

## CLAY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

COMMISSIONERS  
Bryan K. Allender  
Marty A. Heffner  
Paul R. Sinders

**Court House - Room 106  
609 East National Avenue  
Brazil, Indiana 47834**

November 13, 2023

Ashley Green  
US EPA Region 5  
77 West Jackson Boulevard, Mail Code LP-7J  
Chicago, IL 60604-3507

RE: Application for a US EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant (FY24) Clay County,  
Indiana

Dear Ms. Green,

Clay County, Indiana, appreciates this opportunity to submit the enclosed application to the US EPA for a combined \$400,000 hazardous substances/petroleum Brownfields Community-wide Assessment Grant. Funding will support a coordinated effort by the County and community stakeholders and residents to assess and eventually cleanup and reuse our local brownfield sites.

- 1) Applicant Identification:  
Clay County Commissioners  
609 E National Ave., Suite 105  
Brazil, IN 47834
- 2) Funding Requested:
  - a) Assessment: Community-wide
  - b) Federal Funds Requested: \$400,000
- 3) Location:  
Clay County, Indiana
- 4) Target Area and Priority Site Information:
  - Brazil, Clay City, and Knightsville
  - Former Motor Court – 1350 East US Highway 40, Knightsville
  - Ceres Solutions Cooperative – 202 South Walnut St., Brazil
  - Downtown Buildings – Main Street (US 59), Clay City
- 5) Project Director and Highest Ranking Elected Official:  
Marty Heffner, Clay County Commissioner President  
609 E National Ave., Suite 105  
Brazil, IN 47834  
Phone: 812-446-5500  
Email: [heffnerm@frontier.com](mailto:heffnerm@frontier.com)
- 6) Population:
  - 25,637 (Clay County); 7,935 (Brazil); 488 (Knightsville); 1,189 (Clay City)

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7) Other Factors:

Other Factor	Page #
Community population is 10,000 or less.	1, 4
Applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian tribe or United States territory.	
The priority sites are impacted by mine-scarred land.	1, 4, 5, 6
The priority site(s) is adjacent to a body of water	1, 6
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain	1
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy-efficient measures.	2, 3
The proposed project will improve local climate adaptation/mitigation capacity and resilience to protect residents and community investments.	3
At least 30% of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities for priority site(s) within the target area(s).	8, 9
The target area(s) is located within a community in which a coal-fires power plant has recently closed.	

- 8) Letter from State is attached
- 9) Releasing Copies of Applications:  
     Not applicable

We thank you in advance for considering our grant application. If you have any questions or require clarification on elements of this proposal, please call me at (812) 446-5500.

Sincerely,



Marty Heffner  
 County Commissioner President

# Letter from the State



# INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

*We Protect Hoosiers and Our Environment.*

100 N. Senate Avenue • Indianapolis, IN 46204

(800) 451-6027 • (317) 232-8603 • [www.idem.IN.gov](http://www.idem.IN.gov)

**Eric J. Holcomb**  
*Governor*

**Brian C. Rockensuess**  
*Commissioner*

November 3, 2023

Mr. Marty Heffner, Commissioner President  
Clay County Commissioners  
609 E. National Avenue, Suite 105  
Brazil, Indiana 47834

Re: IDEM Acknowledgement Letter  
U.S. E.P.A. Brownfields Grant Proposal  
Community-Wide Assessment  
Brazil, Clay City, and Knightsville  
Clay County

Dear Mr. Heffner:

This letter is provided in support of the Clay County Commissioners (County Commissioners) proposal to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) for Brownfields Community-Wide Assessment Grant funding. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) acknowledges that the County Commissioners are requesting \$400,000 for hazardous substances and/or petroleum assessment.

IDEM understands that the County Commissioners has demonstrated its commitment to redeveloping brownfields by taking advantage of financial and technical assistance offered through the Indiana Brownfields Program (Program) and that the County Commissioners, based on the information it has provided with its request, believes it has the capability to perform the proposed grant-funded activities. The requested assessment grant funding will help the County Commissioners with community outreach, brownfields site inventory and prioritization, cleanup planning, and will primarily be used to fund Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments, including asbestos, and lead-based paint surveys.

The grant, if awarded, will address sites in areas of the County with environmental justice issues or those areas identified by the community that are a priority for revitalization and redevelopment. Redevelopment plans for the target sites/areas include: Brazil site (Ceres Solutions): the County would like to use grant funds to complete master planning activities for this site in order to develop into a retail and restaurant destination within the historical downtown area; Clay City has many dilapidated and vacant downtown structures that need environmental assessments and the County plans to work with Clay City USA, local grassroots organization, to determine best use future plans for revitalization of this

downtown area; the Knightsville property has an interested developer who would like to redevelop this site as multi-family affordable homes but the site has a potential for underground storage tanks and needs an environmental assessments. These sites are located within close proximity to residential homes.

Since the Clay County Commissioners have not yet selected/indicated the specific sites that will benefit from U.S. EPA brownfield grant funding, IDEM cannot make site-specific eligibility determinations at this time. However, should the County Commissioners be awarded the requested grant funding, the Program will work together with U.S. EPA and the Commissioners to determine site eligibility once they have established the sites intended for funding.

IDEM has worked with the Clay County Commissioners on several projects. IDEM recognizes that the County Commissioners are committed to working with the Program and/or the IDEM Voluntary Remediation Program for technical oversight of grant-funded site activities as applicable during the grant project period. The Program and IDEM are committed to continuing to support brownfield redevelopment within Clay County by providing technical and other assistance through the Program.

Based on the information submitted, IDEM considers the Clay County Commissioners an excellent candidate to receive U.S. EPA assessment grant funding to continue its brownfields redevelopment efforts, which support Indiana's brownfields initiative. IDEM looks forward to continuing its partnership with Clay County Commissioners and its constituent communities. For further assistance, please contact John Morris of the Indiana Brownfields Program directly at (317) 234-0235 and at [jmorris@ifa.in.gov](mailto:jmorris@ifa.in.gov).

