



Dan M. Gibson, Mayor
 124 South Pearl Street
 Natchez MS 39120
 P: 601.445.7500
 E: mayor@natchez.ms.us



1. Applicant Identification
 City of Natchez
 124 S. Pearl Street
 Natchez, MS 39120
2. Website URL
www.natchez.ms.us
3. Funding Requested
 - a. Assessment Grant Type – Community Wide
 - b. Federal Funds Requested - \$500,000
4. Location
 - a) City of Natchez
 - b) Adams County
 - c) Mississippi
5. Target Area and Priority Site Information
 - Downtown Target Area (Census Tract 28001000700)
 - **Priority Site #1– Former Gas Station and Dry Cleaner**
 6 Saint Catherine Street
 Natchez, MS 39120
 - **Priority Site #2 – Former Gas Station**
 Eastern corner of St. Catherine Street and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street
 Natchez, MS 39120
 - **Priority Site #3 - Natchez Pecan Shelling Company**
 512 Broadway
 Natchez, MS 39120
 - **Priority Site #4 - Carpet Sales & Service**
 100 State Street
 Natchez, MS 39120
6. Contacts
 - a. Project Director
 James Johnston
 Department of Planning and Community Development
 (601) 445-7518
jjohnston@natchez.ms.us
 124 S Pearl St.

Natchez, MS39120

b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Official

Mayor Dan M. Gibson

(601) 445-7555

mayor@natchez.ms.us

124 S Pearl St.

Natchez, MS39120

7. Population – 14,380

8. Other Factors Checklist

Other Factors	Page #
Community population is 15,000 or less.	4, 5
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian Tribe or United States Territory.	
The priority site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	
The priority site(s) is adjacent to a body of water (i.e., the border of the priority site(s) is contiguous or partially contiguous to the body of water, or would be contiguous or partially contiguous with a body of water but for a street, road, or other public thoroughfare separating them).	
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	
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 efficiency measures.	
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).	
The target area(s) is impacted by a coal-fired power plant that has recently closed (2014 or later) or is closing.	

9. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority

Attached.

10. Releasing Copies of Applications

Not applicable.

Sincerely,



Dan M. Gibson
Mayor



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
TATE REEVES
GOVERNOR

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
CHRIS WELLS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

October 25, 2024

Dan M. Gibson, Mayor
City of Natchez
124 South Pearl Street
Natchez, MS 39120

**RE: EPA Brownfield Grant Application Acknowledgement
FY25 EPA 104(k) Brownfield Community-Wide Assessment Grant
City of Natchez**

Dear Mayor Gibson:

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) hereby acknowledges the City of Natchez's plans to conduct brownfield assessments and apply for federal grant funds through the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields initiative. MDEQ believes the targeted areas within the City of Natchez community are in considerable need of brownfield assessment and future redevelopment opportunities. The City of Natchez has shown the programmatic capability and experience to turn brownfield assessments into cleanup planning and reuse opportunities for their community.

Since many brownfields are abandoned, underutilized, and contaminated, MDEQ is expressly interested in seeing entities like the City of Natchez taking the initiative to assess, remediate, and return these sites to productive use. These efforts are consistent with our mission to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of present and future generations of Mississippians.

MDEQ looks forward to our role in the City of Natchez's Brownfield Initiative and are available to assist you at any time. Should you have any questions or comments concerning this matter, please contact me at (601) 961-5240.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Thomas L. Wallace".

Thomas L. Wallace, P.E.
Division Chief - GARD
Mississippi Brownfield Coordinator

1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION (40 points)**I.a. Target Area and Brownfields (20 points)**

I.a.i. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area (5 points): In 1716, Natchez was established as a French fort site overlooking the Mississippi River. French settlers brought people from western Africa as slaves to provide labor for the development of Natchez. These members of the Bambara tribe – whose name means “those who accept no master” – were the first Africans in what would become the State of Mississippi and contributed greatly to the economic growth of the region and the nation. As one of the oldest incorporated cities in Mississippi, Natchez became a significant trading port and eventually the second-largest slave port in the south because of its deep-water access on the Mississippi River. For 30 years, tens of thousands of enslaved Africans resisted their bondage, yet they continued to be sold until Union forces arrived in 1863 and set up camp. After the war, like most southern cities, a high number of formerly enslaved people remained in Natchez. Reconstruction in Mississippi lasted for 11 years, resulting in 226 Black Mississippians obtaining elected office on local, state, and federal levels. Most notable was Hiram R. Revels, who became the first Black Senator from Natchez and the founder of several schools for Black children. The growth and improvements from Reconstruction, however, didn’t last. Black Codes and Jim Crow Laws became common within the city and state, and Natchez became a hotbed for racism, segregation, and anti-Civil Rights activity.

However, we are now proud to say that the Natchez of today has come a long way. The city’s direction and focus are similar to a Sankofa, an African proverb and tribal symbol represented by a bird looking backward to protect an egg on its back – a symbol of one going back to honor the past so that it can improve the future. That’s exactly what Natchez has done through various projects made possible by funding from our Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Brownfield Coalition Grant (teamed with Adams County and Friends of the Riverfront (FOR) Natchez non-profit). We in Natchez believe that recognizing and embracing our history, good and bad, gives us an opportunity to visualize the importance of moving forward into a transformed, unified and improved future. Part of that change is being able to easily connect the richness of all our cultural spaces around the city, thus creating a complete history and trail of historical sites, monuments, and museums that should be on any must-see list. Location by location, we want our past to be told in vivid detail – each location treasured and respected for the role it played in the City’s and our nation’s history. We at the City of Natchez are submitting this Brownfield Community-wide Assessment Grant proposal for the purpose of continuing the good work and progress that we have achieved through our FY2021 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant. Funding provided through this proposed Brownfield Community-wide Assessment Grant will assist with our two main goals: **to increase tourism and to promote economic recovery and job growth.**

Currently, the main economic driver for Natchez-Adams County is tourism. Our Downtown Master Plan (DMP), developed by FOR Natchez and adopted in May 2018, promotes redevelopment and tourism in downtown Natchez. Our DMP¹ includes detailed plans to develop the Natchez Bluffs, improve biking/walking trails, beautify streetscapes, and attract entrepreneurs/restauranteurs to our historic downtown. One of the DMP’s top priorities is to develop an African American museum and pavilion in the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Triangle sub-area of our downtown. Funding from our FY2021 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant allowed us to perform vital environmental assessments on the MLK Triangle Filling Station Property (a priority site in the FY2021 grant and the DMP) **thereby allowing us to obtain funding to develop an African American history museum and pavilion on the priority site.** However, there are still blighted brownfield sites surrounding this newly developed area that require environmental assessments and potential cleanups. Grant assessments and planning activities will allow our community to quantify environmental issues and qualify environmental stigma associated with brownfield properties located throughout our downtown and surrounding the MLK Triangle property. This will aid us in achieving **our first goal of increasing tourism** and our DMP’s goals of beautification, increased walkability, and increased awareness and respect for the history of our African American citizens. Increased tourism will allow us to realize our second goal of **promoting economic recovery and job growth.**

We have prioritized the following Target Area based on our DMP and our two main goals, with this Target Area being located within a federally-designated *Opportunity Zone*. **Target Area Description (Downtown): This 2.75-sq. mile area is bounded to the E/SE by D’Evereaux Drive; to the S/SW by MS Highway 84; to the N/NW by the Mississippi River; and to the N/NE by W. Oak St. and Dr. M. L. King Blvd. The downtown Target Area includes the Natchez Bluffs Park, the inspiration for New York City’s Central Park, located high above the majestic Mississippi River.** Abandoned industrial and commercial facilities mar the Broadway sub-area of the Downtown Target Area, located adjacent to the Natchez Bluffs and distract from the magnificent beauty of the Mississippi River, hindering economic development associated with tourism. The downtown Target Area also includes the MLK Triangle sub-area, located near the intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and St. Catherine Street, which once served as the cultural/historic hub of Natchez’s Black community. Brownfield sites are ubiquitous in the MLK Triangle sub-area and include old gas stations and dry cleaners, which are planned sites for redevelopment per our DMP. Brownfield sites in Natchez, particularly in the Downtown Target Area, have long hindered economic development and tourism. Despite plans to improve downtown infrastructure, walkability, and local businesses through the DMP, these environmental challenges continue to prevent growth. The impact of these brownfields is felt most by the community’s population. Natchez, with a population of around 15,000, has a majority Black population (around 60%). For many residents, especially in historically underserved areas like the MLK Triangle sub-area of the Downtown Target Area, the presence of brownfields contributes to economic stagnation, higher health risks, and a lack of opportunity. One reason for these poor economic statistics is the poverty created from the loss of hundreds of jobs due to debilitating economic conditions related to the outmigration of several industries, including Titan Tire, International Paper, KCS Lumber Co., Ethyl Petroleum, and Johns Manville. The area’s poverty rate is approximately 70%, and many local residents depend on the tourism and service industries for employment. Yet, the blighted condition of the Target Area, with brownfields near the Mississippi River and the Natchez Bluffs, significantly undermines efforts to attract tourists and create jobs. While the Downtown Master Plan (DMP) aims to improve infrastructure, beautify streetscapes, and increase walkability, the pervasive brownfields continue to stifle these efforts. Removing the environmental hazards will not only reduce health risks but also eliminate the stigma that deters tourists and investors. A cleaner, revitalized downtown will lead to increased foot traffic, more businesses, and higher property values. Addressing brownfield challenges in our historic downtown is crucial in promoting our **two main goals (increasing tourism & job creation)** but also is crucial in making our community more cohesive and unified – particularly in our historically marginalized communities. Assessment and

