of this target area is in a FEMA-designated flood plain. Hurricanes Maria and Fiona destroyed buildings and caused catastrophic flooding from the Nigua River and Caribbean Sea, triggering sewage backflow into homes and businesses. Businesses such as a former hospital, an industrial site, a former supermarket, and others closed, becoming brownfields. An estimated 800 jobs were lost in the past decade. Population in La Margarita dropped by 6.3% after Maria, from 5081 in 2017 to 4771 (American Community Survey (ACS)). Remaining residents struggle to find work as indicated by the high unemployment of 10.1% compared to US at 3.8% (August 2023, Dept. of Labor [most recent data available]). Those working are paid less. The financial challenges of La Margarita residents have perpetuated a cycle of low-quality jobs, inadequate affordable housing, abandoned/polluted buildings, and strain on public resources resulting in social and economic constraints. Our Revitalization Plans (1.b.) recognize the need for modern development in La Margarita. We have put the pieces in place to implement a strategy to create modern mixed-use development, commercial investment, and housing on brownfield sites that balances social, economic and environmental interests to establish sustainable, lasting development. We are making a focused effort to address priority brownfields (1.a.ii) and leverage additional funding for this hardest hit part of our community.

1.a.ii. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s): Our priority sites (Table 1) offer the greatest opportunity to trigger successful reuse/resurgence in our target area. However, other brownfields are also present in La Margarita (approx. 18 totaling ±31 acres). The historical/current uses, likely environmental issues, potential health effects from exposure to these sites, and planned reuses are listed below.

Table 1 – Priority Brownfields Sites and Impacts (in Census Tracts 9530 and 9531)

Priority Sites, Size & Proximity to Target Area Residents	Historic Use/Current Use & Condition/ Planned reuse	Suspected Contaminants*
Industrial Site – PR-701 adjoining urban center, 7.9 acres, adjoins low income & minority residential	Former Industrial Site / abandoned & deteriorated structure / Emergency response, resiliency, storage, & office center with solar development on site	VOCs, PAHs, metals, asbestos, lead paint, PCBs, petroleum

Former Multifamily Residential Complex – PR-701, 6.34 acres, within low income & minority residential & floodplain	Public housing complex / vacant, proposed for demolition / Renewable energy generation & storage & recreational space with stormwater detention features	VOCs, PAHs, lead paint, asbestos, PCBs
Former Supermarket – PR-1, 3.6 acres, within low income & minority residential & floodplain, adjacent to a body of water	Former supermarket / vacant, deteriorating structure / mixed-use commercial & low-income housing complex	asbestos, lead paint, petroleum, mercury, VOCs, PCBs
Abandoned Residential – PR-701, 0.54 acres, within low income & minority residential & floodplain	Former residential adjoining industrial property / vacant, deteriorating structure / Solar power generation & energy storage hub	asbestos, lead paint, petroleum, VOCs, PCBs
Former Hospital – PR-1, 0.45 acres, within low-income & minority residential & floodplain	Former Hospital / 30 years vacant and deteriorating / mixed-use commercial & residential development	VOCs, PCBs, asbestos, lead paint, mercury, petroleum
*According to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the contaminants listed in Table 1 pose a real threat to human health. Health threats include damage to skin, liver, kidneys, heart, spleen; nervous, respiratory, hormonal, blood, & immune systems; may also cause neurological damage, birth defects and cancer (www.atsdr.cdc.gov).		

These highest priority sites will meet La Margarita’s immediate needs, align with our revitalization plans, and redevelopment is imminent due to the **\$3M that has already been secured** from the municipality and private investors to redevelop properties in La Margarita (1.c.i). At the Former Supermarket and Hospital, increasing our low-income housing stock will help those hardest hit by job losses and natural disasters. Adding mixed-use commercial development on these sites will stimulate the economy, improve job availability, and encourage residents to work locally, keeping tax revenues in La Margarita. Improving our storm readiness by developing renewable energy and stormwater infrastructure on the Former Multifamily Residential Complex will better prepare us for natural disasters.

1.a.iii. Identifying Additional Sites: If grant funds remain after addressing target area/priority sites, we may choose to invest grant funding on properties outside La Margarita (but within the census tracts noted in Table 1 or census tract 9529) that become a priority during the grant period. Additional sites will be identified using the brownfield inventory and community/stakeholder input and will be prioritized based on how similar demographic and environmental justice conditions around additional sites are to La Margarita. Similar to La Margarita, demographics in census tract 9529 have significant environmental justice challenges and disadvantaged residents (92nd for projected flood risk, 97th percentile for low income, and 97th for poverty per EPAs CEJST; toxic releases to air (94th percentile) and proximity to Superfund sites (91st percentile) according to EJScreen).

1.b. Revitalization of the Target Area, i. Reuse Strategy & Alignment with Revitalization Plans: The 2019 Salinas Plan for Mitigation against Natural Hazards and our 2020 ASRL Profile and Plan (collectively referred to as Revitalization Plans) specify the redevelopment of existing vacant and underutilized urban space for low and moderate housing, modern commercial development, and climate adaptive infrastructure. While addressing economic and environmental concerns, we will also consider equity issues for residents, primarily low-income residents, elderly, and minorities. Consistent with our Revitalization Plans, we will diversify and modernize our employment sectors to minimize the impacts of future job cutbacks/closures and create a resilient infrastructure (e.g., solar and flood mitigation), housing, greenspace, and commercial development. This in turn will provide support services for the commercial base of the area and residential options desperately needed in La Margarita. An important need is the development and protection of public and private assets against the effects of climate change-induced weather events. This will encourage new business investment, add affordable housing, and help develop our community in a way that capitalizes on existing assets and infrastructure.