Sincerely,



Andrea Robertson Habeck  
Technical Review Coordinator  
Indiana Brownfields Program

ARH/JTM

cc: (via electronic transmission)  
Julie Schilling, V3 Companies

Narrative

***1. Project Area Description and Plans for Revitalization; 1.a. Target Area and Brownfields; i. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area:*** Clay County, a historic gem in the Crossroads of America, is ripe for a transformative journey. Our strategic location along key arteries such as US 40 (National Road), Interstate 70, and vital rail networks has been a catalyst for growth since our establishment in 1825. The county's early settlements thrived due to coal and clay mining industries and their locations near major railways and roadways. This brought about iron and steel mills, fostering a surge in population and local economic growth. However, by the 1890s, these mills relocated to East Chicago, causing an economic downturn in Clay County. While the county continued to capitalize on its clay and coal resources, boosting the local economy, a majority of the mines were closed by the mid-1900s. The economic downturn forced many businesses to close, leaving hundreds unemployed. Yet, in the heart of our county, Brazil, industries like Great Dane Trailers and Hancore Inc. have taken root, showcasing our resilience.

However, our advancement is curtailed by the shadows of our industrial past: abandoned mines and neglected properties. These brownfields are not just eyesores; they are barriers to progress. Except for Brazil, our communities have modest populations under 1,000 residents and are particularly vulnerable, lacking the resources to combat these blights on their own. The County Commissioners, guardians of our collective well-being, have made three past attempts to secure an EPA Assessment Grant to no avail. Without these vital funds, our inventory of brownfields has languished, growing only in number and neglect. Our resolve, though, remains steadfast. We prioritize Brazil, Clay City, and Harmony/Knightsville, where the brownfield presence is most acute. Additional resources will be judiciously allocated across the county to other sites primed for redevelopment.

Amidst this backdrop of need, Clay County has been fortunate to receive \$5 million in ARPA funding and \$500,000 from OCRA for essential utility and infrastructure improvements. We believe that with the strategic application of EPA grant funds, in concert with these financial injections, we can catalyze new development, beckon investors, and revitalize our communities. This is more than redevelopment; it is a rebirth of opportunity, promising affordable housing, quality employment, and a magnet for new residents, businesses, and visitors. This investment is the key to unlocking Clay County's full potential, turning brownfield sites into cornerstones of a vibrant future.

***ii. Description of the Priority Brownfield Sites:*** County officials have been compiling a county-wide brownfields inventory for a decade and currently the list stands in excess of 30 sites still in need of funding. Of this extensive list, we selected three sites/areas in the communities that are most in need with the highest potential to negatively impact the health of nearby residents and the environment while having high development potential.

**Ceres Solutions, Brazil** – This former farm and fuel supply facility consists of nine parcels totaling over 5-acres and is located within a FEMA Zone AE Floodway. Residential neighborhoods are adjacent to the south and east and groundwater likely flows towards Harms Run, adjacent to the southeast. Ten buildings and five grain elevators are located on this gravel covered site with at least 9 aboveground storage tanks, capacities ranging from 3,000-gallon to 40,000-gallon, some of which may contain highly reactive ammonia. This facility stored and dispensed chemicals, pesticides, and fertilizers. The site also has an apparent fuel station with two dispensers and a potential exists for underground storage tanks. Potential contaminants could be impacting the adjacent residential neighborhood and Harms Run. This site is a high priority for commercial and restaurant space because of its downtown location near our two main thoroughfares, State Road 59 and the National Road (US 40).

**Downtown Main Street, Clay City** – Known as the Mayberry of the Midwest, Clay City is approximately 346 acres and is located a short drive north from the Shakamak State Park. Approximately 60% of the buildings located along our downtown Main Street are in severe disrepair. They are unsecured, with collapsed roofs, potentially allowing asbestos fibers to be released to the environment and adjacent residential properties. These buildings housed drycleaners, auto parts stores, and various commercial retailers. A local grassroots organization, Clay City USA Foundation, developed a Downtown Revitalization Plan in 2020 with goals to attract businesses and unique shops and to convert unused open space into small parks and gathering places.

**Former Motor Court, US 40 East, Knightsville** – Formerly used as a motor court with on-site fueling operations, this 5-acre site has been abandoned and vacant for decades. The site is located along the highly

traveled National Road and is adjacent to residential homes on all sides. Multiple suspected unregistered USTs are on-site. A developer, who has previously redeveloped another brownfield in the county, is interested in this site for the construction of a plaza-based, energy-efficient multi-family housing development with greenspace.

**Known or potential contaminants of concern** at these sites include: asbestos containing materials (ACM), lead based paint (LBP), various metals, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). **Health effects of potential / known COCs:** Respiratory damage; asthma; damage to bone marrow, liver, kidneys and central nervous system; anemia; leukemia; lung and bladder cancers<sup>1</sup>. **Proximity to sensitive populations:** These sites are located in high density residential areas where children comprise 29% of the population and over 19% of the population is disabled and/or elderly<sup>2</sup>.

These sites were chosen as priorities because they are located along highly traveled corridors, gateways to our communities. They offer redevelopment opportunities that would beautify the entries into our downtown areas, helping to improve first impressions of visitors, and lending a sense of pride to our citizens. The investment to redevelop brownfields in our downtown historic districts, such as Brazil and Clay City, with mixed-use commercial assets and greenspace amenities will serve as examples of success, triggering further investment.

**iii. Identifying Additional Sites:** If grant funding remains after assessing eligible sites in our inventory, we will commit funding to request community and stakeholder input via social media outlets and public meetings to expand upon our current brownfield inventory and continue the prioritization process. Prioritization is based on the following criteria: imminent threat to human health or the environment, sites within the target areas, development goals and developer interest, property owner interest / site access attainability, and location within disadvantaged/underserved community. This grading metric is used to create a database to be overlain into our current Geographic Information System (GIS) and is color coded by priority level (high, medium, low) to quickly identify sites.