¹ Downtown Natchez Master Plan (DMP), <http://www.natchez.ms.us/DocumentCenter/View/421/Downtown-Natchez-Master-Plan-PDF>

cleanup efforts are essential to create a sustainable, unified, and thriving Natchez for the future.

1.a.ii. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s) (10 points): Data obtained from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Uncontrolled Sites List indicate approximately 25 identified potential brownfield sites, 20 underground storage tank (UST) sites, 5 of which have known releases of contamination, and over 50 underutilized properties within the Target Area². **The priority sites for this proposed grant are significant priorities for Natchez because of their historical significance, economic potential, and prime locations for redevelopment. Priority Site #1 – Former Gas Station and Dry Cleaner**, located in the **MLK sub-area of the Downtown Target Area**, approximately 0.4 acres in size, is located at 6 Saint Catherine Street and owned by a variety of private residents. The site is comprised of various abandoned store fronts and was determined to be the historical location of a former gas station and dry-cleaning facility. **Priority Site #2 – Former Gas Station**, located in the MLK sub-area of the Downtown Target Area, approximately 0.5 acres in size, is located at the eastern corner of St. Catherine Street and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street. The site is comprised of an abandoned building owned by a private resident and was determined to be the historical location of a former gas station. Sites #1 and #2 are priorities because they adjoin the MLK Triangle Property (future new African American history museum and pavilion) to the south and north, respectively. We want to continue the good work accomplished during our FY2021 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant and continue focusing on this historically-rich and significant area to further tell the history of our African American citizens. Locals have worked tirelessly to improve the aesthetics of the buildings in the MLK sub-area of Downtown; however, environmental stigma and potential impacts still exist for these priority sites. During the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) of the MLK Triangle property (funded by the FY2021 Brownfield Coalition Grant), it was determined that Priority Sites #1 and #2 operated as gas stations and/or dry cleaners and that underground storage tanks (UST) prior to 1988 compliance regulations are likely still located on the sites. Brownfield grant funds will allow us to further assess these sites and plan for cleanup activities. **Priority Sites #1 and #2** have the following contaminants of potential concern (COPC): asbestos, volatile organic compounds (VOC), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH), and total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH). **Priority Site #3 - Natchez Pecan Shelling Company** is located at 512 Broadway in the **Natchez Bluffs sub-area of the Downtown Target Area**. The Natchez Pecan Shelling Co. property is a petroleum brownfield site³ and on the National Register of Historic Places Landmark. The former dilapidated building has been demolished, and the vacant, potentially contaminated lot has much promise for redevelopment. Past industrial operations on the site included shelling pecans, insecticide use, and transportation/trucking. **This is a priority site because of its location on old Spanish Parade Grounds (along the Natchez Bluffs) and because it is ripe for development as park space and open-air pavilion tied to tourism and job creation. COPCs include insecticides and TPH.** **Priority Site #4 - Carpet Sales & Service** is located at 100 State Street in the **Broadway sub-area of the Downtown Target Area** and is adjacent to the Natchez Bluff biking/walking trails. Potential asbestos issues/impacts from prolonged carpet cleaning solvent usage need to be assessed before redevelopment/reuse can proceed. This is a priority site because of its planned redevelopment into mixed use housing and a bicycle shop for citizens to enjoy the nearby biking/walking trails – thereby promoting increased tourism and improved health.

1.a.iii. Identifying Additional Sites (5 points): If grant funds remain after addressing the priority sites in the Downtown Target Area, we will assess additional sites that were identified in our FY2021 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant and through findings from assessments performed during this FY2025 Brownfield Community-wide Assessment Grant. Additional sites will be selected based on prioritization criteria which will include if the site is in an underserved community and/or a disadvantaged community (as identified by CEJST), infrastructure amenities, environmental conditions, building characteristics, redevelopment incentives, community capacity, community characteristics, site use, and located within the Target Area/near priority sites.

1.b. Revitalization of the Target Area (10 points)

1.b.i. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans (5 points): The DMP is a 10-year plan that focuses on the **Downtown Target Area** and is a strategic plan for economic development that we adopted in May 2018. Our vision in the DMP includes the creation of a vibrant, walkable downtown with amenities that support recreation and tourism, preserve historic buildings, and maximize infrastructure reuse. The DMP won Mississippi’s 2018 “Best Project and Outstanding Project Award” from the MS Chapter of the American Planning Association. When the DMP was completed, the plan’s greatest urgency was to save the decaying historic buildings in the **MLK Triangle sub-area of the Downtown Target Area**. The MLK Triangle Filling Station property was a catalyst site in the transformation of the MLK sub-area detailed in our DMP. Our FY2021 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant provided the funding necessary for environmental assessments of the MLK Triangle Filling Station property –thereby resulting in a “clean bill of health” for the site and the subsequent development of an African American history museum and pavilion (planned and funded thanks to assessments performed during our FY2021 Brownfield Grant). Our DMP envisions further developing the MLK Triangle sub-area into the hub of a Black Cultural Heritage District focused on celebrating African American history and culture. We plan to maintain existing infrastructure and encourage compatible infill buildings in this sub-area. Not only does the MLK Triangle sub-area now house the future African American history museum and pavilion, but it also is the location of the tragic Rhythm Night Club fire, which kill 209 people and injured over 200 people – all victims were African American. We want this area to not only acknowledge the achievements of our African American citizens but to also pay homage to the victims of this tragedy. Priority Sites #1 and #2 both adjoin the planned and funded African American history museum and pavilion site, and Priority Site #2 also adjoins the Rhythm Night Club site. Reuse plans for these sites (**Priority Sites #1 and #2**) include retail and/or restaurants for the purpose of attracting more visitors. Environmental assessments performed through this grant will provide necessary information and due diligence to attract developers and entrepreneurs to invest in the MLK Triangle sub-area. Site Reuse Visions will also be performed for Priority Sites #1 and #2 and will allow us to compile an extensive revitalization vision of the MLK Triangle sub-area. Grant activities proposed for Priority Sites #1 and #2 include a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA), ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey, Phase II ESA, asbestos survey, site reuse assessment, and site reuse vision.

Potential reuses of the Natchez Bluffs and Broadway sub-areas of the **Downtown Target Area** are endless because of their beauty and history. Our DMP proposes to repurpose **Priority Site #4** as a mixed use housing and a bicycle rental facility on its lower level due to its proximity to our biking/walking trails. Natchez installed informational panels along the

² <https://www.mdeq.ms.gov/water/groundwater-assessment-and-remediation/uncontrolled-sites/>

³ <https://www.mdeq.ms.gov/water/groundwater-assessment-and-remediation/brownfields/>

Natchez Bluff, historic downtown, and St. Catherine Street trails, and these panels detail the rich history of our city. A bicycle rental facility will be a popular attraction for tourists who wish to make use of these trails, and due diligence for this site is needed to satisfy our federal partners, including the National Parks Service, as part of their Environmental Assessment (EA) protocol. The DMP also includes a conceptual site plan for an open-air pavilion to host outdoor concerts and other events at Priority Site #3 on the north end of the Natchez Bluffs. Completion of ESAs would provide necessary due diligence to aid in property acquisition and proper cleanup of the priority site. Activities proposed for Priority Sites #3 and #4 include a Phase I ESA, Phase II ESA, and asbestos survey (excluding Priority Site #3).

