



R01-17-A-041

Bennington County Regional Commission

111 SOUTH STREET • SUITE 203 • BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201 • (802) 442-0713 OR 442-0682 • FAX (802) 442-0439

Frank Gardner
5 Post Office Square
Suite 100, Mail code-OSRR7-2
Boston, MA 02109-3912

December 21, 2016

Project Title: Sustainable Community Redevelopment: BCRC Community-Wide Petroleum and Hazardous Substances Site Assessment

The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) is pleased to submit this application to further its ongoing brownfield planning work. Our project will include assessments of both petroleum and hazardous substance sites, and will focus on sites in Bennington's state designated growth center identified through a previously completed area-wide planning process. All of our programs are directed toward fulfillment of BCRC's mission: to work with and on behalf of its member municipalities to build strong, resilient, and sustainable communities, to foster economic prosperity, and to promote a high quality of life for residents of the region. The BCRC's successful brownfield program has advanced this mission in several economically disadvantaged communities in our region, and we are confident that continued work in this area will provide long-term benefits to residents and businesses.

Previous brownfield site assessments conducted through BCRC's program have included historic industrial buildings, vacant commercial properties, former hydroelectric generating facilities, abandoned landfills, and other properties, most often located in or near economically important downtowns and village centers. The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation maintains a list of sites with known or suspected contamination that include 278 properties in our region and 152 in Bennington alone.

The BCRC's Brownfield Steering Committee will use established criteria to select priority sites for assessment, with a particular focus on sites within Bennington's state designated growth center. Within that growth center, an emphasis will be placed on properties targeted for redevelopment as part of an area-wide plan that was completed under BCRC's EPA-funded brownfield program. That plan included a comprehensive examination of the Putnam Block and numerous distressed properties located in a 50 acre area at the western gateway to Bennington's downtown. The BCRC is working with property owners, potential developers, and community groups to create a plan that will lead to redevelopment projects in this key area that reflect the community's needs and desires. Continued public outreach and coordination with local government officials and our partners at several local and regional organizations also will ensure that these projects advance the sustainability objectives that guide our work.

The BCRC has the capacity, resources, and experience to effectively administer and implement the program. The work also will benefit from the BCRC's program in Sustainable Community Development designed to work with local communities to identify and develop local resources and assets to support healthy and resilient communities. We look forward to continuing this valuable work in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency.

Sincerely,

James K. Henderson
Environmental Program Manager



Bennington County Regional Commission

111 SOUTH STREET • SUITE 203 • BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201 • (802) 442-0713 OR 442-0682 • FAX (802) 442-0439

- a. **Applicant Information:** Bennington County Regional Commission
111 South Street, Suite 203 – Bennington, VT 05201
- b. **Funding Requested:**
 - i. **Grant Type:** Assessment
 - ii. **Assessment Grant Type:** Community-wide
 - iii. **Federal Funds Requested:** \$300,000
 - iv. **Contamination:** Petroleum and Hazardous Substances - \$100,000 Petroleum and \$200,000 Hazardous Substances
- c. **Location:** Eligible sites are located within the 17 municipalities comprising the Bennington Region, with principal emphasis on the western gateway to Bennington's downtown and the state designated Growth Center that includes and surrounds that downtown area.
- d. **Not Applicable**
- e. **Contacts:**
 - i. **Project Director:** James Henderson, Environmental Program Manager – BCRC.
111 South Street, Suite 203 – Bennington, VT 05201. Phone: 802-442-0713 x4,
FAX: 802-442-0439, Email: jhenderson@bcrcvt.org.
 - ii. **Chief Executive:** James Sullivan, Director – BCRC. 111 South Street, Suite 203 –
Bennington, VT, 05201. Phone: 802-442-0713 x5, FAX: 802-442-0439,
Email: jsullivan@bcrcvt.org.
- f. **Population:** The population of Bennington County is 36,411 (2010 US Census). The BCRC serves 17 municipalities; the population of the largest town, Bennington, is 15,757. Other communities that contain centers of local economic activity with concentrations of sensitive populations and areas of particular environmental concern are: Pownal (3,527), Manchester (4,391), Arlington (2,317), and Shaftsbury (3,590).
- g. **Regional Priorities Form/Other Factors Checklist:**
- h. **Letters from State Authority:**

**FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA
RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION**

1. Community Need

a. Target Area and Brownfields

i. Community and Target Area Descriptions: Bennington Vermont is a town of 15,757 people in rural southwestern Vermont. Located between the Green and Taconic Mountain Ranges, Bennington is an important regional economic center with commercial, industrial, educational and health care services relied upon by residents throughout the area. Numerous mills and factories grew up along the waterways that flow through the center of the intersecting valleys where downtown Bennington is located. Industrial and manufacturing businesses developed in these areas beginning in the 18th century, with land uses on any given property shifting from one purpose to another several times over. Textile manufacturers, tanneries, electronic component manufacturers, as well as petroleum storage, processing, and distribution establishments have operated in Bennington over the years, leaving a variety of residual pollutants including PCBs, heavy metals, VOCs, lead, petroleum, solvents, and other potentially hazardous materials. In the winter of 2016 Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) contamination zones were delineated around former industrial sites in North Bennington and Pownal, Vermont. A public water supply and over 200 private wells have been impacted.

Nearly all of the region’s Brownfield sites are located in this valley area; of the several hundred regional properties identified by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VT DEC) as known “hazardous” sites, the majority are found in and around **downtown Bennington, the target community for this grant application**. Within the densely developed central portion of Bennington there is a 2,552 acre state-designated Growth Center which was the subject of recent EPA funded Downtown Bennington Brownfields Area Wide Planning (AWP) work. This target area includes more than 150 vacant, abandoned or largely underutilized Brownfields properties.

ii. Demographic Information and Indicators of Need: Negative population growth, lower than average per capita and household income, and high poverty rates in areas with high concentrations of Brownfield sites present significant challenges for local communities while also presenting real opportunities for neighborhood and community revitalization.

	Municipal and County Demographic Data				
	Bennington CDP	Bennington Town	Bennington County	Vermont	National
Population ¹ (2014)	8,993	15,757	36,739	626,358	314,107,084
Population Change (2010-2014)	-0.4%	-1.3%	-1.0%	0.3%	3.3%
Unemployment Rate ²	7%	6.4%	4.6%	4.2%	5.8%
Households Using SNAP ³	33.2%	28.0%	18.4%	13.9%	13.0%
Poverty Rate ¹	25.0%	22.9%	14.2%	11.8%	15.6%
Percent Minority ¹	6%	6%	4%	5%	26%
Per Capita Income ¹	\$24,039	\$24,386	\$29,647	\$29,535	\$28,555
Median Household Income ¹	\$34,599	\$36,690	\$49,303	\$54,447	\$53,482
1. Data refer to 2014 American Communities (ACS) survey estimates, collected by the US Census Bureau. 2. Unemployment data also come from 2014 ACS estimates; they refer to the percentage of the labor force that was seeking employment but not actively employed in 2014.					

**FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA
RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION**

3. Percent of all households that used Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (ACS, 2014).

iii. Brownfields and Their Impacts: Nearly all of the region’s Brownfield sites are in the densely populated Bennington Growth Center. These sites are blighted properties that have adversely affected the economic vitality of the downtown and surrounding rural areas, caused significant public health concerns, depressed property values, and limited redevelopment for needed housing. These distressed properties also divide neighborhoods and prevent coordinated redevelopment efforts. Previous EPA funded Brownfields AWP work within the state-designated Bennington Growth Center has identified 152 potential Brownfields sites that account for more than 530 acres of land. These sites are largely vacant, abandoned, or underutilized. A partial list of such sites includes:

- The Putnam Block, the priority Brownfield site identified through the AWP process, representing the most prominent location in downtown Bennington, includes an historic three-story hotel, an adjacent former county court house, as well as a recently closed printing facility and hardware store. The site is now dominated by the shuttered retail store, numerous empty storage buildings, and 2.1 acres of vacant land. Conceptual redevelopment plans include mixed income in-town living, diverse retail uses including a grocery store, office space, and parking.
- A vacant lot that was previously the location of another a hardware store and an empty building that had housed a small market located one block from the downtown’s main crossroads.
- An abandoned historic factory building overlooking a scenic natural stream that flows through downtown.
- Two vacant car dealerships located on the busiest commercial corridor in the region.
- A former paper mill property located on either side of a stream, between two of the Growth Center’s busiest roads, and along a proposed rail trail.
- An abandoned fuel distribution center.
- An old drive-in theater property, now a large empty lot, located between a commercial corridor and a high density low-income housing development.
- A centrally located National Guard building that is soon to be vacated; the Town of Bennington has agreed in principle to acquire this site for public use.
- A former school in the downtown’s commercial district.

Many of these properties are affected by pollutants deriving from past industrial and manufacturing uses. These pollutants include PCBs, heavy metals, VOCs, lead, petroleum, chlorinated solvents, asbestos and other materials. Recent Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) Brownfield assessments have also documented a range of environmental contaminants in the Hoosic and Walloomsac Rivers that have posed environmental and public health threats while impeding redevelopment of sites along river corridors and reuse of hydroelectric sites.

b. Welfare, Environmental, and Public Health Impacts

i. Welfare Impacts: Many industrial sites are now abandoned and manufacturing employment in Bennington has declined by 26 percent between 2000 and 2014 (Vermont Department of Labor statistics). A high concentration of Brownfield sites are found in Bennington’s Growth Center, a relatively compact area that also contains over half of the town’s population and most of the

FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION

county's sensitive populations and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Several standard measures of health and welfare illustrate the magnitude of the challenges faced by communities in the county, particularly those in Bennington's most densely developed neighborhoods. The correlation between sensitive populations and the high concentrations of Brownfield sites in the Growth Center is confirmed by other data.

- Over 78 percent of the students at the two public elementary schools serving the Growth Center receive free or reduced price lunches because of family income (VT Department of Education – data refer to 2014 -2015 school year).
- Bennington's downtown has been designated as the only "Food Desert" in southern Vermont by the US Department of Agriculture, meaning that it is an area with a high poverty rate that also lacks adequate access to healthy food.
- The percentage of Bennington Growth Center residents lacking a high school education is the highest in the county and the percentage with a college degree is the lowest of any area in the county (EPA Environmental Justice).
- Over 40 percent of the housing units in Bennington's Growth Center were built prior to 1950, over half of the units in that area are renter-occupied, and the median home value is 24 percent lower than statewide (EPA Environmental Justice and US Census – 2010).
- The teen pregnancy rate of 31 per 1000 in Bennington County is among the highest in Vermont, with the rate being highest in Bennington (National Center for Health Statistics – 2014).
- The only sizeable concentration of minority residents in the county is found in blocks within the Bennington Growth Center. This includes five census block groups with over 10% minority population (US Census - 2010, ACS, 2014).
- Private non-farm employment for people living in Bennington County declined by 17.6 percent between 2000 and 2010 (US Census – 2010).
- Bennington has the lowest percentage of total population (all ages) in the workforce (only 43%) of any large community in Vermont (VT Department of Labor workforce data, 2014).

ii. Cumulative Environmental Issues: In 2016 PFOA contamination zones were delineated around former industrial sites in North Bennington and Pownal, Vermont. A public water supply and over 200 private wells have been impacted, streams, ponds, and soils remain heavily contaminated, and local governments are faced with expansion of the public water systems at a cost of over \$31 million.

Another important factor that has profoundly affected the health, welfare, and environment of area communities is the widespread damage wrought by Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. This extreme rain event caused flooding that damaged public infrastructure and private property. Over 200 reports of damage to local highway infrastructure, including the destruction or extended closing of six bridges, were documented. Bennington suffered over \$5.6 million in reported damage from the storm, mostly concentrated along the Roaring Branch and the Walloomsac River, waterways that traverse the center of the town immediately adjacent to the densely developed Growth Center and its concentration of Brownfield sites.

FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION

iii. Cumulative Public Health Impacts: Information obtained from the EPA (Environmental Justice Database) reveals that Bennington County has one of the highest infant mortality rates in Vermont. According to the Vermont Department of Health's 2012 Behavioral Risk Surveillance System Report, Bennington suffers from higher rates of asthma, diabetes, cancer, COPD, obesity and depression than the State of Vermont. The overall cancer risk in Bennington's Growth Center, an area of high concentrations of Brownfields, is the highest in the county and among the highest in the state.

c. Financial Need

i. Economic Conditions: Due to tightening state and local budgets, the BCRC has experienced a decrease of its core funding supported through the State of Vermont and local municipalities. Furthermore, with the completion of the BCRC's 2010 Assessment Grant, the Commission is unable to fund additional Brownfield work even though there are several existing projects ready to proceed to Phase 2 assessments and remediation planning. Additional resources are needed to maintain an ongoing Brownfields program and an awareness of, and interest in, redevelopment opportunities.

The financial impact of Tropical Storm Irene has significantly affected the financial condition of area towns, especially Bennington, where the municipality has incurred restoration costs of over \$5.6 million. Flood-related damages have affected towns and municipal budgets throughout the region. Several small towns have incurred expenses in excess of their annual municipal budgets. These financial obligations have made it difficult or impossible to raise local revenues to invest in critical community development projects at a time when such investments are critical for improving the region's economic health.

ii. Economic Effects of Brownfields: Brownfields are blights that adversely affect economic vitality, divide neighborhoods and hinder coordinated redevelopment efforts. According to the Vermont Department of Labor, Bennington has suffered a net loss of 35 business enterprises and approximately 800 jobs since 2008, representing nearly one tenth of the town's original workforce. During this same time period, average wages in Bennington have increased at a slower rate than state averages while unemployment rates have remained higher. Most of this loss has occurred in the private sector and has left many vacant Brownfield sites, leading to a decrease in the tax base and property values. Securing and monitoring these vacant properties is a costly expense to the property owners and places an additional burden on municipal services.