**1.b. Revitalization of the Target Area; i. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans:** Due to a lack of financial resources, many of our individual communities within the county do not have master planning documents; however, our regional/Clay City revitalization plans (Thrive 2023-2027 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs); Clay City USA Foundation 2019 Downtown Revitalization Plan) outline the importance of community investment, increased resiliency, and the creation of vibrant, desirable places to live. The CEDs recognizes the large number of brownfield sites within Clay County that are prime target areas for reuse, and it is the guiding resource for revitalization. The following revitalization goals highlighted by our community in our CEDs and Clay City Plan align directly with our priority sites reuse strategies: 1) continue placemaking efforts to draw residents and tourism to downtown destinations; 2) prioritize growth from within, further develop and enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem; 3) enhance quality of life through community beautification and improved amenities such as outdoor recreation opportunities; 4) recruit and involve residents and community organizations into active leadership roles in planning efforts; 5) identify, assess, and promote the redevelopment of brownfield sites; and 6) improve the availability and affordability of quality housing.

**Ceres Solutions** – Brazil’s goal is to first remove the environmental threat this site is posing to our nearby sensitive populations. Reuse planning for this site will be conducted with grant funding, if awarded, and will be focused on creating a community destination consisting of locally and/or community owned businesses with a central greenspace area. This plan aligns directly with the above CEDs goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

**Downtown Clay City** – The Clay City USA Foundation received OCRA funds to complete a Downtown Revitalization Plan in 2019. This plan, which incorporated community input, serves as a guide for reuse strategy within Clay City. Overarching goals of the revitalization plan include: create an entrepreneurial culture, attract unique shops and businesses, enhance overall appearance of downtown, establish a strong identity and sense of arrival, increase activity and patronage, and grow local partnerships and increase partner collaboration. Plans for this area include the formation of a multi-use trail to connect to the schools, Goshen Park, and the new Buell Walking Trail; conversion of unused open spaces into small parks and gathering places; and creating incentives

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<sup>1</sup> ATSDR, CDC, 2023

<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (most recent 5-year estimates)



for investment and business development to attract grocery stores, medical facilities, coffee shops and restaurants. These projects within downtown Clay City also align with the above CEDS goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

**Former Motor Court** – This site currently has the interest of a local developer, Emmert Property Management, who would like to purchase the property for the redevelopment of quality affordable multi-family housing. Emmert completed a similar development, Vanes Apartments, on a brownfield property assessed during the FY09 Brownfield Assessment grant in the City of Brazil, leveraging over \$2M. The plans for the Motor Court property are very similar to the Vanes 20-unit, energy-efficient complex and will provide much needed quality, affordable housing to our Knightsville, and nearby Brazil and Harmony residents. This project aligns directly with the above CEDS goals 3, 5, and 6.

**ii. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy:** Obtaining grant funding will allow the overdue assessment of brownfields in the county, identify risks and potential contaminant exposure pathways, and take steps to remediate or mitigate risks utilizing green remediation methodologies. In addition, environmental assessments will also help to position and facilitate cleanup and redevelopment that is otherwise hindered and will likely not materialize without this EPA funding. Our reuse strategies and their outcomes and benefits are as follows.

Site	Proposed Reuse	Outcomes	Benefits	Promotes Environmental Justice	Employs Sustainable Reuse Practices*	Recreational Property
<b>Ceres Solutions</b>	Mixed commercial and greenspace use	Creation of local jobs; additional tax revenue; assessment and remediation of property	Improved local economy, increased access to recreation and exercise opportunities, enhance quality of life, creation of local owned businesses	X	X	X
<b>Former Motor Court</b>	Multi-family affordable housing with park plaza	Upscale, affordable housing incorporating energy efficiency measures	Improve quality of place and life for sensitive populations, access to recreation opportunities; quality housing	X	X	X
<b>Downtown Clay City</b>	Community and locally owned businesses and small parks	Addition of local commerce, greenspace/trail, services (grocery/medical); removal of blight	Elimination of food desert; increase tax base / job growth; improve quality of place	X	X	X

\* Clay County encourages new and renovated structures to implement a whole-building energy efficiency approach that utilizes features such as: energy efficient windows, roofs and HVAC systems, high-efficiency water fixtures and toilets, continuous insulation, smart or LED lights, energy star appliances, etc.

\* Clay County and QEC ensures Green Remediation practices are utilized during assessment and remediation activities at brownfield sites (shut off vehicles/equipment when not in use; use of Geoprobe® direct push rig to reduce soil cuttings (IDW) and time on site; strategically planning and remediation: place trails, parking lots, or impervious caps over contaminated soils; reuse or recycle on-site construction debris).

These projects will improve local climate adaptation resilience by creating new greenspace, reducing carbon emissions, enhancing our trail network / encouraging green transportation, turning idled brownfields into new hubs for local economy growth, and creating energy-efficient and sustainable development. With Clay County being a predominantly rural area with a focus on agriculture, we plan to incorporate rain gardens, bioswales, urban forests and gardens into our parks plan. This improves our climate adaptation resilience while providing learning opportunities for our Future Farmers of America students.

**I.c. Strategy for Leveraging Resources; i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse:** Though the Commissioners have not been able to secure these grant funds for our communities in the last several attempts, we remained proactive and diligent in our efforts and, instead utilized thousands of dollars of funding from the Indiana Brownfield Program (IBP) and Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) OCRA. Funding from IBP has allowed us to slowly chip away at a few sites in our brownfield inventory through assessment and remediation. OCRA has provided the county funding for blight clearance (demo and cleanup), planning, and infrastructure upgrades. In this process, we have developed strong relationships with IBP and OCRA and are confident that funding will be provided by these entities for any sites assessed as part of this grant. The county and each community are eligible for other funding sources that they either currently have, and/or will continue to pursue and utilize. These resources include insurance cost recovery, OCRA funding, USDA funding, INDOT funding, IBP funding including the Phase 1 Site Assessment Initiative, Revolving Loan Fund, the POSI program, Section 128(a) site-specific EPA funding, and EPA-funded Targeted Brownfields Assessment (TBA). The use of brownfield grant

funding has the potential to trigger these other funding sources. For instance, if brownfield funding is used to assess a property and orphan underground storage tanks (USTs) are discovered, the Commission can use IBP POSI funding to close the USTs by removal and remediate soil and groundwater as applicable. This type of activity would ultimately lead to the issuance of a Comfort Letter from IBP, creating a shovel-ready site for redevelopment. We have also devised a plan and incentive program for brownfield sites. We can use grant funding to assess environmental risks associated with the properties, use funds collected from our TIF districts for façade and/or infrastructure improvements, create/utilize economic revitalization areas for tax abatements, make use of the county economic development budget, or procure OCRA funding for large-scale planning projects, demolition and cleanup, and encourage and support residents with development incentives for the creation of a new and locally owned viable business.

*ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure:* The target areas and priority sites are located in areas where water and sewer, fiber optics, electric and gas are readily available for immediate access. In addition, these brownfield sites have easy accessibility to major highways – National Road (US 40) or US 59. Funding from this grant will also be used to complete site-specific infrastructure inventories and evaluations to determine utility and infrastructure availability, age, capacity, and condition.

**2. Community Need and Community Engagement; 2.a. Community Need i. The Community's Need for Funding:** Once the pulsing heart of industrial vigor, Clay County's legacy is etched into the very seams of coal and clay that run deep beneath its soil. Our forebears bore witness to a boom of extraction that left a patchwork of brownfields in its wake as stringent IDEM regulations ushered in an exodus of mining firms seeking less costly ventures. This departure stranded our workforce, contaminated our land, and left our economy gasping for breath. Our smaller communities, like Clay City, bear the scars of this industrial retreat most profoundly. Here, the specter of abandonment looms large, casting a gloom over once-bustling streets. In downtown Clay City, vacant storefronts outnumber thriving businesses; **over 60% are shuttered.** Across the county, the landscape is pocked with the remnants of mining—land stripped of its vitality, daunting investors with its tainted legacy.

When a FEMA declared natural disaster occurs, as did in 2023 after an extreme storm event, our county must scramble to find resources and funding from an already depleted supply. Flooding of waterways near brownfield sites, such as Ceres Solutions, causes harmful pollutants to travel through the area, further exposing residents to health hazards. Such events underscore the critical nature of restoring these sites to productive use—not merely for economic rejuvenation but for the wellbeing and safety of our people. Without assistance from government programs, our communities lack local resources to tackle the brownfields crisis.

Our only city within the county, Brazil, has a population of 7,935; whereas the remaining towns populations are under 1,000. With these small populations, limited municipal budgets, and lack of outside grant money or funding, our county struggles to address brownfield sites as ongoing repairs to the aging infrastructure have become a dire economic drain. The paucity of our tax base has left us ill-equipped to mend the crumbling arteries of our infrastructure—roads that are in severe disrepair, gravel, or simply dirt. The need to return our brownfield sites to the tax rolls is even more critical to provide funds needed for essential services to our residents.

Moreover, economic challenges are palpable at the household level. The median income for Clay County families stands at \$68,087, which is noticeably lower than the state average of \$75,688<sup>2</sup>. And over half (53.9%) of children living in the Clay Community School District are eligible to receive a free or reduced lunch, in comparison of 49.1% for the State<sup>3</sup>. **Further, 42% of Brazil residents are low income, compared to 32% for the state, with 7% unemployed (state = 5%).**

Our plight is a maelstrom of disinvestment, dwindling civic pride, rising crime, and the exodus of our youth. In stark contrast to Indiana's population growth of 4.2% from 2010-2020, Clay County saw a decline of 6.9%<sup>2</sup>. Without a concerted effort to revitalize and reconstruct, our communities risk becoming relics of time, bereft of the vibrancy and opportunity necessary to retain and attract the promise of new generations. The provision of brownfield grant funding is more than an economic incentive, it's a lifeline. It represents hope for property owners, present and prospective, to ignite the flames of redevelopment and breathe new life into these dormant spaces.

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<sup>3</sup> IN Dept. of Education, Kids Count, 2022 data

**ii. Threats to Sensitive Populations; (1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations:** Our target brownfield sites are near residential and downtown areas with high concentrations of sensitive populations: low-income residents, children, the disabled, and the elderly. Approximately **29% of Clay County residents are children (<18 years) and, in Brazil, 23% of those children live in poverty.** Our per capita income is much lower than Indiana’s (\$56,497) at only \$44,878.<sup>2</sup> We have a higher percentage of elderly (19%) compared to the state and U.S. (14.5% and 13.4%, respectively)<sup>2</sup>. Over 19% of our county population has a disability, which is higher than the state (14%) and U.S. (12%); and Brazil’s disabled population exceeds 24%<sup>4</sup>. Brownfields adjacent to these economically challenged areas depress property values, deter business investments and quality employment opportunities, and amplify the hardships faced by our vulnerable residents.

According to the Indiana Geological Survey, over 275 former mineshafts were used to mine 10 different areas of coal seam throughout the county. Surface and underground coal mining was prevalent during the late-1800s through the mid-1900s and predates the reclamation regulatory action of 1977. The northern portion of the county, including Brazil and Knightsville, and central and southern portions near Clay City were heavily mined by various companies throughout this time. Mining predominantly ceased during the latter half of the 1900s, and no known reclamation efforts were completed. Health concerns stemming from contamination at mine sites span the range of human pathology which includes neurological diseases, heart diseases, liver and kidney concerns, and cancer<sup>5</sup>.

Our sensitive populations, especially children, are also at a greater health risk of suffering from environmental factors and exposure because they are more likely to live in older, substandard housing units, coupled with being exposed to brownfield site contaminants and abandoned mines. According to the US Census Bureau, greater than **65% of Clay County homes were built prior to 1980**, which is an indicator for ACM and LBP exposure. Given the proximity of these homes to potential brownfield sites and their contaminants, it’s clear why our residents also face health conditions and disease. This grant’s financial support is crucial for initiating site assessments, leading to the eventual cleanup and transformation of these degraded areas into valuable housing, recreational spaces, and business ventures, as well as integrating them with our expanding trail networks.