1.b.ii. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy (5 points):

Our Downtown Target Area is considered an urban area. According to U.S. Travel Association’s publication, *Travel: America’s Unsung Hero of Job Creation*⁴, the travel/tourism industry is the 7th largest employer in the United States and an essential component to the lifeblood of small businesses. Tourism is a vital reason why our community has been able to survive, but we see tourism as an area where we can thrive instead of only surviving!

In 2023, one million tourists visited Natchez, accounting for \$100 million in economic impact and close to 1,800 jobs – making Natchez, on a per capita basis, the top performing tourism destination of any small city in our region. Visit Natchez conducts research on tourism each year, and according to their research study and strategic plan, it was identified that Natchez is more often sought after and visited by specific demographics and significantly underperforming in other demographics. Families represent 75% of our visitation, while travelers coming with only friends or solo only represent a combined 16%. Females represent 63% of our travel while males only represent 37%. Caucasians represent 96% of visitors while African Americans represent only 1%. Visitors over the age of 55 represent 71% of our travelers with Millennials only representing 12%. There are opportunities for us to grow tourism through expanding focus to less represented groups.

The DMP revealed a lack of entertainment space, currently 2%, given the city’s dependence on tourism-related revenue. Redevelopment of **Priority Sites #1 and #2** into retail or restaurants and **Priority Site #3** into an open-air pavilion with adjacent green space to host concerts and other events will help meet a need by both increasing entertainment space and boosting revenue, allowing our community the resources to reinvest in our Target Area. The redevelopment plans will also attract younger tourists with opportunities of concerts, retail, and restaurants, and will also attract more African American tourists because of the expanded museum options that tell the accomplishments and history of our Black citizens. The creation of entertainment space, central meeting points, and expanded historical destinations will be attractive to potential businesses in this *Opportunity Zone*.

Based on a ratio of tourism dollars spent to jobs created in our City, for every \$1M spent by tourists, 18 jobs are created. We estimate that improved walkability and biking trails, increased retail and restaurant options, and a wider range of our heritage showcased can increase tourism dollars at least 30% (to \$130M), thereby adding at least 540 new jobs in Natchez.

The cleanup and reuse of **Priority Sites #1 and #2** will significantly enhance local climate adaptation and resilience by addressing environmental hazards and promoting sustainable redevelopment. These sites, historically contaminated by activities such as gas stations and dry cleaners, are located in a pivotal area adjacent to the planned and funded African American history museum and the Rhythm Night Club memorial. The redevelopment of these sites into retail and restaurant spaces will not only drive economic growth but also contribute to climate mitigation by increasing walkability and promoting green infrastructure in the area. The cleanup and redevelopment of **Priority Sites #3 and #4** will also play a critical role in enhancing the local climate adaptation and mitigation capacity, supporting resilience, and protecting community investments. **Priority Site #3** offers significant potential for transforming a historically contaminated site into a valuable community asset. By addressing contamination from insecticides and petroleum hydrocarbons, the site will be made safe for public use, while the new green space will provide ecological benefits, such as reducing the urban heat island effect and promoting carbon sequestration. Additionally, this redevelopment aligns with the community’s goals for climate resilience by creating a vibrant public space that mitigates flooding risks and fosters natural cooling. **Priority Site #4’s** cleanup will remove any lingering asbestos and solvent-related contaminants, ensuring that the space is safe for residential and recreational use. The redevelopment will not only support the area’s walkability and reduce car dependency but also enhance local tourism by attracting visitors who will use the nearby trails. By promoting sustainable transportation options like biking, the project will contribute to reducing the area’s carbon footprint. Furthermore, it will integrate green infrastructure features, such as permeable surfaces and energy-efficient buildings, helping to mitigate climate impacts while improving the community’s resilience to extreme weather events. As part of the broader Downtown Master Plan (DMP), which emphasizes sustainable urban development, these efforts will improve community resilience to climate impacts by increasing the availability of green spaces, enhancing tourism, fostering local investment, enhancing public health, and creating climate-spert spaces that strengthen the area’s overall resilience.

1.c. Strategy for Leveraging Resources (10 points)

1.c.i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse (5 points):

The following table summarizes three recently awarded projects relating to the Target Area/priority sites that we have identified. We will utilize these funds in combination with available incentives to spur redevelopment, attract developers, and accomplish our **DMP** strategies for economic and social revitalization.

Organization	Amount	Purpose	Status
MS Dept. of Health	\$120,000.00	MLK Triangle sub-area of Downtown Target Area for health impact assessments (Priority Sites #1 and #2).	Awarded
MS Dept. of Archives and History (including local match)	\$325,000.00	Rehabilitation of Yazoo and MS Valley Railroad Depot for use as a visitor center in the Broadway sub-area of Downtown Natchez Target Area (near Priority Site #4).	Awarded
City General Obligation Bond	\$256,000.00	Electrical improvements to North Bluff sub-area of Downtown Natchez Target Area (including Priority Site #3). Also includes the installation of an Electric Vehicle charger station.	Awarded
Mississippi Department of	\$586,375.50	Update sidewalks along 100 block of North Commerce Street to current American with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, add lighting to improve	Awarded

⁴ https://www.ustravel.org/system/files/media_root/document/Research_Reports_Travel-America%27s-Unsung-Hero-of-Job-Creation.pdf

Organization	Amount	Purpose	Status
Transportation (including local match)		pedestrian and vehicle safety, and improve handicapped ramp accesses at two intersections. These improvements are being conducted in the Downtown Target Area.	
Dept. of Housing and Urban Development	\$1,000,000.00	City of Natchez Forks to Freedom Infrastructure Improvement Program to complete environmental reviewed, site preparation, and infrastructure improvements along St. Catherine Street (MLK Triangle sub-area) to the Natchez Bluff (North Bluff and Broadway sub-areas) for the development of the Hiram Revels Plaza and U.S. Colored Troops Monument sites. These funds will be used to redevelop the MLK Triangle Property into the African American history museum and pavilion. The Forks to Freedom Park will connect the sub-areas of the Downtown Target Area and will also be used to make redevelopment of priority sites (especially Priority Sites #1 and #2 into reality).	Awarded

A combination of federal, state, and local funding/incentive opportunities encompass our leveraged resources. In partnership with FOR Natchez, we previously leveraged planning resources to envision the transformation of the MLK Triangle sub-area into a high-quality public space, including **the preservation and rehabilitation of the old MLK Triangle filling station into the future African American museum and pavilion located in the MLK Triangle sub-area (and made possible by grant funding from our FY2021 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant).** The redevelopment of the MLK Triangle filling station site was a catalyst project for our DMP and a first step into redeveloping and reinvigorating the MLK Triangle sub-area of the Downtown Target Area. City and county leaders will continue to leverage local/state and federal resources for cleanup and redevelopment of the MLK Triangle sub-area and other sub-areas of the Downtown Target Area. Incentives listed below can promote public/private investment throughout our community but can especially offer assistance with our priority and catalyst sites to advance their assessment, cleanup, and reuse.

Leveraging Tax Incentives	Description
Mississippi Economic Redevelopment Act (MERA)	Private developers and all priority sites are eligible to utilize MERA to assist with clean-up costs. All sales, income and franchise taxes collected from businesses located in a designated redevelopment area would be deposited into a special fund to reimburse developers for approved cleanup costs. Reimbursement to developers would be made semi-annually for a period of up to 15 years, with a maximum distribution to the developer of two and a half times the allowable remediation cost.
Historic Preservation Tax Incentives	The program offers a 20% state tax credit and 25% federal tax credit for the rehabilitation and sustainable reuse of existing historic structures used for residential and/or business purposes. A project must exceed \$5,000 or 50% of the total basis of the building.
Advantage Jobs Incentive Program	Provides for the rebate of a percentage of Mississippi payrolls to qualified employers for a period of up to 10 years. Available to businesses that promise significant expansion of the economy through the creation of jobs. All priority sites are eligible; however, gaming, retail, and certain professional service end uses are not eligible.
Brownfield Voluntary Cleanup & Redevelopment Incentives	Provides an income tax credit for a property owner equal to 25% of the costs of remediating a brownfields property. In lieu of the state income tax credit, a job tax credit for each new job created can be claimed. Provisions for liability protection through the State Brownfield Program exist for public and private entities. All priority sites can use the program to assist with assessment, remediation, and monitoring costs.
Brownfield Clean-Up Grant	Funding for cleanup activities at specific sites; up to 4,000,000/grant with one or multiple sites included within the application and award. All priority sites are eligible, though the applicant must own the property and meet eligibility requirements set forth in the annual guidelines.