A large contributor to the bleak economic situation in Bennington is the lack of vibrancy in critical areas of the town's urban center. Many of the commercial properties, such as the Putnam Block, are vacant or underutilized, some are Brownfield sites and almost all are near or adjacent to one of these properties. These factors have contributed to a pervasive and contagious blight in the region's most critical economic area

2. Project Description and Feasibility of Success

a. Project Description, Timing and Implementation

i. Project Description and Alignment with Revitalization Plans: The BCRC intends to use program funding to continue its successful Brownfield initiative and to follow-through on **The Downtown Bennington Brownfields Area Wide Plan (AWP)** completed for a targeted area within Bennington's designated Growth Center. This area is identified by the Bennington Town Plan and The Bennington Strategic Economic Development Plan as the community's top

FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION

redevelopment priority. Several regional and local organizations, the BCRC, and local government officials, have recently joined together to form an economic development task force. That group has identified several key areas of concern that can be addressed through effective planning, public and private investment, and Brownfield redevelopment. The following findings are supported by data compiled as part of the Bennington economic development planning process being coordinated by the BCRC and a 2012 Business Workforce Needs Survey conducted by the BCRC in partnership with the local Workforce Investment Board:

- The region has experienced a slow pace of economic progress and lacks effective economic development resources.
- A decline in manufacturing employment in Bennington (26%, as noted above) has led to higher unemployment, lower wages, and secondary impacts on local businesses.
- Limited land (vacant land/abandoned buildings with no environmental constraints) is available for new commercial and industrial development.
- Bennington lacks conveniently located workforce housing that is both affordable and desirable.

Program funding will be used primarily for Phase II site assessments and the development of Remediation Plans. Bennington's Growth Center is the center of residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional land uses, as well as the site of numerous areas of environmental concern. The Growth Center holds great promise for redevelopment and is the key to revitalization of the town, and in turn, the entire economic region. The BCRC has mapped all of the properties within the area that are available for redevelopment. Nearly all of this development potential can be classified as "infill," redevelopment that will complete and connect streets, neighborhoods, and mixed-use districts that currently are disconnected and blighted by the presence of vacant or abandoned properties. Environmental assessments and remediation planning funded by this project will support redevelopment of this important area.

The Growth Center includes the historic downtown, dense urban neighborhoods, schools, and group homes for disabled and elderly residents (including the Vermont Veterans Home), industrial properties, parks, and an extensive inventory of vacant or abandoned properties that represent environmental challenges and redevelopment opportunities.

The BCRC and its community partners recognize both the magnitude and the importance of these revitalization efforts. To maximize the probability of effective outputs and ensure that outcomes are as beneficial to the efforts as possible, it is critical that environmental assessments and redevelopment planning be closely coordinated with the comprehensive AWP for the Growth Center. Successful redevelopment in this area will support Bennington's economic development efforts by providing sites for new businesses, a more vibrant and attractive downtown, and centrally located workforce housing. Consequently, a majority of program funding will be targeted to support redevelopment efforts in the Growth Center. Assessment funds not directed toward Bennington's Growth Center will be available for use at other sites in the region that have been determined to meet regional redevelopment objectives.

The BCRC's Brownfield program gives priority in site selection to properties in areas where the presence of existing road, water, sewer, and other infrastructure increases the probability of successful redevelopment, while discouraging development in areas where demands would be made for infrastructure extensions that would be costly and which would lead to inefficient and unsustainable sprawl. The program's primary focus on Bennington's Growth Center, in addition to potential additional work in smaller village centers in the region, supports this objective.

FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION

Existing local and regional plans and land use regulations encourage and facilitate development in those areas while discouraging development in outlying “greenfield” areas. Whenever possible, planning for properties with historic structures includes restoration and reuse of those buildings.

Energy efficiency is a key consideration in all building rehabilitation and construction. Shires Housing (regional housing nonprofit) has obtained numerous grants to improve energy performance in its new and renovated buildings, and will meet or exceed Vermont’s new Residential Building Energy Standards in any Brownfield redevelopment project. Any new or redeveloped commercial building will have to meet the state’s Commercial Building Energy Standards. Opportunities for development of renewable energy resources at Brownfield sites are important considerations in site selection and planning. BCRC Brownfield sites on the Walloomsac and Hoosic Rivers are being redeveloped for their hydroelectric generating capacity. The BCRC energy planning and sustainable community development staff will work with site planners and developers to ensure that buildings are sited to take maximum advantage of solar energy gain, that rooftop solar photovoltaic and hot water systems are utilized whenever possible, that space heating systems using locally sourced biomass are utilized, and that energy efficient lighting and appliances are used. The relatively dense development pattern within the targeted area also will provide opportunities for district heating and cogeneration, as described in the recently adopted Bennington Municipal Energy Plan.

The BCRC has worked closely with towns and community organizations to promote sustainable redevelopment. An example is the ongoing stormwater management initiative, undertaken in cooperation with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources resulting in guidelines for “low-impact” development. To provide sustainable transportation options, all redevelopment projects will be served by existing sidewalk networks, existing or planned bike paths, and will be readily accessible to the Green Mountain Community Network public bus system. Planned community gardens, “green roofs,” and local food stores in the targeted area will support a badly needed local food system and complement the Walloomsac Farmer’s Market that already is located in the targeted Growth Center area.

ii. Timing and Implementation: The BCRC has an established Brownfields Steering Committee that includes representation from local governments, real estate, housing, economic development entities, and private citizens. All professional environmental services will be obtained through BCRC’s approved competitive procurement process. The BCRC advertises for requests for qualifications from environmental contractors, selects the most qualified firms, and issues requests for proposals for each individual assessment or remediation planning project.

During its ongoing Brownfield work, the BCRC has established priorities, consistent with the Commission’s sustainability objectives, that support work in downtowns and village centers where infill development and redevelopment is needed to reduce environmental hazards, revitalize neighborhoods, and when possible, facilitate development of renewable energy resources. To promote the potential of successful outcomes, the availability of public infrastructure, community support, and reuse potential are important site selection criteria.

The Town of Bennington recently completed a comprehensive economic development strategy. Many of the strategies focus on the critical importance of the adaptive re-use of a number of key properties within the Growth Center. Those findings will be fully integrated into Brownfield site selection and redevelopment activities. Initial site selection and prioritization will focus on sites that previously have been identified through the AWP process. The Brownfield Steering Committee will work closely with the BCRC’s environmental and

FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION

sustainable community development planning staff to rank sites within the Growth Center based on selection criteria, consistency with AWP goals and priorities, and potential for successful reuse/redevelopment. Housing projects (affordable & senior) with the potential to reuse existing infrastructure will be given the highest priority because it meets a community need.

Two Brownfield sites, one with hazardous substances including PFOA contamination, have approved Phase I ESAs conducted through our previous grants and are awaiting funding to commence Phase II ESAs and remediation planning. Access consent has been established at both sites through signed access agreements. Based on our past Brownfield Assessment Grants, we anticipated spending all the funds and closing out this grant in three years.

b. Task Description and Budget Table

i. Task Descriptions:

Task 1 – Cooperative Agreement Oversight: The BCRC will manage all financial, reporting, and auditing tasks required of the Brownfield program. BCRC staff experienced with program requirements, will oversee the cooperative agreement, manage environmental contractors, and coordinate among community partners, property owners, contractors, the VT DEC, the EPA and other stakeholders. As part of this task, BCRC staff will attend national Brownfield conferences and other EPA sponsored training workshops. BCRC staff will work approximately 212 hours on this task at a cost of \$12,000.

Task Outputs: Contracts with environmental professionals to conduct assessments and remediation planning, site eligibility forms to EPA and VT DEC as appropriate, access agreements, updated ACRES database, twelve quarterly reports, MBE/WBE utilization reports, training and final reporting.

