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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
OSWER Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5101)
ATTN: Becky Brooks
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Warren County, New Jersey: Proposal for Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot Grant

Dear Ms. Brooks:

On behalf of its Board of Chosen Freeholders, The Warren County Department of Environmental Protection is pleased to submit this proposal for consideration in awarding a Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot Grant. Warren County is a rural county, focused on revitalizing specific isolated areas to enable its population to experience improved economic and educational benefits. Our local economy has declined since the early 1980's when manufacturing began to leave our area. The Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot would offer an opportunity for needed motivation to unite community groups, investors, community leaders and developers to begin the downtown revitalization in areas that have been long neglected.

We appreciate the opportunity to compete. You can reach me at (908) 777-7777, if you have any questions regarding this proposal.

Sincerely,

Lester Brown
Director
Office of Economic Development

Project

Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Grant

Prepared for:

Becky Brooks
Director -OSWER

Prepared by:

Lester Brown
Director

Office of Economic
Development
1122 Royal Street
Hackettstown, New
Jersey 07840

(PH) 908-777-7777
(FX) 908-777-7771
www.warrenco.nj.org

Description

Warren County seeks to improve the economic environment to enable controlled, sustainable economic growth that brings upward mobility within each of its communities and increases educational opportunities.

Our program is focused on using funding to increase the amount of land attractive to new development and accessible to all segments of our population.

CDFA: 10.999

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Date: 00/00/0000

Name: Lester Brown

Address: 1122 Royal Street
Hackettstown, New Jersey 07840
Office: 908-777-7777
FAX: 908-777-7771
www.warrenco.nj.org

Project Name: Brownfields Assessment Pilot Grant
Reason for Grant: Foster economic growth and educational opportunity to a depressed community.

Grant Request: \$300,000

<< Many grant funders will require a list of items to be included in a cover sheet. Update this cover sheet as needed if you are given explicit instructions by a grant funder. The cover sheet is a short, one page summary at the beginning of your grant proposal. >>

Background

Warren County, NJ is located in a rural section of northwest NJ surrounded by 60,000 acres of farmland and state parkland. Facing a long downturn economically due to the loss of thousands of manufacturing jobs as the companies moved away, the area is caught between extreme low-income families (200% below the poverty line) and great wealth (incomes \$150,000 and above). The county seeks to develop and improved select sites tied the Main Street Revitalization and educational reforms demanded by state government in order to help the local population become more competitive for jobs in science, technology, and retail.

Our effort seeks to help stabilize the local economy by using tactics not installed previously. Since the 1950's we have sought to diversify our economy by promoting industrial and commercial development. Although some did become established, it was not enough to stem the growing tide of unemployment and underemployed dominating our population.

We are starting our redevelopment process because our area has become attractive to upper income families seeking large lot sizes and building larger homes. There are distinct differences between the "old timers" and the "newcomers". Our goal is to redevelop our community in a way that is fair and accessible to all residents.

We are in unique position to have acquired abandoned property near federally owned land in our downtown area. One obstacle has been the inadequate public transportation system and limited rail access for residents to use to travel into New York and northern NJ where the jobs are more plentiful.

Much of the land that is available in our area is owned by the federal or state governments. Additionally, no less than seven federal agencies intersect to decide on land use options. As our county continues to face these challenges, we have begun to create new opportunities for ourselves with the aim of addressing budget issues, inadequate broad band access for much of the population, and declining graduation rates at our local high schools.

Goals and Objectives

The overall goal is to motivate an economic environment that is supportive of controlled, sustainable economic growth that improves the standard of living within each of the communities and augments efforts to expand educational opportunities for our residents. To expedite the attainment of our goal, we plan to use funding from the Brownfield's Assessment Demonstration Pilot grant to establish the Warren County Brownfield's Program. The program has great potential to increase the amount land available for successful development. Over the next two years we hope to meet these goals for our population:

- Augment the number of businesses coming into Warren County;
- Diversity our industrial, commercial, and nonprofit based (including attracting renewable energy sources to our area);
- Grow our county tax revenues by raising property values;
- Increase employment opportunities for our residents;
- Expand partnerships between colleges, universities, and vocational schools for the benefit of our unemployed and underemployed residents;
- Overcome obstacles to land issues;
- Establish the Phillipsburg Transportation Center, Theatre and Community Center Project on land that can double as a preserve and community center, and;
- Grow opportunities for broadband expansion in our rural area.

Performance measurement for these goals is based on both quantifiable outcomes and quality experiences. We will inventory the kind of new businesses, assess increases in revenues as a result of the anticipated influx, and increase property taxes over time as the numbers of new jobs are created and employment rates improve. Objectives Tied to Program Implementation:

1. Conduct extensive activities to education and inform potential stakeholders (community leaders, clergy, affected brownfield / environmental justice communities, real estate investors and agents, banks, developers, and hospitals and other key organizations in our community – (2 years);
2. Assess, review, and prioritize potential brownfield properties in each of our target communities (first 6 months);
3. Conduct Brownfield's assessments on up to 7 priority sites and prepare them for cleanup with the help of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection and if needed reuse property (up to 2 years);
4. Evaluate all program activities at the various stages of activity to understand Warren County's possible success in meeting program objectives (month 24 of project).

Approach

Program Strategy

Warren County plans to execute the Brownfield's pilot assessment in four phases: community outreach and assessment; site selection; environmental site assessment and program evaluation.

1. Community assessment and outreach – Using existing state and federal land management agencies and their current programs, we plan to hold community conferences, generate podcasts, online interactive sessions and use local media to communicate and motivate public comment and participation. This will be further enhanced by the use of our local college's radio and TV stations to create programming that focuses on the issues surrounding land use and development. Our effort will focus on:
 - a. Providing communities with a list of options for review and discussion;
 - b. Conduct community outreach over the first six months of the project;
 - c. Continue community awareness activities after program implementation by providing reports in newsletters, online, radio, TV and regional cable TV.
2. Site selection - Warren County plans to use the locations for community outreach to dialogue with local elected officials, key stakeholders, community organizations and local residents. At these sessions will conduct change management seminars that allow us to interpret and review our goals and objectives with local residents. This information will help us determine the final sites and prioritize them in terms of importance to the community. At least one site from within the assessment area will be chosen for Brownfield's funding.
3. Environmental Site Assessment – Once the site selection process has been completed, Warren County will perform the Phase 1 of the Environmental Site Assessment (ESAs) to determine the potential environmental liabilities associated with each site.
4. Program Evaluation will be conducted throughout the two year timeline as monitoring and at the end of the program a concluding activity will be conducted. These criteria are most important:
 - a. Understanding and participation of potential stakeholders in the Brownfield's program;
 - b. Amount of land reviewed and brought into the program
 - c. How much land area has been developed and how much left as green space?
 - d. What are the components of redevelopment and how do they fit into the goals and objectives of the target communities?
 - e. How much tax revenue will be attributed to the development?
 - f. Will the development increase tourism?
 - g. What other socio-economic benefits have been identified as are result of the initiative?

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