**(2) Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions:** These same residents also

Incidence / Death rates (per 100k)	Clay County	State
Colorectal Cancer <sup>1</sup>	46	42
Lung Cancer <sup>1</sup>	89 / 52	72 / 41
All Cancers <sup>1</sup>	489 / 212	470 / 180
Heart Disease Deaths <sup>2</sup>	240	182
Chronic Lower Respiratory Deaths <sup>1</sup>	79	54
Child Mortality Rate <sup>3</sup>	80	60
Premature Deaths (Aged 75 and under) <sup>1</sup>	435	420

suffer from high rates of adverse health conditions. As shown in the table, our county’s high incidence rates for colorectal and lung cancer can be directly linked to common contaminants such as VOCs, PAHs, PCBs, metals, ACM, and LBP, all potentially found in our nearby brownfield sites. These health issues are compounded by the prevalence of nearby industrial facilities and abandoned mines, highways and interstates, contaminated waterways, and lack of resources to tackle

these issues. Respiratory related diseases and cancer rates are shockingly high in our county. The major pollutants discussed above may be a key source of these lung conditions. **The child mortality rate is much higher than the State and Nation (50).** Our county has one of the highest heart disease and chronic lower respiratory hospitalization and death rates in the State and premature deaths within our senior community are much higher than that of the State – it is no coincidence that our towns have few to no parks and our residents have very little access to exercise opportunities.

Funding from the EPA will allow us to assess these sites and remove harmful contaminants from our community that are directly linked to the adverse health conditions described above. In doing so, we will reduce the occurrences of negative health impacts associated with those hazards and create a healthy environment for our residents and their children, especially those near these sites.

**(3) Environmental Justice; (a) Identification of Environmental Justice Issues:** According to the EPA EJ Screen Tool, EPA IRA disadvantaged and “Justice40 (CEJST)” communities were identified within our county.

<sup>4</sup> EPA EJ Screen, retrieved October 25, 2023

<sup>5</sup> Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

Over 42% of Brazil residents are low income, compared to 32% for the state, and 23% have a low life expectancy. These target areas, with low-income and unhealthy populations, are food deserts (85<sup>th</sup> percentile), causing residents to travel 10-30 miles to the nearest supermarket. Census tracts within our target areas scored near or over the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile in the CEJST's low income, poverty, expected population loss, abandoned mine land, low life expectancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma, lead paint, underground storage tanks and releases, lack of indoor plumbing, energy costs, transportation barriers, and population loss categories.

The EPA EJ Screen Tool reveals that residents near our priority sites fall into the low income (92<sup>nd</sup> percentile), persons with disabilities (96<sup>th</sup> percentile), and elderly (97<sup>th</sup> percentile) categories who experience a high exposure to particulate matter (66<sup>th</sup> percentile), ozone (59<sup>th</sup> percentile), toxic releases to air (68<sup>th</sup> percentile), underground storage tanks (78<sup>th</sup> percentile), and lead-based paint (80<sup>th</sup> percentile). These sensitive populations are notably more susceptible to harmful effects due to the brownfield-related contaminants in their communities, reflected by their low life expectancy (86<sup>th</sup> percentile), and heart disease occurrence (86<sup>th</sup> percentile). Direct contamination exposure can also occur via river pollution and floodwaters, contaminated soil and groundwater, unsafe buildings, and airborne threats (i.e. ACM). According to the 2020 Indiana 303(d) List of Impaired Waters, the Eel River, which traverses east to west through the central portion of the county, and its tributaries are on the list for contamination of *E. coli*, cadmium, copper, nickel, zinc, PCBs in fish tissue, biological integrity, and nutrients. The EJ Screen lists our target area in the 93<sup>rd</sup> percentile for flood risk. While some of these specific hazards are out of our control, assessing environmental risks at brownfield sites leads to a reduction in the overall threats to our residents' health and promotes local enterprise growth.

**(b) Advancing Environmental Justice:** At the heart of our mission to advance environmental justice lies the empowerment of our most underserved and vulnerable citizens. Their voices are essential in guiding the decisions that affect their lives – from selecting sites to planning and reimagining their futures. Our commitment to this cause is unwavering, and our strategy, outlined in Section 1.b, is a blueprint for meaningful community engagement. We are dedicated to transforming concerns into actions, addressing the challenges highlighted above, and prioritizing the health and vitality of our community.

Creation of park and trail space is a chief concern for many of these residents, and the transformation of portions of the former Ceres Solutions property and Downtown Clay City unused spaces to greenspace will foster wellness, quality of life, and social connection. Moreover, the untapped potential of our brownfield sites presents a unique canvas for community-led innovation. This grant is a beacon of hope, inviting residents to lead the journey from vision to reality, ensuring their indelible mark on every project. Clay City's revitalization strategy is a testament to this ethos, nurturing local entrepreneurship through pop-up shops and incentivizing ingenuity with "shark tank" style competitions for local business ideas. The redevelopment of these brownfields will improve our disadvantaged areas overall air quality, reduce pollution exposure, advance access to housing, promote public facilities, and increase physical activity.

We live in a very rural county with tight knit relationships and our brownfield team members, being lifelong residents of these communities, engage with citizens in the rhythms of everyday life – at the local diner, post office, or place of worship. It is this very fabric of close-knit relationships that positions us uniquely to translate this grant into tangible, life-changing progress for our county.

**2.b. Community Engagement; i. Project Involvement; ii. Project Roles:** Since 2015, the commissioners have been meeting with county, city, and town representatives to discuss the brownfields initiative to community leaders and stakeholders. Through these ongoing engagements, the community leaders expressed their support and identified abandoned industrial properties and vacant, rundown buildings for consideration under this EPA grant proposal. This early and continual involvement provides significant outreach opportunities to discuss potential site reuse with developers, property owners, and prospective purchasers. The commissioners also serve as members of steering committees in the Clay City Revitalization Plan efforts. We will continue this local outreach to grow the established grassroots community network within our area. To engage our targeted communities, we will rely on our partners, listed below, to assist in gathering input on sites.