Task 2 - Community Outreach & Engagement: The BCRC will build upon the intensive public process conducted as part of the AWP effort through: public meetings scheduled to coincide with work on each site, individual meetings with property owners, neighborhood residents, local officials, and other interest groups, press releases, appearances on local access television and radio, and a Facebook page linked to the Commission's website, www.bcrcvt.org. The Brownfield Steering Committee will work closely with the BCRC's environmental and sustainable community development planning staff to rank sites within the Growth Center based on selection criteria, consistency with AWP goals and priorities, and potential for successful reuse/redevelopment. Those sites having significant momentum toward reuse and development based on input from potential developers, local officials, and community organizations that have been involved in the AWP process will be given additional consideration. Sites with existing infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, and other utilities) will be given higher priority. In addition, Brownfields projects that lend themselves to housing projects (affordable and senior) will also be given higher priority. BCRC also will develop and implement, in accordance with EPA guidelines, Community Relations Plans in concert with any cleanup planning activities. BCRC staff will work approximately 225 hours on this task at a cost of \$12,750.

Task Outputs: Bi-monthly meetings of the Brownfield Steering Committee, public meetings focusing on individual sites being investigated, one-on-one meetings with property owners, neighborhood groups, and partner organizations, regular updates on a Facebook page, public forums for priority sites within the special Growth Center planning area, list of ranked sites,

**FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA
RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION**

assignment of sites to qualified contractors, Community Relations Plans specific to cleanup planning for each individual site.

Task 3 - Phase I and Phase II Site Assessment Activities: Environmental contractors selected through the BCRC procurement process will conduct Phase I and Phase II site assessments in accordance with ASTM processes. Based on our previous projects, it is expected that Phase I assessments will each cost approximately \$4,000. Phase II assessments may cost from \$10,000 for a simple characterization at a small petroleum site to \$75,000 for a complex assessment at a challenging hazardous substance site. It is estimated that funds will cover up to eight Phase I assessments and six to eight Phase II assessments. The final number of assessments will depend upon the number of priority sites identified and the complexity of the environmental work required at each. BCRC environmental program staff will visit sites and review consultant findings and reports, while BCRC sustainable community development staff will facilitate site access and communication with property owners, neighbors, stakeholder groups, and potential purchasers, developers, and funders. BCRC staff will work approximately 318 hours on this task at a cost of \$18,000. \$207,000 is budgeted for contractual services.

Task Outputs: Two to four petroleum Phase I assessments, three to five hazardous substance Phase I assessments, two to three petroleum Phase II assessments, three to four hazardous substance Phase II assessments, complete assessment reports, and public review meetings.

Task 4 – Site Reuse and Cleanup Planning: Reuse and remediation planning will be completed by environmental contractors cooperating with BCRC’s staff and local partners. These planning activities will be closely tied to Phase II assessment findings. Remediation Plans will be developed based on planned or probable site reuse. BCRC staff will work approximately 185 hours on this task at a cost of \$10,500. \$37,500 is budgeted for contractual services.

Task Outputs: Two to three petroleum Remediation Plans, three to four hazardous substance Remediation Plans, coordination and public meetings as required.

ii) Budget Tables (Personnel costs based on a blended average of assigned BCRC staff)

Budget – Petroleum Brownfield Program					
Budget Category	Project Tasks				
	Cooperative Agreement Oversight	Community Outreach & Engagement	Phase I and Phase II Assessments	Site Reuse and Cleanup Planning	Total
Personnel	\$2,800	\$2,975	\$4,200	\$2,450	\$12,425
Fringe Benefits	\$1,200	\$1,275	\$1,800	\$1,050	\$5,325
Travel	\$500	0	0	0	\$500
Supplies	\$250	0	0	0	\$250
Contractual	0	0	\$69,000	\$12,500	\$81,500
Total	\$4,750	\$4,250	\$75,000	\$16,000	\$100,000

**FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA
RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION**

Budget – Hazardous Substance Brownfield Program					
Budget Category	Project Tasks				
	Cooperative Agreement Oversight	Community Outreach & Engagement	Phase I and Phase II Assessments	Site Reuse and Cleanup Planning	Total
Personnel	\$5,600	\$5,950	\$8,400	\$4,900	\$24,850
Fringe Benefits	\$2,400	\$2,550	\$3,600	\$2,100	\$10,650
Travel	\$1,000	0	0	0	\$1,000
Supplies	\$500	0	0	0	\$500
Contractual	0	0	\$138,000	\$25,000	\$163,000
Total	\$9,500	\$8,500	\$150,000	\$32,000	\$200,000

c. Ability to Leverage

Numerous opportunities are available to leverage Brownfield funds with additional resources. The Town of Bennington recently received a \$20,000 Municipal Planning Grant and a \$42,000 grant through Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation to assess existing market conditions, evaluate land use, identify key potential redevelopment sites and create re-use scenarios within the Growth Center. The BCRC will commit funding from community development programs that support work within designated downtowns, village centers, and growth centers. If assessments initiated under this grant cannot be completed with available funds, the BCRC will work to obtain additional assistance through the Vermont Brownfields Technical Assistance Program and the Vermont Brownfields Revitalization Revolving loan Program.

The BCRC has proven successful in assisting Brownfield property owners to obtain over \$275,000 in loans through EPA Brownfields Cleanup Loans and the Vermont Brownfields Revolving Loan Program for cleanup and redevelopment activities. These property owners have also contributed over \$1,000,000 of private equity to redevelop their properties. The developer of a former hydroelectric facility has obtained a \$25,000 grant through the Vermont Agency of Commerce, an \$8,750 grant from the Vermont Public Service Board, and an \$801,609 loan from the Vermont Economic Development Authority allowing them to obtain necessary federal and state permits and proceed with redevelopment of the dam and turbines with a generating capacity of 200 KW.

The Town of Bennington maintains a microloan fund and a redevelopment revolving loan program to support business improvements and growth. The town awarded a \$100,000 redevelopment loan to a downtown business which relocated to a Brownfield property that was assessed and remediation planning implemented through BCRC’s 2010 Brownfield Assessment Grant. These loans continue to be available to any Brownfield owners who commit to implementing approved Remediation Plans.

The BCRC works closely with local and regional development organizations to obtain leveraging for redevelopment. Shires Housing has expressed a strong interest in developing a mixed use project that includes workforce and senior housing at The Putnam Block, the priority Brownfield site identified during the AWP process. Shires will commit to funding pre-development studies and to pursuing tax credits and other financing for redevelopment based on assessment findings and reuse/redevelopment plans. The Better Bennington Corporation will provide technical support for new business starts on Brownfield sites within the downtown Growth Center area. The Bennington County Industrial Corporation has committed to a

FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION

significant allocation of staff resources to recruit businesses seeking to locate on available Brownfield sites throughout the region, and particularly in the Growth Center.

