



City Manager's Office  
P.O Box 1177  
Aiken, South Carolina 29802  
803-642-7654

111 Chesterfield St. S  
Aiken, South Carolina 29801  
Fax: 803-642-7646  
311@cityofaikensc.gov

R04-24-A-034

1. Applicant Identification

City of Aiken  
111 Chesterfield St. S  
Aiken, South Carolina 29801

2. Funding Requested

- a. Assessment Grant Type  
Community-wide
- b. Federal Funds Requested  
\$500,000

3. Location

a) Aiken b) Aiken County c) South Carolina

4. Target Area and Priority Site Information

Target Area: Census Tracts (CTs) 45003021300 and 45003021400

- Priority Site 1: 100 Block of Marlboro Street NE, Aiken, Aiken County, SC 29801
- Priority Site 2: 700 Block of Richland Avenue E, Aiken, Aiken County, SC 29801

5. Contacts

a. Project Director

Mary Catherine Lawton, Capital Projects Sales Tax Manager  
245 Dupont Drive, NW  
Aiken, South Carolina 29801  
803-643-2123  
mlawton@cityofaikensc.gov

b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Elected Official

Mayor Rick Osbon  
111 Chesterfield St. S  
Aiken, South Carolina 29801  
803-645-2833  
rosbon@cityofaikensc.gov

6. Population

City of Aiken, SC: 32,025 (US Census: 2017–2021 American Survey)



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7. Other Factors

<b>Other Factors</b>	<b>Page #</b>
Community population is 10,000 or less.	NA
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian Tribe or United States Territory.	NA
The priority site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	NA
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).	NA
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	NA
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	3
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	3
The proposed project will improve local climate adaptation/mitigation capacity and resilience to protect residents and community investments.	NA
At least 30% or more of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities, as described in Section I.B., for priority site(s) within the target area.	NA
The target area(s) is located within a community in which a coal-fired power plant has recently closed (2013 or later) or is closing.	NA

8. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority  
 See attached.

9. Releasing Copies of Applications  
 Not applicable.



November 3, 2023

Sara S. Janovitz, Manager  
Brownfields and Land Revitalization  
United States Environmental Protection Agency  
61 Forsyth Street S.W. 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-8960

RE: EPA Brownfields Community-Wide Assessment Grant  
City of Aiken, South Carolina

Dear Ms. Janovitz:

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, the State's environmental authority, acknowledges and fully supports the City of Aiken's application for a Brownfields Community-wide Assessment Grant. The funding will be primarily used on Phase I and Phase II assessments slated for mixed-use redevelopment in the downtown area of Aiken. The priority sites are focused on the expansion of the farmers market and the development of an entertainment venue.

The Department appreciates your consideration of the application and hopes for a favorable outcome. Your positive response will assist the City in its efforts to revitalize properties in the community. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Robert Hodges, of my staff at (803) 898-0919 or [hodgesrf@dhec.sc.gov](mailto:hodgesrf@dhec.sc.gov).

Sincerely,

Henry J. Porter, Chief  
Bureau of Land and Waste Management

cc: Elizabeth Basil, BEHS  
Robert Hodges, Manager, Brownfields Program



## **1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION**

**a. Target Area and Brownfields** i. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area: The City is located along the western border of the state and is home to 32,025 people.<sup>1</sup> The City has three unofficial districts: the Southside, Downtown, and Northside communities. The Southside is an area with large residential developments, golf courses, shopping, equestrian events, and hotels. The Downtown area has seen some revitalization, but many storefronts are still boarded, and it suffers from low occupancy. This lag may be attributed to the north-adjacent Northside district (NSD), which has seen a significant decline over the last 40 years. The Downtown and NSD, approximated by Aiken County **Census Tracts (CTs) 45003021300 and 45003021400, are the target area** for this Brownfields Assessment Grant, with the **geographic boundary being the city limits**. CT 214 is a federally designated Opportunity Zone and a **Justice 40 Initiative disadvantaged census tract**. This target area is the same as previous FY18/FY21 grant projects because the City wants to fortify investment opportunities in their most underutilized area and restore CT 214 to a vibrant, productive district.