I.c.ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure (5 points): Priority Sites #1, #2, and #4 have existing, adequate building infrastructure to accommodate the redevelopment strategy of our DMP. **Priority Site #3** does not have a structure. All identified priority sites are easily accessible through our downtown utilities network including electrical, natural gas, water, and sewer. In fact, electrical improvements have been funded and took place in the North Bluff sub-area, including on Priority Site #3. All priority sites are connected to public utilities.

2. COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (40 points)

2.a. Community Need (25 points): For tables below, **bold** values exceed United States (US) averages; and **Shaded** values exceed Mississippi (MS) averages.

2.a.i. The Community's Need for Funding (5 points): From April 2020 to July 2023, **Natchez lost 3.9% of our population.** Our population now falls under the 15,000-resident threshold to be considered a small population, and what is left of our community is struggling with high rates of low income and poverty. The inability of Natchez to receive financial support from our dwindling citizenship is largely due to our high rates of poverty and unemployment, as demonstrated in the table below. We have a **4.4% unemployment rate** (nearly 40% higher than the state average). Nearly 33% of our population lives below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), more than twice the national average, and 1.5x higher than the Mississippi average. One reason for these poor economic statistics is the poverty created from the loss of hundreds of jobs due to debilitating economic conditions related to the outmigration of several industries, including Titan Tire, International Paper, KCS Lumber Co., Ethyl Petroleum, and Johns Manville. Community deterioration is not only evident but possibly connected to the proliferation of blighted brownfield sites located within our Target Area. Due to the Target Area's and the City's small population and high poverty level, we have a significant inability to draw on other sources of funding to carry out important environmental assessments/remediation on brownfield properties – thereby inhibiting subsequent reuse of brownfields in the Target Area. This grant will provide the seed money needed to spur interest in our Target Area to facilitate tangible redevelopment opportunities. It will assist in funding the reuse of brownfields in our community that lacks the resources to deal with the properties, and it will aid in reversing these economic issues so that future brownfields projects work may proceed. We also estimate that over 500 tourism-related jobs can be created with the redevelopment of the four identified Priority Sites, thereby providing more employment and even entrepreneurial opportunities for our citizens.

Community Need Metric	Target Area	Natchez	Mississippi	United States
Population	806	14,380	2,958,846	331,097,593
Poverty	72%	32.65%	19.20%	12.53%
Per Capita Income	\$22,456	\$22,363	\$29,208	\$41,261
SNAP Food Benefits Rate		21.20%	13.77%	11.52%
Food Insecurity		19.5%	18.05%	12.88%
Labor Force Participation	43%	49.13%	57.22%	63.47%
Unemployment	13%	4.4%	3.2%	4.4%

Sources: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2018-22. Source geography: Tract and EJSscreen

2.a.ii. Threats to Sensitive Populations (20 points):

2.a.ii.1 Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations (5 points):

Sensitive Populations	Target Area	Natchez	Mississippi	United States
Black Minority	58%	62.24%	37.24%	12.47%
Children (<18 years old)	26%	26.36%	23.35%	22.11%
Elderly (65+)	29%	21.59%	16.48%	16.53%
Impoverished Population	72%	32.65%	19.20%	12.53%
Impoverished Children		48.66%	26.78%	16.66%
Obesity		39.4%	34.5%	30.1%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2018-22. and EJSscreen

Nearly half of the children living in our city are impoverished, and the poverty rate for our Natchez population and Target Area population is nearly 3x and 6x the nationwide rate, respectively. The estimated job creation rate associated with our DMP, which funds from this grant would support, would provide essential career opportunities for the significant impoverished portion of our populations in the Downtown Target Area and its associated sub-areas. Community leaders are determined to transform Natchez into a community with readily accessible job opportunities, and brownfield assessment grant funds will help provide the means necessary to execute our goals of increasing tourism and promoting economic/job growth. The health and welfare issues affecting our sensitive populations in Natchez are best resolved by creating new job opportunities and a safer city and downtown area. Poverty is a catalyst for many health/welfare crises, and in our Target Area – our most impoverished citizens are minorities. Investment and redevelopment in our city will spur more employment opportunities and, eventually, a wider variety of stores and businesses, particularly in the MLK Triangle sub-area (**Priority Sites #1 and #2**). When meaningful redevelopment occurs in an area, it is a catalyst for change in the entire area, and our FY2021 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant has already started the ball rolling with the assessments performed on the MLK Triangle filling station property. We know that further funding provided through this proposed grant will further attract investors and developers to the MLK Triangle sub-area, and we are committed to doing what it takes to use grant funds for the economic benefit of our citizens. Additionally, fast food restaurants are ubiquitous in Natchez, which has translated into few healthy food options for residents. The development of non-fast-food restaurants in the MLK Triangle sub-area will not only provide more job opportunities but will also provide more healthy food choices for residents.

According to the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), Census Tract 28001000700 (where all our Priority Sites are located) ranks in the 89th percentile for low income; the 94th percentile for low life expectancy; the 98th percentile for heart disease; the 96th percentile for diabetes; the 96th percentile for lead paint; and the 92nd percentile for proximity to risk management plan facilities. Natchez also has a substandard housing rate of 28.97%, compared to 26.93% statewide. According to the Environmental Justice (EJ) Screen, Natchez is experiencing significant housing burdens, and we rank in the 90th State percentile for the percentage of pre-1960 housing units, which are very likely to have lead paint. Additionally, Natchez has a property crime rate of 3,427.4 per 100,000 people, an alarming increase compared to the state rate of 1,875.8 per 100,000. Additionally, all these reuse strategies will help mitigate the rampant crime in our city by decreasing the number of abandoned and/or derelict properties, which tends to attract criminal activity.

The Natchez Pecan Shelling Company’s (**Priority Site #3**) reuse as an open-air pavilion will help us address some of these issues by providing accessible locations for outdoor recreation and community engagement. This will aid in a multitude of health outcomes for the sensitive, impoverished populations living here. Carpet Sales & Service’s (**Priority Site #4**) reuse as mixed-use housing and a bicycle rental facility will also promote outdoor recreation to improve overall health and wellbeing, while simultaneously providing this disadvantaged community with safe housing that is free of lead paint and substandard conditions. This grant will allow us to identify and quantify suspected contaminants at all priority sites that are impacting the surrounding underserved communities, who fight an EJ battle every day. This grant will give us the chance to begin steps to create outdoor spaces for our citizens (**Priority Sites #3 and #4**) – thereby lowering the prevalence of exercise-related health conditions and encouraging more citizen interaction thereby improving mental health conditions. This grant will also give us the chance to work on developing more quality, affordable housing (**Priority Site #4**) to help reduce the number of pre-1960 housing units and will help to create tourism-related jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities to help reduce the prevalence of poverty, the unemployment rate, and the number of citizens without health insurance.

2.a.ii.2 Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions (5 points):

Disease or Health Condition/Metric	Natchez	Mississippi	US
Adults with Asthma ⁵	11.6%	10.7%	10.3%
Colon & Rectal Cancer (per 100k) ⁶	43.9	46.5	36.5
Prostate Cancer (per 100k) ⁷	128.9	131.4	110.5
Cancer Death Rate (per 100k) ⁷	286.0	222.4	182.7
Premature Death – Years of Potential Life Lost (per 100k) ⁸	13,186	12,698	7,986
Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 births) ⁹	9.5	8.7	5.7
Low Birth Weight (%) ⁹	13.7%	12.0%	8.3%

⁵ EJ Screen for the City of Natchez

⁶ [State Cancer Profiles](#). 2016-20.

⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [CDC - National Vital Statistics System](#). Accessed via [CDC WONDER](#). 2018-2022

⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [CDC - National Vital Statistics System](#). Accessed via [County Health Rankings](#). 2019-2021.

⁹ University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, [County Health Rankings](#). 2015-2021.

Maintaining a healthy environment is central to increasing quality and years of life. According to the World Health Organization, globally, 23% of all deaths and 26% of deaths among children under age 5 are due to preventable environmental factors. Because our Target Area is plagued by brownfield sites, the sensitive populations living in these Target Areas are more likely to be exposed to environmental pollutants from these sites.