Partner Name	Point of Contact	Specific Role in the Project
Thrive West Central	Ryan Keller, 812.248.1561 rkeller@thrivewestcentral.com	Will provide EPA grant experience to guide the grant process; assist with public meetings, and site inventory.
Clay City USA Foundation	David Schuck, 812.939.3517 David.schuck@amwater.com	Assist with identification and prioritizing brownfield sites; assist with/attend public meetings; community outreach.
Clay County Health Department	Dr. Camillo Mendoza, 812.448.9021 mendozac@claycountyin.gov	Community outreach; emergency response; health monitoring of residents affected by contamination.

**iii. Incorporating Community Input:** Upon grant award, the commissioners will host a kickoff meeting and will provide updates, progress reports and solicit input throughout the grant term during our monthly County Commissioners meetings. Public and stakeholder meetings will predominantly be held in the Commissioner’s meeting room on the first floor of the Clay County Courthouse, located in Brazil; however, venues such as neighborhood association offices or religious institutions can be utilized for site-specific meetings. Monthly County Commissioners meetings will become hubs of collaboration and innovation, where we’ll not only update the community on our strides but actively seek their wisdom and input.

We recognize that every voice matters. Therefore, we will ensure that our senior and disabled citizens have seamless access to these discussions, with ADA-compliant venues and, if needed, virtual alternatives to navigate any unforeseen COVID-19 restrictions. To ensure inclusivity, translators and sign language interpreters will be available upon request, alongside translated documents, welcoming our non-English speaking and hearing-impaired residents into this vital conversation.

Our commitment to keeping the community informed and involved doesn't stop at meetings. We will harness the power of local media, distributing press releases and informative fact sheets through newspapers and key community organizations, including the county health department. We will galvanize local organizations to amplify our message, using their networks to ensure that every citizen has a say in shaping our site selection, prioritization, and reuse strategies. Their outreach, tailored to their community’s unique preferences – be it public meetings, digital blasts, bulletin boards, or social media – will enrich our project with diverse perspectives.

Our outreach is multifaceted, employing traditional print and modern social media channels to foster participation and transparently report our journey. As we progress into clean-up and redevelopment phases, our engagement will intensify, with specialized public meetings and charrettes that not only inform but invite invaluable community feedback. As our project reaches its culmination, we will hold a final public meeting – a moment to reflect on our shared challenges and triumphs, and to gather final thoughts and insights from our community.

**3. Task Descriptions, Cost Estimates, and Measuring Progress; a. Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs:**

The county and its partners will determine methods and solutions for major components of the plan and process, evaluate how to best solicit and incorporate community input, and identify critical implementation strategies. This timeline assumes a finalized Cooperative Agreement by October 2024. Grant tasks will be completed as follows:

**Task 1 – Programmatic Activities i. Project Implementation:** The county has already retained the services of a Qualified Environmental Contractor (QEC) for grant proposal writing and grant services through a dual procurement competitive bidding process, compliant with federal procurement regulations 2 CFR 200.317-200.326. Further details of the solicitation and procurement process are provided as an attachment. Partners listed in **Section 2.b.** have committed assistance and in-kind services for this grant. The QEC and the county will perform programmatic activities including managing the project team activities, preparing quarterly reports, annual financial and disadvantaged business enterprise reporting, and all other reporting requirements with EPA (such as ACRES reporting). These reports will highlight the status of completion for tasks, progress made over the reporting period, challenges with project implementation, financial expenditures, preliminary data and findings, anticipated activities in the upcoming reporting period, and any changes in key staff involved.

**ii. Anticipated Project Schedule:** Monthly team meetings between QEC and the county; quarterly reports submitted the 30<sup>th</sup> of each April, July, October, and January (beginning Jan. 2025); financial and DBE reporting submitted annually; updates to ACRES after project milestones and/or quarterly; attend national/regional brownfield conference(s) – 2025-28.

**iii. Task/Activity Leads:** Clay County and QEC

**iv. Output(s):** Commissioner(s) to attend brownfields conference(s); meeting minutes and project performance reviews/reports; quarterly reports submitted via ACRES and financial and DBE reports submitted via email; calls, meetings, and correspondence between team (county, QEC, EPA, and partners) for grant management.

**Task 2 – Community Outreach and Inventory Prioritization, i. Project Implementation:** Site selection and prioritization will begin in October 2024 with outreach to stakeholders and residents to seek input on opportunities, with particular emphasis on the targeted populations. The county will hold at least six public meetings (one kickoff within the first 6 months of the grant period) to educate the community and officials about the brownfield initiative and solicit input regarding sites. Meetings, whether virtual or in-person, will be held to educate brownfield property owners and to secure access agreements. We will request community and stakeholder input to expand upon our current brownfield inventory and continue the prioritization process. Prioritization is based on the following criteria: imminent threat to human health or the environment, sites within the target areas, development goals and developer interest, property owner interest / site access attainability, and proximity to sensitive populations. This grading metric will create a database to integrate with our current GIS maps and color coded by priority level (high, medium, low) to quickly identify sites.

**ii. Anticipated Project Schedule:** Identify additional community partners and stakeholders by Jan. 2025; first public meeting in Quarter 1 and subsequent meetings at least every 6 months; prioritize inventory (score sites) by December 2024 and review quarterly.

**iii. Task/activity Leads:** County, QEC, and Partners

**iv. Output(s):** Identification of additional partners; meeting minutes; additional sites based on community input; GIS maps and databases of prioritized brownfield sites; informational sheets and maps for public distribution.