Aiken was founded in 1835. The area's mild winter temperatures and blooming equestrian culture made it a quaint, sleepy southern town until the 1950s, when an explosion of growth occurred due to the construction of the US Government's Savannah River Site (SRS) south of the City. The SRS facility was constructed in 1950 to produce fissile materials used in the fabrication of nuclear weapons supporting the nation's defense programs. The secure, government-industrial complex extends across 310 square miles. At its peak, SRS employed 35,000 people, but the era of nuclear weapons production began to wane in the 1990s.<sup>2</sup> With the mission of the SRS beginning to sunset, jobs at the facility and in adjacent industries began to diminish. Many of its former employees were residents of the NSD, whose neighborhoods and schools were constructed in the 1950s to serve the influx of workers at SRS. When the jobs declined, the workers moved away, and the once spry communities within the NSD now have blighted properties with diminishing value, high unemployment, and increased crime. The NSD is one of the most densely populated areas of the city with the lowest median income in all of Aiken. This Grant will spur mixed-use development on blighted properties in keeping with the Strategic Economic Development Plan, stabilize property values, confront crime, and provide jobs and community resources within the target area.

Numerous idle properties have been hindered in their redevelopment or have thwarted adjacent redevelopment projects; their proximity to residential properties may also represent a threat to public health and the environment. Aiken lacks the resources, however, to sustain the momentum of the City's community-wide Brownfields Program without additional assessment funding for sites throughout the NSD/Downtown target area (CT 213, CT 214).

ii. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s): The City identified over 60 potential brownfields sites in the target area during the FY18/FY21 grant cycles, including bulk petroleum distribution facilities, ice companies, dry cleaners, wood products manufacturers, and auto service facilities. **Priority Site 1 is the block north adjacent to the Farmer's Market.** Expansion of the Farmer's Market and redevelopment in the immediate area were identified as a priority during community visioning sessions. **This block formerly housed the Farmers' Fertilizer and Storage Company, the Aiken Gin Company cotton oil production facility, and the Sinclair Oil Company bulk oil distribution facility.** This site as a priority site will build on the momentum of redevelopment interest near the Farmer's Market and may become a viable site for expanding the Farmer's Market

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<sup>1</sup> Aiken city, South Carolina—Census Bureau Profile

<sup>2</sup> [www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/savannah-river-site](http://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/savannah-river-site)



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retail space and parking. The City is already actively engaged in the area through acquisition and initiation of mixed-use redevelopment at the adjacent “Jackson Petroleum” site under the FY18/FY21 Assessment Grants. A large portion of the Priority Site 1 block is currently occupied by rusty, metal-sided vacant sheds/warehouse, and the properties have been listed for sale for more than six months. The rest of the block is occupied by existing businesses, a used car lot, and a restaurant. Residential properties are adjacent. Contaminants of concern include asbestos and lead paint, petroleum compounds (PCs), pesticides/herbicides, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). **The City has site access for the parcels that are currently vacant/for sale.** The City does not intend to assess existing businesses.

**Priority Site 2 is the Humble Oil & Refining Company site two blocks west of the Farmer’s Market.** This site was formerly a bulk oil distribution center and later a gas station. According to the current property owner, a prospective purchaser has already balked due to the site’s unknown environmental legacy. The 0.87-acre site is currently developed with a vacant brick structure, built in the late 1970s, and a partially paved lot. The City and the property owner are committed to reusing the site as an entertainment venue. The site owner has granted signed property access for assessment. Contaminants of concern include asbestos and lead paint, PCs, and PAHs. The site is adjoined by residences to the north. **The City has site access from the property owner.**