ASRL is requesting \$401,000 in funding, most of which will be used for Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) providing the initial, highest risk investment necessary for brownfields reuse. These funds will help us reach redevelopment goals outlined in our Revitalization Plans, providing essential information for determining remediation requirements, preparing redevelopment planning, and tackling environmental challenges associated with the highest priority sites within La Margarita (1.c.i). For example, plans are underway to redevelop the former Supermarket and Former Hospital into mixed-use commercial and 75 low-moderate income housing units, increasing our housing stock and leveraging \$2M in private investment plus an additional \$1M in public funds. The Abandoned Residential will provide solar energy and stormwater management while adding recreational greenspace and a sustainable environment for local plants and wildlife. Putting redevelopment resources in the target area will set an example and maximize the likelihood of growth and redevelopment in this

struggling area of our community. Short-term construction jobs will be created, and permanent jobs will be in place once the planned redevelopment of the priority sites is complete (1.b.ii).

1.b.ii Outcomes & Benefits of Reuse Strategy: **The full redevelopment of Table 1 priority sites will create 75 housing units, 120 construction jobs, 90 permanent jobs, and an estimated \$450K in additional annual tax revenue.** Redevelopment of the Industrial Site will remove environmental threats (VOCs, PAHs, metals, petroleum, etc.), eliminate blight, reduce crime (2.a.i), and become a viable asset to the community (150 office units and storage for emergency response supplies). The reuse of the Former Supermarket and Former Hospital will create over 40 housing and 10 commercial units, generating 50 temporary construction jobs, and critical neighborhood improvements which will mitigate environmental justice concerns while preventing displacement of low-income minority residents. EPA grants will help leverage the necessary funding for these reuse efforts, creating high value jobs, affordable housing, and municipal assets, which are all goals of our Revitalization Plans. New, energy efficient construction (LEED certified) on priority sites, including the use of solar, will reduce energy usage and operating costs where new construction is planned (e.g. Former Hospital and Supermarket). We will encourage/promote the reuse of existing buildings, infrastructure, building codes that advocate for energy/resource-efficient emission measures such as energy efficient lighting, low-flow faucets, and water saving strategies. Redevelopment will be consistent with the Puerto Rico “Renewable Energy Act” (Act 82, 2010) for stimulating the development of renewable energy and the Net Metering Program (Act No. 103, 2012), incentivizing the use of green energy infrastructure. Flooding caused by natural disasters has heightened our awareness of needed flood mitigation. Integration of bioswales, water diversion/harvesting, and infiltration trenches in reuse design will protect new investment in our community from the impacts of flooding induced by climate change. These measures combined with building codes integrating renewable energy use will better prepare us for future natural disasters.

EPAs investment in brownfields in La Margarita will help meet Justice40 goals by creating energy efficient, sustainable development, conserving and preserving greenfields, improving health by reducing exposure to contaminants, and turning idled brownfields into new hubs for economic growth. These accomplishments will deliver justice to disadvantaged residents (due to low income, high unemployment/underemployment, distressed neighborhoods, disproportionate exposure to environmental impacts from brownfields, etc.).

1.c. Strategy for Leveraging Resources, i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse: Target area redevelopment funding is secured for one priority site (Former Multifamily Residential Complex). **\$800K has been committed to demolish the structures once the environmental unknowns are eliminated. \$1.45M has also been secured for additional investment in the target area in non-brownfield properties.** ASRL is currently seeking \$1.5M from the US Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) and Small Business Administration to install solar fields on both the Industrial site property and Abandoned Residential site. ASRL is eligible for and will seek additional funding from the following sources: EPA Brownfield Clean-up and Multipurpose grants (\$5M/\$1M), US Dept. of Agriculture Grants (\$300K grants/\$1M in loans for community and economic development aid), CDBG, CDBG-DR (Disaster Relief) of which over \$7M is available to Salinas for demolition, infrastructure, and economic development of brownfields, Federal Emergency Mgmt. Agency (FEMA) (\$2M available for hurricane-related clean-up and redevelopment), US Economic Development Administration (USEDA), Dept. of Transportation (DOT) grants, and new funding opportunities/incentives available in the future. Funding from these resources are available for remediation, demolition, site development, public infrastructure improvements, streetscape improvements, building rehabilitation, job training, etc., to encourage and complete our redevelopment strategies. Army Corps of Engineers resources will be used to improve the flood control measures on the Nigua River, Dept. of Transportation to make road improvements in La Margarita, and the USED A to incentivize job creation. Should EPA funds be awarded for environmental assessment, the EPA grant funding qualifies as required match to CDBG-DR, FEMA, and other funding discussed above, further leveraging resources for brownfields redevelopment. Additionally, some funding sources require environmental assessment prior to becoming available and would be unlocked with the use of EPA assessment funds on the properties.