**Task 3 – Phase I/II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs)/QAPP, i. Project Implementation:** Once sites are selected and site access is granted, eligibility determinations will be submitted to the EPA Project Officer for approval. After approval, the QEC will conduct Phase I ESAs for the selected sites under ASTM Standard 1527-21 and the EPAs “All Appropriate Inquiry” rule. After the data management call with the EPA Project Officer, the QEC will prepare a QAPP, which will be reviewed and approved by the EPA before Phase II work can begin. Prior to each Phase II ESA, the county and QEC will submit a site-specific Sampling and Analysis Plan (SAP) and Health and Safety Plan (HASP) to the EPA Project Officer for approval. The county’s grant funds focus is on Phase II ESAs, and at least 9 sites will be assessed as part of this grant; however, we would like to exceed this goal and assess 12 properties.

**ii. Anticipated Project Schedule:** The QAPP submittal in Nov. 2024 and updated annually; Phase I ESAs begin upon finalization of Cooperative Agreement and continue as each new site is selected and obtains eligibility approval; Site-specific SAPs and HASPs submittal after Phase I ESA completion (estimated to begin Dec. 2024); Phase II ESAs commence after Phase I completion and SAP/HASP approval; all activities completed by end of Quarter 11 and final contractor invoices submitted at least 45-days to end of grant period.

**iii. Task/activity Leads:** QEC and the County

**iv. Output(s):** 9-12 Phase I ESAs; QAPP; 7-10 SAPs/HASPs and Phase II Investigations

**Task 4 – Cleanup and Reuse Planning, i. Project Implementation:** If sites require planning activities outside of the QEC capabilities, the county and its partners will select a qualified engineering/planning firm following Federal procurement regulations. The QEC/Eng. Firm will conduct cleanup/reuse planning after evaluation of Phase II data for each site based on potential reuse scenario(s) and public input. Each Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA) / Remedial Action Plan (RAP) will include remedial actions for identified contaminants that exceed IDEM regulatory screening levels. Remedial actions are evaluated on cost, intended use, feasibility, and effectiveness in protecting human health and the environment. Up to 2 public meetings will be held for each site to inform and solicit feedback from the community; the services of the Health Department will be sought, if needed. Reuse planning will dovetail our revitalization strategy and include such outputs as infrastructure evaluations, site reuse assessments, and market analyses.

**ii. Anticipated Project Schedule:** Cleanup planning for sites commence when contamination is confirmed (est. Feb. 2023) and public/stakeholder meetings will be scheduled at the onset and completion of these activities; planning studies completed as needed for site redevelopment and occur after the completion of the site RAP.

iii. **Task/activity Leads:** QEC, Engineering/Planning Firm, and county

iv. **Output(s):** 2-3 Remediation Work Plans / ABCAs; 3 site reuse planning documents (site specific as warranted)

**3.b. Cost Estimates:**

<b>Program Task</b>	<b>Task 1 Programmatic Activities</b>	<b>Task 2 Outreach &amp; Prioritization</b>	<b>Task 3 Phase I / Phase II</b>	<b>Task 4 Cleanup / Reuse Planning</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Personnel	\$2,000	\$6,000	\$2,000	\$6,000	\$16,000
Travel	\$3,000				\$3,000
Supplies					0
Contractual	\$15,000	\$40,000	\$192,000	\$134,000	\$381,000
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	<b>\$46,000</b>	<b>\$194,000</b>	<b>\$140,000</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>

**Task 1: Programmatic Activities:** The \$20,000 budget includes \$15,000 for the QEC (150 hours x \$100/hr) and \$2,000 for the county (40 hours x \$50/hr). County staff will attend at least one national and/or one regional EPA Brownfield Conference for a total of \$3,000. This assumes \$1,500 for registration and fees, \$400 airplane ticket to the national conference (location TBD) and \$180/night for hotel for 6 days (both conferences combined).

**Task 2: Outreach and Inventory Prioritization:** The \$46,000 budget includes \$40,000 for the QEC (400 hours at \$100/hr) and \$6,000 for county personnel (120 hours x \$50/hr). The county and Clay City USA have committed to provide meeting space and supplies as in-kind services for grant associated meetings.

**Task 3: Phase I/II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs)/QAPP:** The \$194,000 budget includes: 9 Phase I ESAs (9 x \$5,000 each totaling \$45,000); QAPP (\$7,000 total), and 7 Phase II ESAs: (7 x \$20,000 each totaling \$140,000). Our experience is that individual projects require several meetings with stakeholders or State agencies for Phase I and Phase II ESAs. We anticipate \$2,000 for county personnel time at meetings (40 hours at \$50/hr). These costs are averages only and may vary based on site conditions and complexity.

**Task 4: Cleanup and Reuse Planning:** The \$140,000 budget includes: 2 Remedial Action Plans/Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives (2 x \$7,000 each totaling \$14,000), further reuse planning for at least 3 sites (3 x \$40,000 totaling \$120,000), and \$6,000 for county personnel (120 hours at \$50/hr).

**Any county personnel time invested in this effort above the amounts listed above will be provided as in-kind services throughout the duration of this grant timeline.**

**3.c. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results:** The program manager for the grant will perform monthly grant reviews ensuring sufficient progress is being made and key outputs are on schedule and on track for completion. Corrective actions will be taken immediately to minimize delays and grant progress and activities will be reported to and monitored by county commissioners. Commissioners will update the public during their monthly public meetings. The program manager will meet quarterly with the team to evaluate and make necessary adjustments to the project. While the number of completed Phase II ESAs and ABCAs/RAPs will also be used as measures of success, their number and cost to complete will be dependent on the outcome of Phase I ESAs. A site-specific “property profile” will be completed in the ACRES database for each parcel that benefits from the use of EPA funds, and a quarterly progress report summarizing project activities will be submitted to the EPA Region 5 Project Officer (via ACRES) within 30 days of the previous reporting period. The Commissioners will ensure that the following measures of success are tracked and documented in quarterly reports / ACRES submittals: brownfields assessments started; brownfields assessments completed with expended amounts; properties with brownfields redevelopment activities underway; cleanup & redevelopment dollars leveraged; jobs leveraged; properties with brownfields cleanup activities started; properties with brownfields cleanup activities completed; and those without cleanup.