iii. Identifying Additional Sites: Currently the City uses a property intake form available on the City’s brownfields website for public use to bring potential projects to the City’s Brownfields Program. The form asks to identify previous/current site use, known/suspected contamination, and proposed redevelopment plans. This approach has been highly successful in identifying eligible sites. The City will continue to use this tool throughout the grant life cycle to identify sites, as priority will be given to sites within the target area. For sites within the target area that have not been previously identified on the inventory, factors such as proximity to residents, properties identified on the intake forms, proposed redevelopment, current use, and alignment with redevelopment plans will be considered. Ranking will be completed using either the updated site prioritization tool or will be given immediate funding if no current sites are under active assessment. Additional preference will be given to sites located in the CEJST “disadvantaged” area; US Census data will be used to confirm pecuniary need of the community. When the target area has been completely assessed, sites throughout the geographic boundary of the city will be considered after presentation to the Steering Committee and one of the biannual community meetings and if the project benefits an underserved community based on census and CEJST data.

**b. Revitalization of the Target Area** i. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans: In February 2020, the City held a workshop to develop a guide for growth, investment, and greater opportunity for Aiken residents. Some of the key issues that arose from the workshop were these: **Issue 1**–Resident attraction and retention. The City has struggled to attract and retain younger families and single young professionals due to poor walkability, interconnectedness, and mixed-used development. **Issue 2**–A need to identify target areas for growth and development. The City lacks available housing, the NSD/Downtown areas have been identified as having significant potential, and the City is underprepared to leverage key investments/burgeoning industry clusters within the region. This project aligns directly with the needs identified in the **City of Aiken Comprehensive Plan 2023 Update, the December 2020 Strategic Economic Development Plan, and the 2022 City of Aiken Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism (PRT) Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan.** In addition to the **Issues** noted above, the 2022 PRT Plan surveyed Aiken citizens with respect to specific community needs. Overwhelmingly (48%), the highest priority for the community was access to an entertainment venue.



**Priority Site 1** is north of the Farmer’s Market across Richland Avenue. The Farmer’s Market is currently situated in the median of Williamsburg Street and lacks space to expand, limiting vendors and patrons to on-street parking. Further investment in Priority Site 1 directly addresses Issues 1 and 2. Additionally, expansion of the Farmer’s Market will provide additional access to fresh food sources since the target area is low income and has limited access to fresh food sources.<sup>3</sup>

**Priority Site 2** is west of the Farmer’s Market and is a prime spot for an entertainment venue, which will address Issues 1 and 2, as well as the needs identified in the 2022 PRT Plan.

ii. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy: The redevelopment of target-area brownfield sites will cause both economic and noneconomic quality of life benefits for all residents. Brownfield redevelopment within the Downtown or NSD will spur economic growth in the Opportunity Zone (CT 214). By expanding the Farmer’s Market (Priority Site 1) and encouraging growth, Aiken will address Issue 2 and combat CT 214’s status as a USDA Food Desert. Priority Site 2 redevelopment is poised to add jobs, increase tax revenues, and integrate protective measures against contamination sourced from petroleum use on-site, addressing Issue 1 and the 2022 PRT Needs Assessment. The proximity of Priority Sites 1 and 2 to the Farmer’s Market and the Jackson Petroleum mixed-use redevelopment project will catalyze additional growth in the NSD.

Although most structures located on the priority sites are dilapidated, every effort will be made to recycle and reuse materials deemed environmentally safe. In addition, the City will strongly encourage all developers to use **energy efficient (EE) and renewable energy options** in their design plans such as incorporating solar panels into the roofs of buildings, using EE windows, and prioritizing native landscaping design.