We will also seek funds from the Puerto Rico Economic Incentives Act and the Municipality of Salinas which will be used to encourage investment and development of manufacturing and commercial businesses, which are planned for some of our brownfields. We will market brownfields as excellent tax

shelters under Opportunity Zone (OZ) tax incentives, attracting private funds in our low-income areas. We are negotiating with the municipality to receive transfer of ownership of properties, as we have done before, so we may then negotiate with developers to help leverage reuse. Using EPA funding for the initial high-risk environmental assessment of these sites, brownfield redevelopment will be successful. As properties are assessed, we will work in partnership with many agencies and entities (Municipality of Salinas, HUD, FEMA, PR Dept. of Housing, PR Dept. of Economic Development & Commerce, etc.) to fill in funding gaps such as demolition funding and redevelopment incentives, ensuring successful redevelopment. A detailed funding plan will be developed based on individual status and eligibility for each brownfield site as assessment projects are realized. Other funding noted above will also be sought as it becomes available. These funds coupled with the EPA Assessment Grant will enable us to realize and document revitalization within the next 2-4 years.

1.c.ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure: Our Revitalization Plans' land use goals emphasize infill reuse and rehab before additional land is considered for development. Modern utility infrastructure is available in the target area (3-phase electricity, natural gas, city water and sewer, telephone, and fiber optic service). Power lines and roads have been repaired or made more resilient since severe weather events like hurricanes and is robust enough to handle the added capacity required by the planned reuses and will utilize existing services and infrastructure (roads, curb cuts, on/off-street parking, & nearby utilities), reducing site reuse costs. With reuse including residential, commercial, and new stormwater management and energy production, existing infrastructure will allow access to new development, enabling residents to work and live in the same neighborhood with reduced risk of flooding and lower energy costs. For example, existing infrastructure currently servicing the Former Supermarket and Hospital has adequate service to support the mixed-use commercial/affordable housing planned for the site. The solar projects planned for the Industrial Site and abandoned residential will be easily tied into the power grid with existing energy transmission infrastructure adjoining the site. If additional infrastructure is needed, we will use a combination of CDBG, US Dept. of Transportation Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant program, the Infrastructure and Jobs Act, commonwealth funding (when available), and FEMA funds.

2. Community Need and Community Engagement, a. Community Need, i. The Community's Need for Funding: ASRL does not have the funds for site assessments in our budgets. The only available resource to address brownfield redevelopment is federal funding. A large portion of our residents are low income, with a **MHI of \$19,859 (less than 30% of the US), and 49.6% of La Margarita residents fall below the poverty line** (2021 ACS) (see 2.a.ii), making investment in our brownfields an impossibility. After over 15 years of setbacks and economic decline, we have fewer jobs, reduced tax revenues, damaged municipal buildings and infrastructure, and limited local government resources. We estimate the tax losses due to disinvestment in Salinas to be \$1.5M annually over the past decade. Brownfield sites add to the financial burden borne by residents, suppressing residential property values, adding to municipal expenditures through reduced tax base, and additional public safety services to brownfield sites for criminal activity as indicated by the doubled crime rate in La Margarita compared to Salinas as a whole. Because of the 15-year long recession and destructive hurricanes, the territorial government has no funds for brownfield redevelopment. Moreover, local governments in PR don't have funding resources available to local governments on the mainland (e.g. Tax Increment Financing). Incentivizing redevelopment through payment of environmental due diligence is attractive to developers, but we have no tools at a local or territorial level. Reuse of priority sites would gain momentum with EPA funding.

2.a.ii. Threats to Sensitive Population, (1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations: Our community's most sensitive populations (low-income residents, children & elderly (especially those in poverty) (Table 2), live in and around often unsecured La Margarita Brownfield sites and risk exposure to toxic chemicals, asbestos, soil and groundwater contamination, and unsafe structures. Contaminants such as metals, petroleum, VOCs, SVOCs, PAHs, PCBs, glycols, lead paint, and asbestos are potentially causing harm to our sensitive populations. Over 70% of houses in La Margarita were constructed before 1980, making them much more likely to contain lead-based paint, a significant threat to young children and pregnant women. Recently, EPA conducted a risk assessment to evaluate the impact of ethylene oxide releases from a neighboring industrial site, which identified elevated risk of cancer in the target area with the most at risk living in properties directly adjoining the site. The former Industrial Site is less than ¼ of a mile from two schools, introducing health threats from VOCs, PAHs, metals, asbestos, lead

paint, PCBs, and petroleum to a large group of children (highly sensitive to contaminant exposure). **Three of our priority sites, are located adjacent to the Nigua River and are potentially impacted**