Additionally, the quarterly progress reports will include: modifications to the Work Plan; project activities relative to the EPA grant; task progress/schedule; site identification and targeted sites; cleanup redevelopment activity; summary of expenses by category; and other financial assistance leveraged. Electronic copies of all Phase I, Phase II, and ABCA/RAP reports completed during the quarter will be forwarded to the EPA Project Officer via ACRES and/or email within a week of completion. All material will also be forwarded to the IDEM and the IBP.

**4. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance; a. Programmatic Capability; i. Organizational Capacity, ii. Organization Structure, iii. Description of Key Staff:** If awarded, the three member Commissioners staff will oversee the grant implementation. The county is fully capable of successfully implementing this assessment grant as evidenced by their performance during past federal and state grants. The successful completion of the proposed assessments will be accomplished with a robust team of experienced and motivated individuals and will include a Program Manager that has successfully managed two previous EPA Brownfield Assessment Grants. **Mr. Marty Heffner**, Commission President, will serve as the Program Director. Marty is a lifelong resident of Clay County who is a 5<sup>th</sup> generation farmer. He spent 30 years using his talents in two major manufacturing facilities in West Central Indiana. In 2018, he sought election as a Clay County Commissioner and has worked tirelessly seeking to improve the quality-of-life of his fellow hometown residents through economic and community development projects since that time. Marty will oversee compliance with the Cooperative Agreement Terms and required reporting. **Mr. James Coffenberry**, Economic Development Specialist, will serve as the Program Manager. Jim has amassed over 30 years' experience in planning, development, and grants management and program administration from State, Federal, and private funding organizations. He has managed 3 brownfield assessment grants, including Thrive Coalition, City of Clinton, and City of Terre Haute. Jim will oversee grant administration, public outreach efforts, project development, and reporting. He will train the Commissioner's on the grant process, management and administration, public outreach, and project oversight. **Ms. Patricia Fox**, Controller, will serve as the Program Administrator. Ms. Fox has overseen the county's financial affairs since 2012. Patricia specializes in working with the financial components of numerous state and federal grants and will serve as the financial manager for this EPA grant. She will conduct draws, disbursements, and establish accounting and tracking systems.

**iv. Acquiring Additional Resources:** The Clay County Commissioners have already procured the services of a QEC experienced with EPA and IBP to complete the technical site components of the project. The QEC was selected in compliance with federal procurement requirements (2 C.F.R. 200 and EPA's rule at 2 C.F.R. 1500). Our consultant will prepare all technical documents for EPA submittal. Should staff turnover or additional consultants be necessary, the county will be prepared to acquire these services using the same procurement process followed during the initial search for a QEC. In addition, having three commissioners involved with grant administration ensures adequate cross-training in the event of staff loss and efficient training of incoming staff. The county will receive support from the community partners listed in section 2.b. and will utilize the services provided by the Technical Assistance to Brownfield (TAB) program.

**4.b. Past Performance and Accomplishments; i. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant: 1) Accomplishments:** Clay County was a coalition member of the FY09 \$894,000 EPA Brownfields Assessment grant (petroleum – BF00E94801; hazardous – BF00E94401) awarded to Thrive West Central (formerly West Central IN Economic Development District) which included the coalition partners of Clay, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo counties. Grant details are further discussed in the following table.

Grant Type	Grant Term	% Funding Utilized	ACRES Status
<b>\$894,000 FY09 Coalition Assessment</b>	<b>10/1/2009 – 9/30/2012</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>Complete</b>
<b>Outputs:</b> 28 Sites were identified and prioritized during the course of grant implementation, and 9 of these sites were located in Clay County. One QAPP was developed, submitted, and approved. Over \$200,000 of the total grant funds were utilized on Clay County sites. In sum, 80% of grant funding was utilized for site assessments (Phase I/Phase II/Cleanup Planning).			
<b>Outcomes (Clay County only):</b> The Vanes Property was redeveloped as a 20 tenant, energy-efficient, affordable housing complex. Two other sites were redeveloped as locally owned light warehouse businesses. Over 70 temporary jobs and twenty full-time jobs were created for these two projects. Further, over \$25M of private funding was leveraged for these projects.			

**(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements:** The coalition met the terms and conditions of the work plans and Cooperative Agreements, exceeded projected outputs, and completed all work within grant timeframes. Over 92% of the total grant funds were expended and over 80% was spent on direct assessments (i.e., Phase I/Phase II/Cleanup Planning). All quarterly reports and the final report were submitted on time and approved by the EPA project manager. Project information was promptly entered in ACRES after the web-based program was integrated into the EPA Brownfields Protocol and at the request of EPA.



# THRESHOLD CRITERIA RESPONSE

## Community-Wide Assessment Proposal

### 1. Applicant Eligibility

The applicant is Clay County, which is considered a local government as defined by 2 CFR 200.64 and is therefore eligible to apply for and receive U.S. EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant funding.

### 2. Community Involvement

Upon grant award, the commissioners will host a kickoff meeting and will provide updates, progress reports and solicit input throughout the grant term during our monthly County Commissioners meetings. Public and stakeholder meetings will predominantly be held in the Commissioner's meeting room on the first floor of the Clay County Courthouse, located in Brazil; however, venues such as neighborhood association offices or religious institutions can be utilized for site-specific meetings. Monthly County Commissioners meetings will become hubs of collaboration and innovation, where we'll not only update the community on our strides but actively seek their wisdom and input.

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### 3. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds

The County does not have an open EPA Brownfields Assessment or Multipurpose Grant.

4. Contractors and Named Subrecipients

The Clay County Commissioners have selected a consultant in compliance with the fair and open competition requirements in 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 1500.

- The county sent the Request for Qualifications on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 directly to 4 local environmental consulting firms, including one DBE firm. RFQ and email notice are attached.
- The county's due date for the proposals was September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, giving consultants 2 weeks to submit a response.
- One firm, V3 Companies, Ltd., responded to the RFQ. The commissioners approved V3 as the selected firm during the September commissioners meeting and, after price negotiations, we executed the contract on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. See attached for commissioners meeting minutes and contract between the County and V3 Companies.