3. Community Engagement and Partnerships

a. Engaging the Community

i. Community Involvement Plan: Community involvement has been a hallmark of the BCRC's Brownfield Program and the Commission will continue to ensure that the process is open and that a variety of means are available for residents and organizations to participate in this ongoing program. Because strong and consistent community involvement is essential to ensuring comprehensive assessments, remediation planning, and to ensure successful redevelopment, the BCRC will communicate and cooperate with key players throughout the process. A widely publicized public meeting will be held at the town's public meeting hall, located in the center of the targeted area within the Growth Center. At that meeting, project goals will be reviewed, maps and site inventory information presented, and people will have an opportunity to discuss needs, desires, priorities, and how to best organize future meetings. Email/mail lists will be maintained so that regular project updates can be distributed; project updates also will be made available through BCRC's website and a Facebook page dedicated to the project. A key feature of the BCRC effort is utilization of the Commission's sustainable community development program staff to meet regularly with site owners, local officials, and potential developers and investors.

ii. Communicating Progress: Quantitative outputs that will be tracked include a list of priority sites, the number of sites within the Growth Center identified through the previous Brownfield AWP process that have completed Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments, and the number of remediation plans. Outcome measurements will include the acreage and number/size of buildings made available for redevelopment, public and private investment in assessed sites, reduction in environmental and health hazards, and any direct or indirect job creation.

Neighborhood Meetings: The BCRC, environmental contractors, and the VT DEC will meet as necessary with neighbors of each assessment site. Residents will be notified directly and the meetings will be advertised in the area.

Public Meetings: In addition to the initial public meeting, follow up and community relations plan meetings will be held to present and explain assessment findings and cleanup plans, hear and address public concerns, and obtain ideas related to site reuse. All such meetings will be widely advertised through newspapers, public access television, BCRC's website, social media, and through direct email and mail to interested parties.

Public Access to Project Staff: BCRC's project staff will be available to meet with residents and any interested parties; office hours, phone numbers, and email contact information will be provided at public meetings, on all notices and project reports, and online. The director of BCRC's sustainable community development program will report to local economic development officials and organizations, and will regularly meet with property owners and developers to facilitate redevelopment plans.

Project Documents and News Bulletins: All project documents and records of meetings will be available to the public in digital and hard copy formats. BCRC staff issues monthly project updates to municipal representatives, legislators, and interested stakeholders through an electronic newsletter and by posting on www.bcrctvt.org.

FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION

Language Barriers: According to the 2010 US Census, less than one percent of the region's population does not speak English well. If a need for language assistance becomes necessary, the BCRC will obtain and provide necessary translation services.

b. Partnerships with Governmental Agencies

i. Local/State Environmental Authority: The BCRC will continue to work closely with municipal governments and the Vermont DEC in the conduct of its Brownfield assessment program. Several municipal officials serve on the BCRC Brownfields Steering Committee. DEC staff routinely attends Brownfield Steering Committee meetings, review site selection decisions, ascertain eligibility of petroleum sites, and offer input on consultant selection, assessment findings and reports, and cleanup plans. The DEC also provides guidance to applicants for cleanup funds. The BCRC will consult with The Vermont Department of Health on any Brownfield sites with asbestos and lead paint remediation needs.

ii. Other Governmental Partnerships: The BCRC will continue to actively work with EPA staff on all phases of Brownfields assessment. EPA Brownfields staff will assist with enrolling projects and the review of technical documents including Quality Assurance Project Plans. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development could play a role in much needed housing projects in our target area. The BCRC is participating in a comprehensive "healthy communities" planning process being conducted by the Southwestern Vermont Health Corporation. Representatives from the Vermont Department of Health and other state and local health care agencies are involved in that project as well, and are in regular communication with BCRC about health needs of sensitive populations and strategies for addressing those needs. Those efforts are focusing on several aspects of the targeted assessment area: opportunities for mixed use development, safe bicycle and pedestrian links, access to healthy food, and recreational opportunities.

c. Partnerships with Community Organizations

The BCRC will work with community partners, including the Town of Bennington, the Bennington County Industrial Corporation, the Better Bennington Corporation, Shires Housing, and Bennington Economic Development Partners. A description of each, along with the commitments and role of each organization, is provided below:

The Town of Bennington: The Bennington's Assistant Town Manager and Economic Development Director serve on the Brownfield Steering Committee and will provide assistance with site identification, site selection and financial assistance with redevelopment through their Redevelopment Revolving Loan. Dan Monks, 802-442-1037

Bennington County Industrial Corporation: Supports business retention, growth, and recruitment of industrial business in the area. BCIC has committed to serve on the Brownfield Steering Committee, provide assistance with site identification, and assistance with development resources. William Colvin, 802-442-0713.

Better Bennington Corporation: Fosters the improvement and development of Bennington's historic downtown. They have committed to serve on the Brownfield Steering Committee, act as liaison with local businesses and downtown residents during area-wide planning, and assist with site identification. John Shanahan, 802-442-5758.

FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION

Shires Housing: Creates/manages housing for low-moderate income residents of the region. They have committed to serve on the Brownfield Steering Committee and funding pre-development affordable housing studies and to pursuing tax credits and other financing for redevelopment based on assessment findings and remediation plans. Shires Housing also will assist with site identification, and are interested in creating mixed use developments on assessed properties. Stephanie Lane, 802-442-8139.

Bennington Economic Development Partners: Develops and implements an economic development strategy for the Bennington area. They have committed to serve on the Brownfield Steering Committee and will provide assistance with identifying sites and priority needs for economic development. Michael Harrington (Chair), 802-442-1037.

d. Partnerships with Workforce Development Programs

The BCRC is actively engaged with the regional Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the Southwest Vermont Career Development Center (SVCDC). The BCRC will meet with SVCDC to determine how students in related training programs can benefit from experience with the assessment program, and will work with the WIB to identify opportunities for workforce development initiatives in this area. The BCRC also regularly engages student interns from Bennington College, Southern Vermont College, and Green Mountain College. The BCRC will continue to conduct outreach to owners who are redeveloping their properties through the program to emphasize local procurements of materials and contractors.

4. Project Benefits

a. Welfare, Environment, Public Health Benefits

Protection and enhancement of public health, welfare, and the environment are principal objectives of the BCRC Brownfield and sustainable community development programs. Most of the Brownfield sites in the Bennington region are abandoned or neglected sites characterized by financially challenged ownership. The environmental contaminants associated with these properties are often not addressed due to lack of financial resources and will continue to pose threats to the community. If left idle, these properties and their contaminants will continue to threaten the environment and the health of surrounding neighborhoods. Identification of contaminated sites and implementation of remediation plans that secure the site until redevelopment increase public awareness while preventing dangerous exposure. The project's focus on Bennington's Growth Center assures that most of the assessed and remediated properties will benefit neighborhoods facing the most severe health threats in the region. Low and moderate income families are disproportionately represented among the residents of these areas. Understanding the nature of any public health threats and developing plans for remediation and economic revitalization of affected properties will directly benefit these residents through a cleaner environment and promotion of mixed use developments that will provide new housing, employment, shopping, and recreational opportunities within these neighborhoods.

The targeted Growth Center area also is the subject of several ongoing planning efforts that promote "healthy community" and "complete streets" principles: redevelopment designs that enable and encourage more physical activity by integrating bicycle and pedestrian facilities, local food stores, and other elements that contribute to healthy lifestyles. The BCRC is cooperating

**FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA
RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION**

with the town to develop a recreational path and to completely redesign a major street in the area, projects that will be closely linked to redevelopment of assessed sites.