Data on birth defects in the Target Area is limited due to Natchez's small, rural population. However, the National Center for Health Statistics reports that Mississippi had an infant mortality rate of 9.4 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2021, significantly higher than the national rate of 5.4. Additionally, from 2019 to 2021, birth defects were responsible for 19.6% of infant deaths. March of Dimes has introduced a Maternity Vulnerability Index (MVI) to assess the determinants of maternal health. This comprehensive tool evaluates clinical risk factors alongside social, contextual, and environmental influences to identify areas where mothers in the U.S. face heightened vulnerability to adverse pregnancy outcomes. The MVI operates on a scale from 0 to 100, with 100 indicating the highest risk. Adams County has an MVI of 76.9, highlighting significant concern.

According to the CDC, studies have shown a correlation between birth defects and environmental exposures to certain contaminants. Benzene has been linked to cardiac and neural tube defects; solvents can cause neural tube/cardiac/limb defects, oral clefts, gastroschisis, and developmental disorders; and trichloroethylene has been connected to neural tube defects and oral clefts. All of these are potential contaminants of concern at our priority brownfield sites. Assessment of these and other brownfields in the Target Area will facilitate the identification and reduction of threats to the health and welfare of infants and other sensitive populations.

As shown in the table above, the incidence of various cancers in Natchez surpasses both state and national averages, with the cancer mortality rate following suit. Lymphatic and hematopoietic cancers, including leukemias and Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, have been linked to benzene exposure (potential contaminant of concern at priority sites). Additionally, lung cancer is associated with exposure to certain heavy metals and asbestos (potential contaminants of concern at priority sites). It is no wonder that the cancer mortality rate in Natchez is more than 1.5 times the national rate.

Asthma rates in Natchez are elevated compared to both state and national figures. Research indicates that exposure to air pollution can trigger asthma and amplify the effects of other respiratory pollutants, increasing individuals' susceptibility. Asbestos (potential contaminant of concern at priority sites) exposure also worsens asthma symptoms. This grant will identify environmental threats posed by these sites to the sensitive populations in the Target Area and facilitate subsequent cleanup and reuse to greatly reduce those threats.

2.a.ii.3 Environmental Justice (10 points):

2.a.ii.3.a Identification of Environmental Justice Issues (5 points): As highlighted in previous sections, the underserved populations within our Target Area are small, economically disadvantaged, and disproportionately affected by various challenges. According to the EPA's CEJST, the Census Tract encompassing our priority sites has been classified as disadvantaged due to its multiple burden thresholds and corresponding socioeconomic factors. The communities near these sites are primarily low-income and minority populations, facing higher-than-average rates of cancer, asthma, and other adverse health conditions. As illustrated in the table below, EPA's EJScreen reveals that our Target Area experiences significant proximity to and exposure from environmental hazard. Additionally, as previously noted, this area grapples with other pressing issues, including high crime rates, food insecurity, and an abundance of substandard housing. Reuse of properties like Priority Site #4 for mixed use housing would be a step in the right direction to improve substandard housing in our Target Area.

It is no secret that throughout our nation, more people of color live in places polluted by toxic waste, which can lead to illnesses (like those mentioned in the above sections). Communities populated by people of color are often chosen as locations for landfills, chemical plants, etc., and unfortunately, these often-underserved communities (like those in the Target Area) lack connections to lawmakers and necessary funding to put up a meaningful fight. This fact is no different in Natchez. Communities in the Target Area have been next door to abandoned dry cleaners, gas stations with USTs still in the ground, abandoned factories, and dilapidated structures with friable asbestos for decades now. Also, according to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's (ATSDR) EJ Index, the entire Target Area has an EJ Index of 0.95 and a Social Vulnerability Rank of 0.98. Considering the EJ Index ranks census tracts from 0 to 1 based on EJ issues – with 0 being no EJ issues and 1 being the most potential EJ issues – an EJ Index of 0.95 and a Social Vulnerability Rank of 0.98 are significant. The Target Area received these high indices due to the high prevalence of pre-1980 housing; our large populations of minorities (0.99 index) and children (0.95 index); the ubiquity of poverty (0.99 index); the low rate of high school graduates; our significant unemployment rate (0.99 index); our citizens' rampant lack of health insurance; our lack of internet access; our high prevalence of asthma, high blood pressure, diabetes, and mental health issues; our high air toxics cancer risk; and our population's proximity to Risk Management Plan (RMP) sites and Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) sites.

Environmental Justice Index for the City of Natchez	Percentile in State	Percentile in US
Nitrogen Dioxide	75 th	36 th
Traffic Proximity	72 nd	33 rd
Lead Paint	90 th	68 th
RMP Facility Proximity	82 nd	73 rd
Underground Storage Tanks	76 th	76 th
Drinking Water Non-Compliance	75 th	76 th
Limited English Speaking Households	86 th	56 th
Population Over 65	72 nd	72 nd

Source: EJ Screen Report for the City of Natchez

2.a.ii.3.b Advancing Environmental Justice (5 points):

This grant and the associated site reuse strategies will advance environmental justice by directly addressing the disproportionate environmental burdens faced by underserved communities in the Downtown Target Area, which includes predominantly low-income and minority populations. The cleanup of **Priority Sites #1 and #2**, both historically contaminated by gas stations and dry cleaners, will remove hazardous materials such as asbestos, VOCs, and petroleum hydrocarbons, which pose health risks to the surrounding community. These sites are located in a historically significant African American area, and their remediation will not only improve environmental quality but also contribute to the area's revitalization, which is central to the community's cultural identity and resilience. By investing in the cleanup and reuse of these properties, the project will mitigate the historical environmental injustices that have affected local residents, creating

safe, usable spaces that promote public health, tourism, and local economic development.

Displacement in the Target Area will be actively avoided through a series of strategic, community-centered measures that prioritize the needs of existing residents and businesses. The redevelopment efforts outlined in this grant focus on revitalizing brownfield sites in ways that promote economic growth without forcing out long-standing community members. Key to this approach is the creation of mixed-use developments that include affordable housing, as seen with **Priority Site #4**, which is planned for redevelopment into mixed-use housing and a bicycle rental facility. By providing affordable housing options in the area, the project helps prevent gentrification and ensures that current residents have access to safe, quality housing without being displaced by rising rents or property values. This focus on affordable housing is especially important given the area's history of substandard housing and the need to create stable living conditions for low-income families.

Additionally, the grant emphasizes the preservation of local businesses and the promotion of small-scale, locally-owned enterprises. For example, the reuse of **Priority Sites #1 and #2** into retail and restaurant spaces will support entrepreneurship and local job creation without displacing existing businesses. The revitalization of these sites will be designed to complement and enhance the surrounding community, ensuring that new development is integrated in a way that benefits current residents. The emphasis on cultural heritage through the development of the MLK Triangle as a Black Cultural Heritage District also reinforces the community's identity, ensuring that redevelopment celebrates the area's history rather than erasing it. Furthermore, community engagement is a central component of this strategy; local residents and stakeholders will be actively involved in the planning and decision-making processes to ensure that redevelopment aligns with their needs and priorities. By focusing on equitable growth, affordable housing, and community empowerment, this project will foster sustainable development that benefits both current and future residents, protecting them from the displacement that often accompanies gentrification.

2.b. Community Engagement (15 points):

2.b.i. Project Involvement (5 points): Our award-winning DMP and our FY2021 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant were only successful because of the fervor that the residents of our city have for the revitalization/redevelopment of our great city! Developing the DMP reinforced to our community that soliciting community input is not enough! Success comes from actively engaging community members and involving them in the process from beginning to end. We have selected project partners who are rooted in Natchez and can reach all cross-sections of our community, thereby encouraging community input and activity throughout this project. Our community partners are comprised of non-profits, business owners, elected officials/organizations, regulators, and citizens who regularly communicate with each other and their peers for input and feedback. Project Partners include Natchez, Inc. (local economic/business development organization), Natchez Chamber of Commerce, SWMPDD, MDEQ, and Zion Chapel AME Church (group leading redevelopment/reuse of the MLK Triangle area along with the help of FOR Natchez), and a developer working in our city.

2.b.ii. Project Roles (5 points): Each of the identified entities will have meaningful involvement in the site selection, cleanup, and future reuse determinations of the identified Priority Sites and other additional sites assessed. They will be effectively engaged and informed throughout this grant.

