

For Immediate Release

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Wayne County Awarded \$1 Million for EPA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund

One of 17 recipients nationwide

Lyons, NY – May 23, 2022 – Wayne County has been awarded a \$1 million U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant to establish a Brownfield Program Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). A brownfield is a property on which expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by environmental contamination. The RLF will provide gap financing through a variety of flexible loans targeted at environmental cleanup activities specifically on identified brownfield sites in the County. As one of ten total EPA awardees in New York, and one of three RLF recipients, the County is positioned to use this federal financing as a much-needed resource to bring local brownfields back to productive use.

It is not uncommon to see abandoned gas stations, machine shops or small manufacturing sites around the county. “It is really exciting to think that we can finally clean up and reuse some of these abandoned properties,” said newly appointed County Chairman and Town of Huron Supervisor, Phil Eynor. “We have been trying to figure out how to get this done for years.”

The County’s Brownfield program started in 2018 with a Derelict Properties Study followed by a 2019 Brownfield Inventory which identified the number and scope of properties identified as brownfields and helped to narrow in on the most at-risk, blighted and neglected properties. The inventory further identified and prioritized likely contaminated parcels, while also identifying options for addressing the concerns. However, the full scope of environmental contaminants at these sites is still largely unknown.

In 2020, the County pursued and was awarded a \$600,000 EPA Communitywide Brownfield Assessment grant to complete phase I and phase II studies on properties that had been identified in the inventory which were possible opportunities for redevelopment. In cooperation with the Wayne County Regional Land Bank, formed in 2017, and the Wayne Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the County is now taking steps to put these properties back on the tax rolls and into productive use.

The WEDC has committed \$200,000 in matching loan funds to the EPA RLF and will serve as the loan administrator providing financial underwriting, loan servicing, and program management expertise necessary for the effective long-term operation of the RLF Program. WEDC will provide these services to the County at no charge, and no grant funds will be required for their efforts. The Land Bank will continue to monitor derelict sites for possible redevelopment. “We have worked hard to build and develop this program area and appreciate the support from the EPA,” said Economic Development and Planning Director Brian Pincelli whose department has been leading these efforts. “These properties present real challenges and cost the taxpayers more every year. Bringing them back to productive use will provide a tremendous benefit.”

According to the EPA website, an academic peer-reviewed study found that residential properties near brownfield sites increased in value by 5% to 15% as a result of cleanup activities. Also, analyzing data near 48 brownfields nationwide, EPA found an estimated \$29 million to \$97 million in additional tax revenue for local governments in a single year after cleanup, which is 2 to 7 times more than the \$12.4 million EPA contributed to the cleanup of those brownfields sites. The EPA Brownfields Program’s RLF grants are a source of capitalization that allow recipients to bridge the financing from cleanup to full redevelopment.

Wayne County Office of Economic Development and Planning focuses on utilizing multiple grant programs to meet the needs of the county. For more information on these and other programs, contact the Office of Economic Development and Planning at 315-946-5919 or www.WEDCny.com ###

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