A specific outcome of the assessment work will be improved and expanded housing; Shires Housing, a project partner, is actively seeking opportunities to develop additional affordable workforce and senior housing in the Growth Center. By improving the quality and affordability of housing, neighborhoods are revitalized, additional household income is available to address other needs, and the overall welfare of the community is enhanced. The anticipated housing development also will include ground-floor commercial uses, providing local services and job opportunities for residents of the targeted area.

b. Economic and Community Benefits

The BCRC Brownfields Program has provided numerous economic benefits for our region’s communities including raising the property values of brownfield sites and neighboring properties, increasing tax revenues, and creating new jobs. Redevelopment of brownfield sites in the Growth Center has also benefited the downtown retail shops and restaurants. We expect future assessment and remedial actions will produce similar results. Economic benefit will continue to be an important factor in the site selection process. The recently adopted Bennington Town Plan outlines strategies that support a sustainable local economy through development of local resources and assets. The plan recognizes that for economies to be sustainable in the future they must emphasize local resources and assets, function with less total energy, and promote initiatives such as: pursuit of local and regional markets for manufactured products, retention and development of local human resources, expansion of local food systems, and production of renewable energy from local resources. The capacity for redevelopment in Bennington’s Growth Center will allow for the realization of many of these objectives in the heart of the community. The following table lists the amount of vacant or underutilized land within the entire Growth Center and the potential for redevelopment of various types. Many of these redevelopment opportunities are Brownfield sites, the highest concentrations of which are located in the targeted area at the western gateway to the downtown and Growth Center.

Bennington Growth Center Redevelopment Potential	
Available Area by Land Use/Zoning District	Capacity for Redevelopment (based on physical and regulatory constraints)
Residential – 263 acres	850 dwelling units
Commercial – 62 acres	950,000 square feet - commercial space
Industrial – 90 acres	800,000 square feet - office/professional space
Institutional – 87 acres	900,000 square feet - industrial space
Mixed Use – 32 acres	

5. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance

a. Audit Findings

The BCRC has never had any internal or external adverse audit findings associated with its EPA Brownfield program or with any other program or grant.

FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION

b. Programmatic Capability

The BCRC is experienced in managing EPA Brownfield Assessment projects and in carrying out the full range of planning and project management oversight functions required to successfully complete the proposed project within the grant period. All project work will be overseen by the BCRC's Executive Director, James Sullivan, who has over 25 years of planning and program management experience and has been directly involved with the conduct of each of the BCRC's three previous EPA Assessment grant programs. James Henderson, the BCRC's Environmental Program Manager with over 25 years of experience in GIS, environmental, and land use planning, will be responsible for direct oversight of environmental contractors and ensuring that all program outputs are completed in an accurate and timely manner. The BCRC's Director of Sustainable Community Development, William Colvin, will play a key role in ensuring the success of the program by serving as the principal liaison with property owners, developers, and financing institutions.

The project manager and lead staff person have each worked at the BCRC for over 25 years, assuring that a depth of local knowledge, strong community connections, and stability are brought to the project. The community development director, who previously worked in a similar position with the Town of Bennington and for a major local development company, has a strong working knowledge of state and federal economic development and financing programs. Consistency with other BCRC programs is assured because all of the Commission's work is coordinated through the sustainable community development program and its guiding sustainability objectives. If employee turnover occurs for any reason, the BCRC's Executive Director and Executive Committee are guided in recruitment efforts by a comprehensive personnel policy that has proven highly effective in the past.

All professional environmental services will be obtained through BCRC's approved competitive procurement process. The BCRC advertises for requests for qualifications from environmental contractors, selects the most qualified firms, and issues requests for proposals for each individual assessment or remediation planning project. If legal assistance is needed it will be procured using the same process. All such decisions are made by the Brownfield Steering Committee and affirmed by the Executive Committee.

c. Measuring Environmental Results: Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes

BCRC will produce twelve quarterly reports, update ACRES database on all project activities, submit MBE/WBE utilization reports, submit site eligibility forms to EPA and VT DEC and maintain a Brownfields Redevelopment Program link on the BCRC website.

i) Currently or Has Ever Received an EPA Brownfields Grant

1. Accomplishments: Over twenty Phase I, Phase II, and remediation plans have been completed under BCRC's Brownfield initiative since the program's inception in 2005. Although not all assessments have led to full redevelopment, unknown environmental contamination is no longer an impediment to the sale or reuse of any of the properties. Several of the program's success stories are described below:

- Assessments at an underused historic industrial building in North Bennington led to the sale of the property to a developer who subsequently converted a portion of the building to 40

FY17 EPA COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT RANKING CRITERIA RESPONSES BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION

housing units, all of which are now occupied. A previously unused portion of the building is now leased to a manufacturer of snowshoes.

- Assessments and remediation plans resulted in the sale of a former mill building on the Walloomsac River, and are guiding ongoing redevelopment work that includes a start-up distillery of local spirits and the newly established Paper Mill Covered Bridge Park. This project was recognized as an EPA Brownfields Success Story in 2013.
- Extensive assessment of river sediment contamination and remediation planning at a former hydroelectric dam on the Walloomsac River in Bennington has allowed the property owner to receive all state and federal permitting required to re-establish a facility that generates over 200KW of renewable energy at the site and two full time jobs.
- Environmental Site Assessments at another former hydroelectric dam, this one on the Hoosic River in Pownal, provided the information needed for a developer to secure an agreement with the town and financing for cleanup and redevelopment of the facility.
- Petroleum and hazardous substance assessments at a former automobile dealership have led to the redevelopment of a portion of the site by a national retail developer. Implementation of the approved Remediation Plan has led to the redevelopment of the existing historic building into a furniture store creating 8 full time jobs.
- Hazardous substance assessments at a former tannery landfill and associated testing on a large adjacent former gravel pit have led to the implementation of remediation plans that has isolated the contaminated property and the reuse of the now reclaimed gravel extraction site as a 500 KW solar facility.

2. Compliance with Grant Requirements: The BCRC has conducted work under three previous EPA Brownfield grants: BF-97110701, a community-wide petroleum site assessment grant that resulted in completion of Phase I and II evaluations of sites in Bennington, Pownal, Arlington, and Dorset. That grant was successfully closed out, with all funds expended, in January 2008. The second, BF-977186601, was a community-wide hazardous substances assessment grant that was successfully closed out, with all funds expended, in October 2011. Under that grant, Phase I and II assessments and remediation planning were completed for one site in Pownal and three sites in Bennington, and an expanded sites inventory was compiled. The third grant, BF-961315010 provided funding for ten petroleum and hazardous site assessments, five approved remediation plans, as well as a focused Brownfields AWP covering a key portion of Bennington's state designated Growth Center. This grant was successfully closed out in September, 2014.

The BCRC is in full compliance with past cooperative agreements, has submitted required quarterly reports, financial status reports, and has kept site information current through timely submission of property profile forms and the ACRES database. The BCRC has prepared and implemented Community Relations Plans associated with the remediation and reuse plans at those sites. The EPA Region I Project Officer assigned to BCRC's current project is Christine Lombard (617-918-1305).

Appendix 3 - Regional Priorities Form/Other Factors Checklist

Name of Applicant: Bennington County Regional Commission

Regional Priorities Other Factor

If your proposed Brownfields Assessment project will advance the regional priority(ies) identified in Section I.F., please indicate the regional priority(ies) and the page number(s) for where the information can be found within your 15-page narrative. Only address the priority(ies) for the region in which your project is located. EPA will verify these disclosures prior to selection and may consider this information during the selection process. If this information is not clearly discussed in your narrative proposal, it will not be considered during the selection process.