Table 2	US ¹	PR ¹	La Margarita ¹
Median Household Income	\$69,021	\$21,963	\$19,859
Percent Minority	40.6%	99.1%	100%
Individuals Living in Poverty	12.6%	42.7%	49.6%
Children Living in Poverty	17.0%	56.3%	76.8%
Elderly Living in Poverty	9.6%	38.5%	29.3%
¹ Stats from 2021 ACS			

with VOCs, PAHs, metals, petroleum, asbestos, and other contaminants known to cause cancer and infant mortality which are experienced by ASRL’s residents at a higher rate than the nation (2.a.ii(2)). The proximity of brownfields to low-income neighborhoods in our target area drives down housing values, suppresses commercial

investment, and limits residents’ access to adequate employment, resulting in a distinct disadvantage to La Margarita residents with no real relief in sight. This grant will help our community better understand the environmental conditions at our brownfields and help reduce the risk of exposure, eliminate sources of contamination, improve the ecological health of our community, and incorporate livability and equitable development principles. ASRL has worked to educate residents in resiliency, administer climate-disaster response supplies, and distribute basic needs to our community due to unexpected emergencies. Per our Revitalization Plans, we will improve natural disaster resiliency for our residents, provide basic needs in the face of rising climate-change-related hurricanes and flooding, and provide safer living and recreational opportunities for the elderly, one of our most underserved populations. These redevelopment activities will encourage people to return to ASRL to participate in and benefit from the reconstruction of our community. This, in turn, will strengthen La Margarita, provide social and environmental justice to residents, and create more development opportunities.

2.a.ii(2) Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions: La Margarita has high incidences of various cancers and low birthweight. Brownfield properties such as the Industrial Site are potentially impacted by metals contamination. Studies on the health effects of exposure to metals has been linked to higher incidences of leukemia, which is 22% higher in Salinas than PR. Sites such as the Former Hospital and the Former Supermarket are known or believed to be contaminated with petroleum, which is known to affect the liver. Liver cancer incidence in Salinas is over 68% higher than in PR (PR Cancer Registry 2019). 69% of the housing stock in the municipality was built prior to 1980 (2021 ACS), and older homes are a greater risk for high lead levels from paint. Likewise, mercury, lead, and other metals, as well as VOCs, PAHs, and petroleum constituents are believed to be present on priority sites. These are known to be a threat to unborn children and infants, and the infant mortality rate and low birthweight rate in PR are 25% and 22% higher than the US according to the CDC. The cumulative effects of these sites likely contribute to the adverse health conditions impacting our residents. Currently, there are 44 properties in the municipality with environmental records in EPA’s EnviroFacts database. **Identification and removal of environmental contaminants at brownfields in our community will reduce exposure of our residents, which will help to reduce the disproportionate incidences of disease and other poor health outcomes that these residents currently experience.**

2.a.ii(3) Environmental Justice (a) Identification of Environmental Justice Issues: The public health impact from target area brownfield properties, industrial operations, and storm related sewage backflow into homes, and their proximity to impoverished and minority residents has disproportionately exposed them to environmental pollutants, resulting in an inability to maintain their health and wellbeing. The EPA’s EJScreen tool indicates that La Margarita residents (a disadvantaged community, as defined by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool - CEJST) are in the 98th and 99th percentile for Air Toxics Cancer Risk exposure, 82nd and 91st for lead paint, 70th and 94th for traffic proximity, 96th flood risk, and 40th and 90th percentile for Superfund proximity compared to PR and US. These conditions have a direct impact on the health, prosperity, and wellbeing of La Margarita residents, as evidenced by their poor health (2.a.ii(2)), poverty status (2.a.ii(1)), exposure to environmental contaminants, etc. **All La Margarita priority sites in 1.a.ii are located within a disadvantaged CEJST census tract.**

2.a.ii(3)(b) Advancing Environmental Justice: Brownfield assessment, cleanup, and reuse strategies will improve the welfare of our residents by identifying and eliminating the health risk they pose. The EPA grant will play an important role in this, reducing threats by funding environmental investigations needed to trigger stalled cleanup and end disinvestment in La Margarita. Development of stormwater controls and recreational space in the Former Multifamily Residential site will help manage and prevent

wastewater system flooding and create a recreational space for elderly residents of the community. This will, in turn, reduce the need for emergency response efforts, prevent infrastructure repair costs, mitigate the impact of increasing weather-related catastrophes, and reduce risk of contamination and disease. An emergency response center planned at the Industrial Site will serve as a resilient commercial and storage hub, while remediation will mitigate exposure to toxins in the surrounding areas. New jobs in the target area will create gainful employment for residents. Increased employment, higher wages, and new development on brownfield properties will create a sense of pride and ownership of the neighborhood, and a cumulative advantage as new tax revenue is generated and reinvested in the target area. An EPA grant will help by funding environmental due diligence, a common stumbling block for land recycling in our community, improving the economic status and health of residents near brownfields. **Health indicators such as increased cancer, liver disease, and low birth weight (2.a.ii(2)) will no longer be influenced by environmental impacts caused by brownfields. This will be accomplished in areas where the disadvantaged, such as low income and minority populations are highly concentrated, supporting environmental justice goals.** To minimize the displacement of underserved residents and businesses, reuse plans will include affordable housing, competitive-wage jobs, and the attraction of potential consumers through commercial development. Residents will be involved in the planning through community engagement, where their input into brownfield reuse will be sought. Reuse plans will always preserve federally subsidized housing programs.