Entity/Group	Point of contact (name, email & phone)	Specific involvement/assistance in the project
Natchez, Inc.	Chandler Russ, 601-445-0288 cruss@natchezinc.com	Assist with site selection, cleanup, future reuse, commercial/industrial recruitment, identify public/private financing, spearhead Opportunity Zone Fund development, and serve on BAC.
Chamber of Commerce	Debbie Hudson, 601.445.4611 natchezchamber@natchezchamber.com	Assist with site selection, public education/input, project update distribution, serve on the BAC.
Chartre Companies, LTD	Clarence Chapman, 662.236.5080 cwc@chartre.com	Affordable housing developer in MLK Triangle sub-area & needs EAs for properties for new affordable housing units using Low Income Housing Tax Credits and other financing. Site selection, cleanup, and future reuse.
SWMPDD	Wirt Peterson; 601.446.6044 wpeterson@bellsouth.net	Serve on the BAC, USDA/MDA/DRA grant leveraging, site selection
MDEQ	Thomas Wallace 601.961.5240 twallace@mdeq.ms.gov	Resource, work approvals, cleanup incentives, liability protection.
Zion Chapel AME Church	Reverend Birdon Mitchell; 601-442-1396 zionchapelstation@gmail.com	Site selection, cleanup, future reuse, public education/input, serve on the BAC, owner of MLK Triangle Filling Station site, interest in Priority Sites #1 and #2 redevelopment. Local church group representing minorities living in the Target Area.

2.b.ii. Incorporating Community Input (5 points): We will prepare a Community Involvement Plan (CIP) using similar techniques as were utilized to create the DMP. The CIP will be used to ensure the community, project entities, and residents/groups in or in closest proximity to the Target Areas have a voice throughout the project and have a clear understanding of project implications/benefits. Project partners have already obtained input from community members about priority sites and will continue to be actively involved throughout the execution of this grant in a variety of ways, including participation in the BAC. BAC members will meet 3x per year to discuss progress, prioritize sites, and plan. One community meeting will be held annually in a location closest to the most economically-impacted portion of the Target Areas to ensure that those who do not have vehicles can walk to and attend the meeting. Community meetings will also be held via Facebook Live so that community members who cannot attend can still view the meetings and provide comments on social media. All community meetings will be publicized on social media outlets, via email, through radio broadcasts, in the *Natchez Democrat* (local newspaper), through the Mayor's Facebook Live show, and via handouts distributed throughout the community (most heavily in Target Areas). Community input will be solicited, responded to and posted via three distribution methods – city's website, *Natchez Democrat*, and printed and distributed at community and BAC meetings. All three modes have proven to be successful methods of communication in our Target Areas. We will also contact local churches to alert them of upcoming community meetings. This strategy will both allow us to reach a wide intersection of our population but

also be an effective way to alert non-English speaking residents of our community meetings. Contingent property owners/occupants of priority brownfield sites will be personally invited to community meetings. Surveys/questionnaires will be available during community meetings for local citizens to complete, if desired. We will also contact each concerned/interested citizen regarding any questions that he/she may have written on the survey/questionnaire. In addition, we will also be available to discuss concerns and/or suggestions by citizens during these meetings. If a resident is illiterate, does not speak English, or unable to complete the questionnaire or read an email response, we will contact him/her via telephone (with translator if necessary). We are committed to giving our citizens a voice. Since taking office in July, Mayor Dan M. Gibson regularly hosts a Facebook Live broadcast entitled **"Natchez Renewal Live. The Facebook Live broadcasts have an average of 956 views, 39 comments/questions, and 55 Likes/Shares. Natchez-Adams County residents have been well-informed of our DMP and brownfield grant progress. We will continue to utilize this method to communicate and solicit input from our citizens because it has proven to be incredibly effective. Summaries of community feedback, along with the City's responses, will be addressed during Natchez Renewal Live and will be reviewed at subsequent meetings to keep the community informed of how their input is being used. This approach ensures that all community members, regardless of language or physical ability, have meaningful opportunities to stay informed and contribute to the project, creating a transparent, inclusive, and responsive communication strategy.**

3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS (45 points)

3.a. Description of Tasks and Activities (25 points):/

Task/Activity: Project Management

i. Project Implementation: We will select a Multi-Disciplinary Consulting Team (Consultant) following a procurement process compliant with 2 CFR Part 200, 2 CFR Part 1500, and 40 CFR Part 33. Our Program Director (PD) will develop the Grant Work Plan, correspond with the EPA, administer/oversee the grant, work hand-in-hand with the Consultant, approve quarterly/annual reports, approve/check expenditures, review budgets, perform drawdowns, and prepare annual financial and DBE reports. The Consultant, along with the PD, will also update ACRES and correspond with Natchez, MDEQ, and the EPA.

ii. Anticipated Project Schedule: Immediately upon award of the grant and upon selection of the Consultant. The following is the anticipated schedule of work for this grant:
 Cooperative Agreement (CA) & Work Plan – July 2025 Federal Financial Reports (FFR) – December 30 annually
 Kickoff meeting – October 2025 (*led by EPA) Final Performance Report – end of grant
 Quarterly reports – Due 30th of Jan, Apr, Jul, Oct ACRES Updates – 30th of each month (minimum)
 DBE Reports – October 30 annually

iii. Task/Activity Lead(s): The PD, James Johnston, will lead with assistance from the Consultant.

iv. Output(s): Work Plan, Quarterly Reports, DBE Reports, FFRs, final report, ACRES updates

Task/Activity: Inventory & Outreach (I&O) and Community Engagement (CE)

i. Project Implementation: (a) **Inventory:** We have already compiled the inventory of priority sites, and the BAC will determine the order in which sites will be assessed. The BAC's site prioritization criteria include whether or not the site is located in a disadvantaged tract as identified by CEJST, environmental justice impacts, redevelopment potential, benefits to residents, economic potential, public health threats, environmental impacts, community plans, land-owner willingness, degree of blight/underutilization, and parcel size. (b) **Outreach/Research:** Under the direction of the city, the Consultant will conduct inventory & outreach activities by reviewing EPA and MDEQ environmental records; reviewing property records relevant to identification of brownfields; reviewing historical documentation to identify past uses of concern; surveying local developers, real estate brokers, property/business owners, and other stakeholders for information on potential sites and upcoming redevelopment projects; conducting tours/windshield surveys of priority brownfield sites and the Target Area, and completing Eligibility Determination (ED) requests for priority sites. (c) **Engagement:** Site selections will be dependent upon input from the community and BAC. Community buy-in is driven by the city, community partners, and their commitment to making the program a success. Natchez will utilize its strong social media platform to reach community members. The chamber of commerce will also email members and reach out to the business community to develop interest in grant opportunities. (d) **Site Access:** Property owners interested in participating will be required to submit site nomination forms, and the city/Consultant, along with project partners will contact the property owner to discuss site access and timing. The BAC will evaluate each funding request, and if prioritized by the BAC, an Access Agreement will be executed between the applicant and the property owner prior to proceeding with assessments.

ii. Anticipated Project Schedule: The GIS-based site inventory will be updated during the first quarter of the grant. This GIS-based site inventory will be updated by the 30th of each month. BAC meetings will be held 3x per year (April, August, and December), and community meetings will be held each December. Outreach/engagement will be conducted continuously throughout the period of the grant.

iii. Task/Activity Lead(s): The PD, James Johnston, will lead with assistance from the Consultant.

iv. Output(s): 1 updated GIS-based site inventory, agendas & minutes from BAC (12) and community meetings (3).

Task/Activity: Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs)

• **Project Implementation:** Under this task, a Generic Quality Assurance Project Plan (GQAPP) will be developed, which will define field, sampling, and laboratory procedures applicable to Environmental Assessments funded through this grant. Phase I ESAs and Phase II ESAs will also be performed for all four priority sites under this grant. Phase I ESAs will be conducted in accordance with EPA's standard for all appropriate inquiries and practices in ASTM Standard E1527-13. Phase I ESAs may also include ground-penetrating radar (GPR) surveys to detect the presence of underground lines and/or tanks, particularly at petroleum sites like Priority Sites #1 and #2. Phase II ESAs will involve the collection and analysis of soil, groundwater, surface water, and/or suspect asbestos-containing material (ACM) to determine if priority sites have been impacted by past uses. Prior to performing Phase II ESA field activities, a Sampling and Analysis Plan (SAP) will be prepared for each site to be assessed. The SAP will establish the scope of work for the site and will reference the Generic QAPP for specific standard operating procedures. The SAP must be approved by the City, the MDEQ, and the EPA prior to performing Phase II ESA activities. If additional funds are available after priority sites have been assessed and all eligible planning has been completed, then the non-priority/additional sites will be added to the assessment queue and will be ranked and prioritized by the BAC for assessment. We anticipate performing Phase I and II ESAs on four additional non-priority sites that surround our

identified priority sites.

ii. Anticipated Project Schedule:

- 4 Phase I ESAs (Priority Sites) – Q1-Q2
- 4 SAPs (Priority Sites) – Q2-Q6
- 2 GPRs (Priority Sites #1 and #2) – Q2-Q5
- 4 Phase II ESAs (Priority Sites) – Q2-Q7
- 3 ACM Surveys (Priority Sites #1, #2, and #4) – Q2-Q7
- Generic QAPP – Quarter 1 (Q1)
- 4 Phase I ESAs (Non-Priority Sites) – Q7-Q8
- 4 SAPs (Non-Priority Sites) – Q8-Q9
- 4 Phase II ESAs (Non-Priority Sites) – Q9-Q10

iii. Task/Activity Lead(s): This task will primarily be conducted by the Consultant.

iv. Output(s): Generic QAPP; *Priority Sites* – 4 Phase I ESAs, 4 SAPs, 4 Phase II ESAs, 2 GPRs, 3 ACM Surveys
Non-Priority Sites – 4 Phase I ESAs, 4 SAPs, 4 Phase II ESAs

Task/Activity: Eligible Planning

i. Project Implementation: A Resource Roadmap will be developed to help condense the brownfield projects into distinct, fundable components, to assign lead responsibilities, to develop a multi-layered funding plan to support brownfields cleanup and reuse, and to create a timeline for pursuing grants, loans, private and other sources of funds relate to our brownfield projects. Site Reuse Assessments will be performed for Priority Sites #1 and #2 to identify potential reuse assets and barriers specific to each site and to understand the range of sustainable reuse options for each site. Following Site Reuse Assessments, Site Reuse Visions will be developed for Priority Sites #1 and #2 to visually reflect stakeholder input, market data, environmental considerations, and other opportunities uncovered for Priority Sites #1 and #2. Since a picture is worth a thousand words, a Site Reuse Vision will really help to illustrate the potential or preferred redevelopment scenario for the MLK Triangle sub-area. Design concepts can include visual representations such as sketch illustrations, renderings and/or 3D models of the reuse options, proposed land uses, access, and key infrastructure.

ii. Anticipated Project Schedule: The Site Reuse Assessments for Priority Sites #1 and #2 will be performed from Q8 to Q10. The Site Reuse Visions for Priority Sites #1 and #2 will be performed from Q10 to Q12. The Resource Roadmap will be created during quarter two and updated throughout the grant and finalized upon the grant completion.

iii. Task/Activity Lead(s): This task will primarily be conducted by the Consultant.

iv. Output(s): 2 Site Reuse Assessments, 2 Site Reuse Visions, and 1 Resource Roadmap

The City expects to meet the required 18-month, 35% use of funds by the end of the first grant year.

3.b. Cost Estimates (15 points): The City of Natchez developed the following reasonable cost estimations based on our

Budget Categories		Project Tasks (\$)				Total
		Project Management	I&O and CE	Environmental Assessments	Eligible Planning	
Direct Costs	Personnel	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	-	-	\$20,000.00
	Fringe Benefits					
	Travel		\$4,000.00			\$4,000.00
	Equipment					
	Supplies					
	Contractual	\$35,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$336,000.00	\$70,000.00	\$476,000.00
	Construction					
	Other					
Total Direct Costs		\$45,000.00	\$49,000.00	\$336,000.00	\$70,000.00	\$500,000.00
Indirect Costs						
Total Budget		\$45,000.00	\$49,000.00	\$336,000.00	\$70,000.00	\$500,000.00
EAs > 50% of funds		(9.0%)	(9.8%)	(67.2%)	(14.0%)	

management of the FY2021 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant and recent inflation considerations.

Task 1: Personnel Costs = 200 hours x \$50/hr. = \$10,000; Contractual Costs = \$35,000 (200 hrs @ \$175/hr)

Task 2: Personnel Costs = 200 hours x \$50/hr. = \$10,000; Travel Costs (conferences) = (\$2,000/person)/conference x 2 people x 1 conference = \$4,000; Contractual Costs = \$35,000 (200 hrs @ \$175/hr)

Task 3: Contractual Costs = Generic QAPP = 40 hr. x \$175/hr. = \$7,000; Phase I ESAs = 8 sites x \$5,000 = \$40,000; SSQAPPs = 8 sites x \$3,500 = \$28,000; GPR Surveys = 2 sites x \$3,000 = \$6,000; Phase II ESAs = 8 sites x \$30,000 = \$240,000; ACM Surveys = 3 sites x \$5,000 = \$15,000

Task 4: Site Reuse Assessments = 2 sites x \$10,000 = \$20,000; Site Reuse Visions = 2 sites x \$20,000 = \$40,000; Resource Roadmap = \$10,000

3.c. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results (5 points): Our selected Consultant, with our support, will prepare a Resource Roadmap early in the project to track progress and redevelopment plans. The Resource Roadmap will define specific project components and phases for each priority brownfield project, estimate costs for each phase, identify best sources for funding, create a chart/matrix with this information, and organized by project component and phase. It will be updated as funding commitments are pursued and secured. Each month, the Resource Roadmap will be revisited, and the consultant will email a one-page progress report to the EPA and MDEQ Project Managers and the City. BAC and community meetings will include a recap of work completed in the past quarter and work scheduled for the upcoming quarter. Outcomes anticipated will also be tracked and reported to EPA via ACRES. As critical leveraged funding becomes available, we will track progress until it becomes available, at which time it will be added to ACRES. The grantee will also track and evaluate the number of sites assessed, number of sites with off-site risks, number of sites for which property title transfers are facilitated, number of sites/ acres of land redeveloped, acreage of parks/green space created, amount of funding leveraged, number of jobs created/retained from redevelopment projects, increased property/sales tax revenue generated, and increased property values - addressing EPA and City objectives. If measures/timeline milestones are not being met, which we do not expect to occur, we will continuously communicate with MDEQ and EPA to keep grant managers up-to-date and to solicit advice to progress the grant.

4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE (35 points)

4.a. Programmatic Capability (20 points)

4.a.i. through 4.a.iii Organizational Capacity (5 points), Organizational Structure (5 points), and Description of Key Staff (5 points): City of Natchez staff have a solid track record in the preparation, coordination, oversight, and monitoring of state and federal grants issued by various agencies. Natchez's Department of Planning and Community Development will lead this Brownfields CWA project and ensure the timely and successful expenditure of funds and completion of all technical, administrative, and financial requirements of the grant. The Department has extensive experience with leading development projects for economic growth in the City. Mr. James Johnston will be managing and directing this project. Mr. Johnston has over 30 years of experience working for/with planning districts as well as for/with municipal and county government. Mr. Johnston's expertise and experience includes preparing and administering dozens of federal/state grants including the Natchez Coalition's FY21 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant. He has effectively led the City's Brownfield Program under the grant, coordinating coalition and public meetings, reporting, and consultant oversight and recently attended the 2022 National Brownfields Training Conference. Ms. Megan McKenzie will provide financial oversight for this project. Ms. McKenzie has served as City Clerk since November 2021 after previously serving as Interim and City Clerk during a previous administration. Megan is the Chief Financial Officer who is responsible for the city's accounting records and related financial reports; her responsibilities include preparing the city's annual budget, payroll oversight, debt administration, report preparation and other duties as required by state law. Megan is also responsible for supervising the Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivables Clerk(s), Human Resources Manager and Payroll Clerk. This team has an impressive track record in oversight of several federal grants that will allow them to successfully manage this assessment grant.

4.a.iv. Acquiring Additional Resources (5 points): The primary additional resource necessary to this project will be a QEP who is experienced with the EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant process. The QEP will assist the City with the technical aspects of successfully implementing the grant, including program management, community outreach, environmental assessments, cleanup planning, other eligible activities, and EPA reporting. The City will have a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) prepared and advertised by website, newspaper, and other media outlets. Upon receiving submittals, Natchez will select and procure a QEP within 30 days to assist with management and implementation of the grant. The City will comply with all procurement standards in 2 CFR 200 and 2CFR Part 1500, and 40 CFR Part 33.

Natchez strives to promote strong labor practices and promote local hiring/procurement throughout the City and in all of our projects. This CWA Assessment project and the eventual redevelopment outcomes will be no different. The City's Downtown Master Plan details a primary goal of promoting local workers, entrepreneurs, and businesses through job creation and the attraction of a strong tourism industry by revitalizing the heart of Downtown Natchez. Additionally, the City strives to provide a skilled, well-equipped workforce. Alcorn State University operates the TechCenter, a small business incubator housed in the APEX Center in downtown Natchez (in the target area). The APEX Center is a partnership with Natchez, Inc. and the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) to connect future and existing business owners with needed training, resources and support. Throughout the lifecycle of this CWA project, we will utilize local workers whenever possible, with local contractors and subcontractors procured for the project whenever this option is available and feasible. In addition, during all redevelopment projects that are spurred by this CWA project, we will focus our efforts on implementing various strategies that are already in place to promote local hiring and local workforce development at these revitalized brownfield sites.