Regional Priority Title(s):
Coordinated Public Funding for Brownfields

Page Number(s): Page 9 Ability to Leverage

Assessment Other Factors Checklist

Please identify (with an **x**) which, if any, of the below items apply to your community or your project as described in your proposal. To be considered for an Other Factor, you must include the page number where each applicable factor is discussed in your proposal. EPA will verify these disclosures prior to selection and may consider this information during the selection process. If this information is not clearly discussed in your narrative proposal or in any other attachments, it will not be considered during the selection process.

Other Factor	Page #
<i>None of the Other Factors are applicable.</i>	
Community population is 10,000 or less.	
Applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian tribe or United States territory.	
Target brownfield sites are impacted by mine-scarred land.	
Project is primarily focusing on Phase II assessments. x	5, 8
Applicant demonstrates firm leveraging commitments for facilitating brownfield project completion by identifying amounts and contributors of funding in the proposal and have included documentation.	
Recent (2008 or later) significant economic disruption has occurred within community, resulting in a significant percentage loss of community jobs and tax base.	
Applicant is one of the 24 recipients, or a core partner/implementation strategy party, of a "manufacturing community" designation provided by the Economic	

<p>Development Administration (EDA) under the Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership (IMCP). To be considered, applicants must clearly demonstrate in the proposal the nexus between their IMCP designation and the Brownfield activities. Additionally, applicants must attach documentation which demonstrate either designation as one of the 24 recipients, or relevant pages from a recipient's IMCP proposal which lists/describes the core partners and implementation strategy parties.</p>	
<p>Applicant is a recipient or a core partner of HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities (PSC) grant funding or technical assistance that is directly tied to the proposed Brownfields project, and can demonstrate that funding from a PSC grant/technical assistance has or will benefit the project area. Examples of PSC grant or technical assistance include a HUD Regional Planning or Challenge grant, DOT Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER), or EPA Smart Growth Implementation or Building Blocks Assistance, etc. To be considered, applicant must attach documentation.</p>	
<p>Applicant is a recipient of an EPA Brownfields Area-Wide Planning grant.</p>	<p>x 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9</p>



AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

State of Vermont
Department of Environmental Conservation
Waste Management & Prevention Division
1 National Life Drive – Davis 1
Montpelier, VT 05620-3704
(802) 249-5822
Patricia.coppolino@vermont.gov

Bennington County Regional Commission
Attn: Jim Henderson
111 South Street, Suite 203
Bennington, VT 05201

December 9, 2016

Dear Mr. Henderson,

This letter will serve as acknowledgment that the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has received notice that the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) intends to apply for a hazardous EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant and to use the grant funds, if awarded, to conduct general site assessment activities associated with the characterization of non-petroleum related brownfield properties within the BCRC region of Vermont.

The State of Vermont is very appreciative of your programmatic successes and of your intent to apply for additional grant funding, as BCRC's local involvement in the Brownfield Program continues to assist us in the inventory and assessment of properties in Vermont. The objectives of the assessments are appropriate and consistent and continue to progress the objectives of the Vermont Brownfields Program.

As you progress in your efforts with brownfield assessments, the Vermont DEC looks forward to working collaboratively with BCRC to assist potential developers enter the Vermont Brownfield Environmental Liability Limitation Program, through which additional cleanup funding is available.

Good luck in the competition.

Sincerely,

Patricia Coppolino, Environmental Program Manager
Sites Management Section
Waste Management and Prevention Division





AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

State of Vermont
Department of Environmental Conservation
Waste Management & Prevention Division
1 National Life Drive – Davis 1
Montpelier, VT 05620-3704
(802) 249-5822
Patricia.coppolino@vermont.gov

Bennington County Regional Commission
Attn: Jim Henderson
111 South Street, Suite 203
Bennington, VT 05201

December 9, 2016

Dear Mr. Henderson,

This letter will serve as acknowledgment that the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has received notice that the Bennington County Regional Commission intends to apply for a petroleum EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant and to use the grant funds, if awarded, to conduct general site assessment activities associated with the characterization of petroleum related brownfield properties within the BCRC region of Vermont.

The State of Vermont is very appreciative of your programmatic successes and of your intent to apply for additional grant funding, as BCRC's local involvement in the Brownfield Program continues to assist us in the inventory and assessment of properties in Vermont. The objectives of the assessments are appropriate and consistent and continue to progress the objectives of the Vermont Brownfields Program and we will assist in the petroleum determinations for identified properties.

As you progress in your efforts with brownfield assessments, the Vermont DEC looks forward to working collaboratively with BCRC to assist potential developers enter the Vermont Brownfield Environmental Liability Limitation Program and Petroleum Cleanup Fund, through which additional cleanup funding is available.

Good luck in the competition.

Sincerely,

Patricia Coppolino, Environmental Program Manager
Brownfields Response Program
Waste Management and Prevention Division



Threshold Criteria

1. **Applicant Eligibility:** The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) is a regional planning agency established in 1967 by its 17 member municipalities under authority granted by the State of Vermont (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117). As such, it is eligible to apply for EPA Brownfields Assessment Grants as a regional council or group of general purpose units of local government. The Commission's governing body consists of representatives appointed by each member municipality plus members representing the following interests: economic development, local businesses, local agriculture and food systems, arts and the creative economy, housing, conservation, and transportation. The organization's mission is to "work with and on behalf of its member municipalities to build strong, resilient, and sustainable communities, to foster economic prosperity, and to promote a high quality of life for residents of the region." This mission is accomplished through direct planning and community development assistance to town and village governments, through preparation and implementation of regional plans and studies, and through synergistic working relationships with local and regional organizations. The BCRC employs professional staff with expertise in sustainable community development, environmental science, geographic information systems, solid waste management, and transportation, land use, energy, and emergency management planning. The BCRC has successfully completed work under previous EPA Petroleum and Hazardous Substances Brownfields Assessment Grants.
2. **Community Involvement Plan:** Community involvement has been a hallmark of the BCRC's Brownfield Program and the Commission will continue to ensure that the process is open and that a variety of means are available for residents and organizations to participate in this ongoing program. Because strong and consistent community involvement is essential to ensuring comprehensive assessments, remediation planning, and to ensure successful redevelopment, the BCRC will communicate and cooperate with key players throughout the process. A widely publicized public meeting will be held at the town's public meeting hall, located in the center of the targeted area within the Growth Center. At that meeting, project goals will be reviewed, maps and site inventory information presented, and people will have an opportunity to discuss needs, desires, priorities, and how to best organize future meetings. Email/mail lists will be maintained so that regular project updates can be distributed; project updates also will be made available through BCRC's website and a Facebook page dedicated to the project. A key feature of the BCRC effort is utilization of the Commission's sustainable community development program staff to meet regularly with site owners, local officials, and potential developers and investors.



December 20, 2016

James K. Henderson
Environmental Program Manager
Bennington County Regional Commission
Bennington, Vermont

Dear Mr. Henderson:

The Bennington County Industrial Corporation (BCIC) is pleased to provide this Letter of Commitment to support the ongoing brownfield planning work of the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC). The Town of Bennington has begun to turn a corner from an economic development perspective, and continuing BCRC's successful Assessment work is vital to this ongoing revitalization.