2.b. Community Engagement, i. Project Involvement & ii Project Roles: Several community partners have pledged a supporting role for our brownfields program (Table 3). This assemblage of community groups is best suited to engage at a grass roots level. They also have regional influence and local ties, maximizing the benefits to the project. A brownfield committee is being assembled from these and other entities, including residents, members of the public, to provide input into the inventory and site prioritization, reuse plans, economic development, and community engagement efforts, among others. The committee will meet 2-4 times/year to discuss our brownfields program.

Table3 – Project Partners and Roles

Name of organization/entity /group	Point of Contact (name, email & phone)	Specific involvement in the project or assistance provided
Municipality of Salinas	Jose Carlos Collazo profedsalinas@gmail.com / 787-243-8460	Municipal Government working directly with residents impacted by target area brownfields who will help with the negotiations of site access, provide cleanup planning & reuse input as well as funding for demolition
Cooperativa de Energia Las Margaritas	Jose Santiago Rivera [REDACTED] / 787-215-9478	Local grass-roots organization working directly with residents impacted by target area brownfields advocating for resilient, renewable energy systems; will provide funding and planning for the solar development project on the Industrial & Abandoned Res. sites
Dialogo Ambiental	Victor Alvarado [REDACTED] / 787-210-3984	Environmental Committee in Salinas who will perform health & contamination monitoring within the municipality
Pathstone	Sr. Albert Rivera arivera@pathstone.org / 787-579-6923	Non-profit & current EPA Job Training Grant recipient who will provide economic development & job creation expertise by training local residents as remediation and renewal energy construction professionals who can work on planned redevelopment projects
Departamento de Agricultura	Prof. Carmen J. Rodriguez carmenj.rodriguezmartinez@upr.edu / 939-452-3620	Agricultural Local Government Agency who performs and will assist with the community engagement activities including information dissemination and creating a space for input/feedback

2.b.iii. Incorporating Community Input: ASRL has a well-established culture of community involvement that we will maintain for this grant. ASRL already holds quarterly community meetings, which are well attended by area residents. These meetings will offer stakeholder engagement opportunities and updates on grant progress. **A total of 8-12 brownfield-focused public meetings will be held during the 4-year grant** to maintain stakeholder engagement and continue to gather input on site selection, prioritization, assessment needs, cleanup decisions, mitigation measures from the cleanup and redevelopment activity, and reuse planning. In Addition, 2-4 brownfield committee meetings will be held each year. Public outreach events advertised through municipal and partner websites, newspapers, radio, and social media (earned media and other low-cost/no-cost, or in-kind methods) will ensure that the entire community has an opportunity to provide input. When social distancing or other restrictions limit in-person community meetings, we will follow existing recommendations/guidance including

EPA's Office of Land and Emergency Management *Socially Distant Engagement Ideas for EPA Brownfield Grant Applicants* that discusses Virtual Tools (online meeting platforms, social media, QR codes, web page or email updates, etc.) and Non-Digital Approaches (phone or conference calls, flyers, newspaper ads, local TV, and radio, etc.). The community participants will be updated on advances throughout the grant and have the opportunity to share input through comment opportunities on municipal and partner websites. For residents with limited internet or cellular network access, paper surveys will be available at local businesses, enabling community input without access to digital resources. Because we have a large non-English speaking population, ASRL has multi-lingual staff to interpret presentations and translate documents in Spanish and English. We have already begun engaging target area residents, business owners, and community advocates to solicit their input regarding our brownfield project and will continue to do so during the grant period. A public meeting will be held in the second quarter of the grant period to discuss goals, planned activities, and a schedule for future community involvement. For subsequent meetings, personal invitations will be sent to residents directly impacted by priority sites, neighborhood groups, lenders, area businesses, and developers to maximize stakeholder engagement. We will contact regional developers to bring awareness of the reuse opportunities priority sites offer. When developers are identified, they will attend public meetings to share their redevelopment plans. ASRL staff will catalog stakeholder input for reference when determining assessment and redevelopment priorities. We will involve stakeholders in the decision-making process regarding prioritization, assessment, site marketing, cleanup planning, and feedback on reuse. We will evaluate stakeholder input against development goals and available resources, adopting feedback that feasibly meets these criteria.

3. Task Descriptions, Cost Estimates, & Measuring Progress, a. Description of Tasks/Activities &

Outputs: ASRL will begin activities immediately upon award confirmation, working to prepare a Work Plan approved by the EPA PM/PO. No subawards or participant support costs are planned. After the Cooperative Agreement period begins, ASRL and its QEP will complete the following tasks:

Task/Activity 1: Program Management, Training Support, Brownfield Inventory/Prioritization

i. Project Implementation: ASRL staff will travel to the PR Brownfields Week and national brownfields conferences, participate in calls, meetings, and correspondence between ASRL, QEP, EPA, etc. to manage the grant's Cooperative Agreement. We will complete Quarterly, DBE, Annual reports, and ACRES database entries, and will track contractor costs, comparing to the budget, expenditures, project progress, and milestones to ensure the timely expenditure of funds within the 4-year project period. ASRL, with QEP support, will continue to develop a brownfield inventory and will use it as a tool to help accomplish brownfield reuse goals. Inventoried sites will be prioritized based on the following criteria, as discussed with the stakeholders: 1) reuse potential, 2) potential benefit for environmental or human health and environmental justice (EJScreen and/or CEJST), and 3) community input. Additional sites will be identified by ASRL, community leaders, local governments, redevelopment investors, and through community outreach. Priority will be granted to sites within areas in Salinas identified as disadvantaged by EJScreen and/or CEJST and sites near residential areas that pose health risks to underserved communities. Priority will also be considered for sites that have a higher chance of redevelopment and a greater economic impact potential within our target area.