4.b. Past Performance and Accomplishments (15 points):

4.b.i. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant (15 points): We received a Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant in 2021. The City of Natchez managed the Coalition grant and is thereby more than qualified to manage a second Brownfield grant – this time Community-wide.

4.b.ii.1. Accomplishments (5 points)

Natchez was awarded an FY21 EPA Brownfields Coalition Assessment Grant that will be closing out in 2024, and we are currently successfully managing an FY23 Brownfields Cleanup Grant. Accomplishments/outputs of our FY21 Brownfields Coalition Assessment Grant include completion of thirteen (13) Phase I ESAs, ten (10) Phase II ESAs (including 4 asbestos surveys), one (1) draft Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives, and one (1) Corrective Action Plan. Our FY21 EPA Brownfields Coalition Assessment Grant Work Plan had a goal of eight (8) Phase I ESA, seven (7) Phase II ESAs, and two (2) cleanup planning activities. With our grant project window coming to a close, we have completed 100% of these Work Plan goals, and we have actually exceeded our Phase I and Phase II ESA goals. Other outputs include a Generic QAPP, CIP, community meetings, timely submissions of all quarterly and annual reports, and entry of all data in the ACRES database. **One major accomplishment of our FY21 Brownfields Coalition Assessment Grant was the assessment of the MLK Triangle Filling Station and subsequent removal of USTs on this historic property, paving the way to transform the property into public space to honor Senator Hiram Revels, the first African American elected to the U.S. Congress.** Another major accomplishment was the City's decision to accept the donation of the Fry Building Site (which was assessed and had an ABCA developed under our FY21 Brownfields Coalition Assessment Grant). This site is now the subject of our current FY23 Brownfields Cleanup Grant. This grant is still in the early stages, but accomplishments/outputs thus far include a Cooperative Agreement, an FY23 Brownfields Cleanup Grant Work Plan, consultant procurement, New Grantee Meeting attendance, quarterly reports, and work performed on the development of a Corrective Action Plan.

4.b.ii.2. Compliance with Grant Requirements (10 points): The City has maintained an excellent record of submitting quarterly and annual reports on time, as required by the EPA. These reports provided detailed information on the status of grant-funded activities, including site assessments, community engagement efforts, and planned next steps for cleanup and redevelopment. Additionally, the city has submitted all necessary reports to the EPA in compliance with grant deadlines. The City of Natchez has regularly updated the ACRES online database to track all environmental assessments and redevelopment outcomes. At the time of this application submission, all brownfield sites assessed under the grant have been accurately reflected in ACRES, with clear documentation of progress. The City has ensured that all required data, such as the number of sites assessed and any identified environmental issues, are fully captured and up-to-date in the system. The City adhered to the workplan and schedule outlined in the grant (making updates as necessary), achieving key milestones in a timely manner. Environmental assessments were completed as planned, and the City and/or developers remain on track to complete planned cleanups and site redevelopments (like the Fry Building). The City did not require adjustments during the grant period. The FY2021 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant started on October 1, 2021, and ended on September 30, 2024. All grant funds were expended in accordance with the workplan. At the time of this application, there are no unspent funds.

City of Natchez Community-Wide Assessment Grant Threshold Criteria

1. Applicant Eligibility

- a. The City of Natchez, Mississippi is a General Purpose Unit of Local Government, and is therefore eligible for funding.
- b. Not Applicable, the City of Natchez is not a 501 (c)(4).

2. Community Involvement

The City of Natchez developed an award-winning Downtown Master Plan (DMP). This DMP and our FY2021 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant were only successful because of the fervor that our residents have for the revitalization/redevelopment of our great City! Developing the DMP reinforced to our community that soliciting community input is not enough! Success comes from actively engaging community members and involving them in the process from beginning to end. We have selected project partners who are rooted in Natchez and can reach all cross-sections of our community, thereby encouraging community input and activity throughout this project. Our community partners are comprised of non-profits, business owners, elected officials/organizations, regulators, and citizens who regularly communicate with each other and their peers for input and feedback. Project Partners include Natchez, Inc. (local economic/business development organization), Natchez Chamber of Commerce, SWMPDD, MDEQ, and Zion Chapel AME Church (group leading redevelopment/reuse of the MLK Triangle area along with the help of FOR Natchez), and a developer working in our city.

Each of the identified entities will have meaningful involvement in the site selection, cleanup, and future reuse determinations of the identified Priority Sites and other additional sites assessed. They will be effectively engaged and informed throughout this grant.

Entity/Group	Point of contact (name, email & phone)	Specific involvement/assistance in the project
Natchez, Inc.	Chandler Russ, 601-445-0288 cruss@natchezinc.com	Assist with <u>site selection</u> , commercial/industrial recruitment, identify public/private financing, spearhead Opportunity Zone Fund development, and serve on BAC.
Chamber of Commerce	Debbie Hudson, 601.445.4611 natchezchamber@natchezchamber.com	Assist with site selection, public education/input, project update distribution, BAC
Chartre Companies, LTD	Clarence Chapman, 662.236.5080 cwc@chartre.com	<u>Affordable housing developer in MLK Triangle sub-area</u> & needs EAs for properties for new affordable housing units using Low Income Housing Tax Credits and other financing
SWMPDD	Wirt Peterson; 601.446.6044 wpeterson@bellsouth.net	BAC, USDA/MDA/DRA grant leveraging
MDEQ	Thomas Wallace 601.961.5240 twallace@mdeq.ms.gov	Resource, work approvals, cleanup incentives, liability protection,
Zion Chapel AME Church	Reverend Birdon Mitchell; 601-442-1396 zionchapelstation@gmail.com	Site selection, public education/input, BAC, owner of MLK Triangle Filling Station site, interest in Priority Sites #1 and #2 redevelopment

We will prepare a Community Involvement Plan (CIP) using similar techniques as were utilized to create the DMP. The CIP will be used to ensure the community, project entities, and residents/groups in closest proximity to the Target Areas have a voice throughout the project and have a clear understanding of project implications/benefits. Project partners have already obtained input from community members about priority sites and will continue to be actively involved throughout the execution of this grant in a variety of ways, including participation in the BAC. BAC members will meet 3x per year to discuss progress, prioritize sites, and plan. One community meeting will be held annually in a location closest to the most economically-impacted portion of the Target Areas to ensure that those who do not have vehicles can walk to and attend the meeting. All community meetings will be publicized on social media outlets, via email, through radio broadcasts, in the *Natchez Democrat* (local newspaper), through the Mayor's Facebook Live show, and via handouts distributed throughout the community (most heavily in Target Areas). Community input will be solicited, responded to and posted via three distribution methods – city's website, *Natchez Democrat*, and printed and distributed at community and BAC meetings. All three modes have proven to be successful methods of communication in our Target Areas. We will also contact local churches to alert them of upcoming community meetings. This strategy will not only allow us to reach a wide intersection of our population, but also be an effective way to alert non-English speaking residents of our community meetings. Contingent property owners/occupants of priority brownfield sites will be personally invited to community meetings. Surveys/questionnaires will be available during community meetings for local citizens to complete, if desired. We will also contact each concerned/interested citizen regarding any questions that he/she may have written on the survey/questionnaire. In addition, we will also be available to discuss concerns and/or suggestions by citizens during these meetings. If a resident is illiterate, does not speak English, or unable to complete the questionnaire or read an email response, we will contact him/her via telephone (with translator if necessary). We are committed to giving our citizens a voice. Since taking office in July, Mayor Dan M. Gibson regularly hosts a Facebook Live broadcast entitled "Natchez Renewal Live". We will continue to utilize this method to communicate and solicit input from our citizens because it has proven to be incredibly effective.

3. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds

The City of Natchez had an FY21 EPA Brownfields Assessment Coalition Grant (BF02D07921) which closed out on September 30, 2024. All funds have been allocated. As of October 1, 2024, there was \$96,917.83 left to drawdown from ASAP, which is less than 20% of the total award amount of \$492,000. Confirmation of ASAP drawdown status is attached.

4. Contractors and Named Subrecipients

- Contractors - Not Applicable
- Named Subrecipients – Not Applicable