As the regional development corporation for Bennington County, BCIC cannot overstate the importance of brownfield redevelopment programs to a town like Bennington. Its downtown, village centers, waterways, and connecting thoroughfares provide no shortage of properties with significant redevelopment potential. Environmental factors often create barriers to the reuse of industrial, commercial, and residential properties of historic and cultural relevance, as well as sound structural integrity. For example, the Putnam Block redevelopment project, which would redevelop over 4 acres of former hotel and vacant industrial space in the center of Bennington's downtown, received a 4,500-page Phase I assessment earlier this year. The document is indicative of the complexity of the industrial legacy: the activity that initially served as a catalyst for compact, downtown community development created the circumstances that eventually led to vacant and derelict properties in those same downtowns.

BCRC's brownfield redevelopment program is helping to reverse that trend, bringing more businesses, residents, visitors, tax revenues, and prosperity to our region's largest municipality. We at BCIC will continue to support this work in whatever way possible, especially through our place on the BCRC Brownfield Redevelopment Steering Committee.

Sincerely,

William Colvin
Acting Director
Bennington County Industrial Corporation
Bennington, Vermont

Address:
111 South Street
Suite 203
Bennington, VT 05201

Phone:
802-442-0713

Email:
info@bcic.org

Web:
www.bcic.org



BENNINGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

December 13, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is being written in support of the Bennington County Regional Commission's application for funding through the Brownfield Assessment Grant (BAG), a program that has enormous impact on the town of Bennington, and which has done so in years past. Specifically, this program has enabled the Town to capitalize on redevelopment opportunities, which otherwise would not have been available.

Specifically, in Bennington, a small group of local investors have combined their resources to begin the process of revitalizing an entire downtown block. This block is home to the historic Putnam Hotel, built in 1870, and includes three additional historic building know as the Drysdale Building, the Winslow Building and the Knights of Columbus Building. However, with over a 180 years' worth of use, there is substantial remediation work needed to bring this area back to life.

Unfortunately, as with most evolving communities, there is no shortage of properties that could benefit from this funding, but using the example above, we feel that this program is our best shot at making a measurable improvement on a list that includes former manufacturing sites, a print shop, and a prior hardware store.

In closing, the redevelopment of sites identified as brownfields is crucial to the economic success of Bennington, which has come a long way since its former 'mill town' days. The Bennington Economic Development Partners are proud to offer their support and assistance to the Regional Commission in any capacity needed to effectively manage and distribute future resources from the BAG program. Thank you for your consideration and we hope you see the benefit of continuing to support the vital work of the Bennington Country Regional Commission.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Harrington
Facilitator, Bennington Economic Development Partners



December 20, 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept this letter of support for the Bennington County Regional Commission. The BCRC is a strategic partner in the efforts of the Better Bennington Corporation, and all that we strive to accomplish in downtown Bennington.

Brownfield redevelopment has been one of the more celebrated success stories in our downtown business community in recent years. Downtown business and property owners alike are all interested in the efforts that went into turning a brownfield site into a thriving downtown business. My commitment to continued participation on the steering committee is supported by my board and our membership due to this remarkable success.

The recent prospect of a major redevelopment project at the Putnam Hotel property in downtown Bennington is much more than just the restoration of an historic property; it's an economic development boost of historic proportions for our entire business community.

If additional input to clarify just how important this project is to our organization, our business partners, and the over economic development efforts in our community is needed, please contact me at the number listed below.

Respectfully,

John Shannahan

John Shannahan, Executive Director
Better Bennington Corporation

The Mission of
the Better
Bennington
Corporation is
to Build,
Improve, and
Support a Vital
Downtown that
Benefits Our
Entire
Community



Top Quality Housing That Fits Your Budget!

12/14/2016

Jim Henderson
Environmental Program Manager
Bennington County Regional Commission
210 South Street
Bennington, VT 05201

Dear Mr. Henderson:

Shires Housing is writing to provide support for the Bennington County Regional Commission's application for funding through the EPA Brownfields Assessment Initiative. Shires Housing's developments often include the restoration of historic structures in key downtown and village centers. We will continue to support ongoing efforts to revitalize distressed sites and community centers, in partnership with BCRC and other local partners.

Shires Housing is a not for profit housing organization whose mission is to provide decent, safe, affordable housing to limited income residents. As part of that mission, Shires develops and rehabilitates affordable housing projects throughout Bennington County and preserves them for low to moderate income households. We feel there are many opportunities for Bennington in regard to Brownfields assessment and remediation. In previous years Shires Housing has been an ongoing participant in the Brownfields Task Force and this year have committed to participate in the BCRC Brownfield Steering Committee. As a result, Shires has been familiar with the list of targeted sites. As we continue to identify our pipeline of potential future development sites, we feel that several of the properties on BCRC's list seem suitable for housing or mixed use development. If even one of these potential sites were to be developed and a housing project realized through this valuable partnership, and as a result of funds secured through the Brownfields Initiative, the funds would be leveraged many times over by state and federal housing agency resources.

Often, these proposed developments include sites that contain environmental concerns and this can easily present road blocks for federal and state funded affordable housing projects, or even prevent their development entirely. That is why we think it is essential that BCRC secure these EPA funds for assessments. Affordable housing funders such as the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board are more likely to consider moving forward with a housing development on a site with evidence of past contamination when they have ready access to information and site history and can have estimates for remediation that are as accurate and timely as possible. The BCRC Brownfields Initiative could complement our development efforts in the community by removing environmental barriers to development of certain sites that are otherwise ideally suited for affordable housing development. Partnering our efforts could also serve to further the Town of Bennington's economic development strategies.





Top Quality Housing That Fits Your Budget!

There are tremendous partnering opportunities and potential developments in the town of Bennington. EPA Brownfields funds are essential to ensuring that these properties are efficiently and properly assessed and support development plans that stimulate jobs and the economy and provide essential housing opportunities that may move forward unobstructed.

Shires Housing is pleased to offer our full support of the BCRC's funding proposal and the EPA Brownfields Assessment Initiative.

Sincerely:

Stephanie Lane
Executive Director
Shires Housing, Inc.



TOWN OF BENNINGTON

December 13, 2016

James Henderson
Environmental Projects Manager
Bennington County Regional Commission
111 South Street, Suite 203
Bennington, VT 05201

Re: Brownfields Program

Dear Mr. Henderson:

The Town of Bennington continues to wholeheartedly support the Bennington County Regional Commission's (BCRC) Brownfields Redevelopment Program. Town officials have served and will continue to serve on BCRC's Brownfields Redevelopment Steering Committee, and Town staff has and will continue to coordinate with BCRC on brownfield re-development projects.

As you know, the program has resulted in the successful re-development of high profile properties in Bennington. Most recently, the work done by BCRC paved the way for the remediation and re-development of the long vacant former Alcaro Motors car dealership on Main Street in Bennington. The development, through BCRC's Brownfield Redevelopment Program funded by the EPA, of an approved remediation plan for the Alcaro property was essential to the sale of the property and subsequent remediation of environmental hazards, renovation of the building and conversion of the property to a retail furniture and appliance store.

The Town looks forward to partnering with BCRC on future brownfields redevelopment projects.

Sincerely,

Daniel W. Monks
Assistant Town Manager