ii. Schedule: QEP will be selected through a competitive bidding process (compliant with federal procurement regulations - 2 CFR 200.317 - 200.326 and "Brownfield Grants: Guidance on Competitively Procuring a Contractor – May 2023") before Cooperative Agreement begins; correspondence will occur at least monthly (more frequently as specific project activities require) throughout the grant; update and prioritize brownfield inventory the first 2 quarters, then as necessary for the remainder of the grant; ACRES updates will be conducted at least quarterly throughout the grant.

iii. Task/Activity Leads: ASRL & QEP

iv. Outputs: Travel-ASRL staff to regional/national brownfields conferences/meetings; prioritized inventory; project performance reports: 16 Quarterly Reports, ACRES entries, 4 DBE reports, 4 annual financial reports, etc.; calls, meetings, and correspondence between ASRL, QEP, EPA, etc. to manage the grant's Cooperative Agreement.

Task/Activity 2: Environmental Investigation

i. Project Implementation: Prior to applying for site eligibility, we will prepare and execute an access agreement for each site being considered. Eligibility determinations will be completed under this task,

and the QEP will complete Phase I ESAs activities on sites selected by ASRL. All Phase I ESAs will be conducted by/in accordance with the applicable ASTM standard (E1527-21) and the All-Appropriate Inquiry (AAI) rule. Areas of focus will include those already identified as priority sites listed in Table 1. The QEP will prepare a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) as well as Sampling & Analysis Plans (SAP) for EPA approval and Health & Safety Plans (HASP). Once approved, the QEP, directed by ASRL, will complete Phase II ESAs based on environmental conditions identified in the Phase I ESAs.

ii. Schedule: Obtain site access, request eligibility determinations & finalize site access to initial sites for investigation-early 2nd Quarter of Grant period; Begin Phase I ESAs-2nd Quarter of Grant period; Submit QAPP to EPA for review/approval; QAPP approval & Phase II ESAs begin-3rd Quarter of Grant period; all Phase I ESAs completed-end of 15th Quarter of Grant period; all Phase II ESAs completed, and final contractor invoices submitted-45 days before end of grant period.

iii. Task/activity Leads: ASRL & QEP

iv. Outputs: 9 Phase I ESAs; QAPP and SAP/HASP; estimated 6-10 Phase II ESAs.

Task/Activity 3: Clean-up & Reuse Planning:

i. Project Implementation: The QEP, directed by the ASRL, will prepare site-specific cleanup plans/documents, including: Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives, remediation plans, site closure letter requests, and clean-up/reuse funding development (1.c.i). A collaborative and intensive design/reuse session will be held for a well-rounded redevelopment plan encompassing priority sites. This activity will host the participation of architects, urban planners, environmental experts, community members, and developers.

ii. Schedule: Prepared after Phase I and II ESAs are complete, contamination is present, and cleanup is even necessary. Task 3 activities will continue throughout the grant period.

iii. Task/activity Leads: ASRL & QEP

iv. Outputs: 6 cleanup planning and/or reuse documents and 1 design charrette/visioning session

Task/Activity 4: Community Outreach & Involvement:

i. Project Implementation: 8-12 public meetings will be held during the grant period to update the community on ESA progress and seek public input/involvement. Print and mail material for project/site information and marketing documents will also be funded under this task. ASRL will complete this task, assisted by the QEP, who will manage the technical aspects of the community outreach program and will attend/participate in outreach events. Social media outlets and other online media will be developed/maintained, and outreach efforts will inform the public on the progress of investigation/cleanup planning activities and provide marketing resources for future development. Additional sites will be identified during public community outreach meetings. These meetings will be focused on public engagement including what sites the community views as a priority for redevelopment. Priority will be granted to sites identified by underserved communities, especially when those sites are within areas identified as disadvantaged by the EJSscreen and/or CEJST.

ii. Schedule: 2-4 brownfield committee meetings planned per year and 2-3 public meetings planned per year with the 1st planned for the 2nd Quarter of the grant period.

iii. Task/activity Leads: ASRL & QEP

iv. Outputs: 8-12 public meetings to update the community on the brownfield assessment progress and seek public input and involvement; 8-16 brownfield committee meetings to provide input into the inventory and site prioritization, reuse plans, economic development, and community engagement efforts; supplies: printed flyers, advertising, postage, etc.

We will work diligently to assure startup activities are completed per the tasks and schedule above. ASRL will allocate all grant funds to project properties before the final quarter of the grant period to assure that grant task activities are completed before the end of the 4-year Cooperative Agreement contract. Because there is a high demand for assessments and site access has already been obtained for some of the highest priority sites in Table 1 (Former Supermarket and Former Multifamily Residential Complex), it is likely that funds will be spent prior to the end date. We are proactively communicating with representatives of privately-owned brownfields to gain access and resolve issues in anticipation of this grant funding as well as non-grant funded assessment activities. Such communication initiates the process for eventual property transfer and redevelopment. These discussions create a positive dialog between property owners, local government, and impacted citizens.

3.b. Cost Estimates: The costs outlined in Table 4 were developed anticipating tasks necessary to

efficiently identify, characterize, and plan for the remediation of the priority sites listed in Table 1. Please note, ASRL will allocate \$314,200 (79% of total grant funds) to Phase I and II ESAs.

Table 4 Budget	Budget Categories ¹	1. Program Mgmt, Training Support, Inv / Prioritization	2.Phase I / II ESAs	3. Clean-up / Reuse Planning	4. Community Outreach & Involvement	Budget Category Total
DIRECT COSTS	Personnel	3,000			\$2,000	\$5,000
	Travel	\$4,000				\$4,000
	Supplies				\$400	\$400
	Contractual ²	\$21,600	\$314,200	\$45,000	\$10,800	\$391,600
TOTAL BUDGET		\$28,600	\$314,200	\$45,000	\$13,200	\$401,000

¹Table 4 only includes budget categories with costs. ²In accordance with Federal, State, and local procurement regulations.

Grant tasks will be completed at the anticipated costs with the following anticipated outputs/outcomes:

1. Program Management & Training Support, Inventory/Prioritization: \$28,600 – **Personnel:**

Program management activities – approx. 60 hours \$50/hr. = \$3,000, **Travel:** Attend National Brownfield Conf.: airfare x 2 @ \$1,400, 2 rooms, 3 nights lodging @ \$1,700, meals @ \$650, ground transportation @ \$250 = \$4,000, Municipality staff time for administering the grant will be provided as in-kind support, **Contractual:** total \$21,600, includes approx. 125 hrs. \$80/hr. = \$10,000 for inventory, & approx. 145 hours \$80/hr. = \$11,600 for program mgmt.

2. Env. Investigation: \$314,200 – **Contractual:** 9 Phase I ESAs at an average cost of \$3,800 each = \$34,200, & 6-8 Phase II ESAs at an estimated cost of \$35,000-\$45,000 (depending on site complexity/environmental conditions) = \$280,000 (@ \$40,000 average cost). Though our budget will support 9 Phase I's and 6-8 Phase II ESAs, we understand that large sites may need more investment requiring us to realign the budget during the grant period. Areas of focus will include those already determined in the inventories as priority sites listed in 1.a.ii.

3. Clean-up & Reuse Planning: \$45,000 – **Contractual:** 6 ABCAs/clean-up plans expected to cost \$5,000 each = \$30,000. 1 design charrette/visioning session = \$15,000

4. Community Outreach & Involvement: \$13,200 – **Personnel:** Community outreach activities – approx. 40 hours \$50/hr. = \$2,000, **Supplies:** printed flyers, advertising, grant fact sheets, outreach visual aids, advertising, postage, etc. = \$400, **Contractual:** approx. 135 hours at an estimated \$80/hr. = \$10,800.

3.c. Plans to Measure & Evaluate Environmental Progress & Results: We will track, measure, and evaluate progress through meeting minutes, Quarterly and Annual Financial Reports, quarterly review/analysis of grant performance, ACRES entries, and completion of Work Plan tasks. If planned outputs/outcomes are not achieved or milestones/project schedule outlined in 3.a are not being met, we will create a corrective action plan to identify deficiencies and make appropriate adjustments to achieve anticipated outputs on schedule. The Assessment Grant will have the following measurable outcomes: sites/acreage assessed, jobs created/retained, redevelopment complete, number of parcels cleaned up/redeveloped, acreage made ready for greenspace/recreation, and leveraged monies. These and other statistics will be included in Quarterly Reports and ACRES submittals as data becomes available, which will allow the EPA to better evaluate and highlight the grant program outcomes. At the close of the grant, ASRL staff will provide a final report to the EPA and our residents summarizing project outputs and outcomes. After evaluation of sites is done, it is in our community's best interest that redevelopment happens, and as such, close monitoring of subsequent actions will be done diligently. Outputs and outcomes following the close of the grant will be uploaded to EPA's ACRES page for continued monitoring of the program's success.

4. Programmatic Capability & Past Performance, a. Programmatic Capability, i. Organizational Capacity, ii. Organizational Structure & iii Description of Key Staff:

ASRL's grant management staff will handle most programmatic management activities and will seek assistance from a QEP, as needed. This office is currently managing over \$300K in annual funds for operations and to establish solar-powered energy systems, addressing resilience needs, and emergency response resource distribution in the community. ASRL has the technical, financial, and administrative ability in place to implement this grant project successfully. Mrs. Wanda J. Rios Colorado, President will serve as the Project Manager. Mrs. Colorado has been with ASRL since its inception and manages the organization. She has a bachelor's degree in biology and administration. She has extensive experience managing the budgets of organizations including her Army platoon and the Municipality of Salina's Post Office. She has over 16 years of experience administrating as much as \$500K in assistance program budgets, supervising

personnel, and managing projects. A community leader of the municipality since 2014, she has worked as a mediator between agencies, local government, and the needs of the community. Mrs. Colorado will be assisted by Mrs. Elsa Modesto Colon. Mrs. Modesto has managed federal programs for over 34 years including community and social impact funding. She managed over \$4.5M in funds, supervised over 3K volunteers, and generated reports and documents for federal program funding. ASRL's accountant, Moraima Colon Negron will serve as the Grant Financial Manager and will be responsible for accounting and financial reporting. With over 18 years of experience as a fiscal agent in Center San Francisco, Ponce, she has provided these services on many other programs benefiting ASRL. Staff assigned to this project have all worked with ASRL for at least 6 years, including prior to ASRL receiving 501(c)(3) status. This team will be supported by municipal departments including finance, utilities, engineering, the legal department, and the office of the mayor.

4.a.iv. Acquiring Additional Resources: The aforementioned staff will oversee the QEP procurement process as well as the acquisition of additional resources. Through a competitive bidding/procurement process, we will select a QEP according to federal procurement regulations (2 CFR 200.317 through 200.326 and "Brownfield Grants: Guidance on Competitively Procuring a Contractor – May 2023") and experience conducting environmental investigation and working with the PR Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER). We will make every effort to contract with Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (women and/or minority owned) and consultants/contractors who employ disadvantaged people, when possible, and we will require our QEP to make every effort to do the same. ASRL will also engage with Invest in Puerto Rico, a nonprofit investment promotion organization created by law, via Act 13–2017 to increase investment in the region. The team and execution plan outlined above will ensure timely and successful expenditure of funds within the 4-year project. As appropriate, we will utilize visioning sessions and other assistance/advice offered by the Technical Assistance for Brownfields (Region 2 TAB) to maximize the incorporation of community input.

We will work with the PR Small Business Administration (PRsBA) to identify small businesses in the area with strong labor practices who have been vetted by the PRsBA as qualified to perform remediation activities and other contracted services. We will invite the vetted contractors through the competitive bidding process noted above. We will also work with Pathstone (see 2.b.iii) to link our community members to job opportunities related to the investigation, remediation, redevelopment, and ultimate reuse of brownfields.

4.b. Past Performance & Accomplishments, ii. Has Not Received an EPA Brownfields Grant but has Received Other Federal or Non-Federal Assistance Agreements (1) Purpose and Accomplishments:

ASRL was formally established three years ago, and in that short time, we have positioned ourselves as an influential and effective local nonprofit. ASRL received \$90K from Salinas in 2020 and \$180K from the DOE for the development of solar-powered energy systems in the community. Design and execution of a pilot program, providing 7 homes with fully equipped solar power and energy storage systems and over 50 residences with energy-efficient systems. This successful program was the key to unlocking a third phase of DOE funding totaling \$150K. We also received approximately \$70K in assistance from various donations and charities which supported approximately 300 families with food, financial support and improvements to our community center. Though ASRL is a relatively new organization, our management and operations team has extensive experience managing assistance agreements totaling over \$15M prior to our work at ASRL. Our staff's past experience outlined in 4.a.ii above coupled with our accomplishments with assistance agreements received in the initial three years since ASRL was established, well positions us to successfully complete all tasks outlined in section 3.a and 3.b above.

4.b.i.(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements: All funding assistance agreement terms and conditions were met for the above projects. They have successfully established ASRL as an effective 501(c)(3) and expanded the services ASRL provides in the community. **All assistance agreement outputs/outcomes above were achieved, all reports (quarterly progress, annual, and financial) were completed in a timely manner, and no corrective measures were needed.** ASRL was fully compliant with the terms and conditions of these agreements. ASRL is fully committed to complying with the terms and conditions for this grant's Cooperative Agreement.

III.B. Threshold Criteria for Assessment Grants

III.B.1 Applicant Eligibility

Asociación de Residentes de La Margarita (ASRL) (applicant) is a non-profit organization with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status (documentation attached). The applicant is therefore eligible to apply for and receive U.S. EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant funding.

III.B.2 Community Involvement

Involving our community and soliciting feedback regarding Brownfields activities and redevelopment plans are essential to our community's Brownfields program's success. Communication is a two-way process, and our ultimate goal is to keep the community informed and involved so they remain aware of potential concerns, questions and solutions. 8 to 12 outreach events (2-3 per yr.) will be held throughout the grant period to maintain stakeholder engagement and continue to gather public input on site selection and prioritization, assessment needs, cleanup decisions, mitigation measures from cleanup/redevelopment activity, and reuse planning. Outreach events, open to the general public, will be advertised through municipal and partner websites, local papers, radio, and social media platforms (earned media and other low-cost, no-cost or in-kind methods) ensuring that the entire community has an opportunity to provide input. When social distancing or other restrictions limit in-person community meetings, we will follow existing recommendations/guidance including EPA's Office of Land and Emergency *Management Socially Distant Engagement Ideas for EPA Brownfield Grant Applicants* that discusses Virtual Tools (online meeting platforms, social media, QR codes, web page or email updates, etc.) and Non-Digital Approaches (phone or conference calls, flyers, newspaper ads, local TV, and radio, etc.). See Section IV.E.2.b. of the Narrative/Ranking Criteria for further information.

III.B.3 Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds

This criterion is not applicable as ASRL is not a current EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant recipient.

III.B.4 Contractors and Named Subrecipients

ASRL has not procured/named any contractors or subrecipients.