c. Strategy for Leveraging Resources i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse: The City is eligible to apply for state and federal grant funding as a local unit of government. The only funding available to the City to continue assessment of brownfield sites is the EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant, which the City intends to apply for until funding is awarded. Additional assessment funding will allow the City to connect patrons with local businesses, farmers, and entertainment. For sites where cleanup is needed, the City has discussed funding access and low-interest rate loan opportunities through South Carolina’s Revolving Loan Fund with the Catawba Council of Governments. Aiken will apply for funding to clean up priority brownfield sites throughout the NSD/Downtown areas upon assessment through the EPA Brownfield Cleanup grant. In addition, the City will work with the Lower Savannah Council of Governments to pursue US Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant funding for the demolition of remediated brownfield sites to further the City’s redevelopment plans. Lastly, the City promotes coupling of state brownfields tax incentives with tax incentives already offered for redevelopment within the Opportunity Zone.

ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure: The infrastructure currently in place (roads, rail service, water, sewer) is sufficient for the redevelopment of the priority sites and throughout the NSD/Downtown target area. The area has high-speed internet service available, and the City has recently upgraded sanitary sewer service in the area. Additionally, the City is upgrading the drinking water capacity. The water and wastewater improvements will provide capacity to support long-term growth.

## **2. COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

a. Community Need i. The Community’s Need for Funding: Since the 1950s, the SRS has been the largest employer in the region. At its height, SRS employed nearly 35,000 people; employment today is around 11,000 people.<sup>2,3</sup> The nearly 25,000 lost jobs comprise over 80% of the City’s current total population in terms of raw numbers. This number does not account for other losses in

<sup>3</sup> USDA Food Access Research Atlas



jobs from adjacent services to the facility (not quantified). This slow decline from SRS's peak was compounded by the Great Recession in 2008 and again by the COVID-19 pandemic. Compared to 53% across the City, employment in the target area was last measured at 36%, a number undoubtedly increased by 2020 pandemic conditions.<sup>1</sup> Income inequality is prevalent in the target area, with a median income (\$38,271) 20% less than the City's median income (\$46,994).<sup>1</sup> **Poverty has risen as a result, with a rate (28.8%) twice that of the City as a whole (14.4%).<sup>1</sup>** Blight has risen as well, lowering property values and property tax revenue and placing a burden on the community. These conditions have reduced the ability of the community to support critical municipal services. The City does not budget for properties they do not plan to purchase, so any brownfield assessment funding provided to nongovernmental prospective purchasers must come from economic development contingency funds. Regional Economic Benchmarking Report for Aiken County 2016 Update concluded that total government expenses for the City are growing faster than total government revenue, preventing the City's ability to sustain brownfield assessment and redevelopment projects on its own. The City has very limited in-house capacity to finance brownfield projects and needs additional sources of funding to sustain brownfield redevelopment community wide.

ii. Threats to Sensitive Populations (1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations: The target area's sensitive populations are **minorities, youth, elderly, single-mother families, and those living in poverty**. The target area has a 61% minority population compared to the City's 41% total minority population.<sup>1</sup> Nearly half of the total population of the target area are youth (22% under 18) or elderly (27% over 65).<sup>1</sup> These sensitive populations have a documented increase in occurrence of health risks. CT 214 is in the 93<sup>rd</sup> percentile for **asthma** occurrence, 98<sup>th</sup> for diabetes occurrence, 97<sup>th</sup> for heart disease, and 97<sup>th</sup> for low life expectancy.<sup>4</sup>

Aiken has identified welfare concerns related to community services access, connectivity, crumbling infrastructure, and crime. As an early step to address these issues, the Urban Land Institute's South Carolina District Council Aiken Technical Assistance Panel convened in December 2014 to focus on helping the City of Aiken revitalize the target area. The results of the panel outlined several issues: neighborhoods lack amenities and services (daycare, after-school care, family services, healthy restaurants), public transit may be inadequate, and land value can exceed the value of structures built on it (blight).

The USDA Food Access Research Atlas indicates the target area is a low-income CT where a significant number of residents live more than a half mile from the nearest supermarket. This condition is doubly impactful because of vehicle unavailability within the community. By expanding the Farmer's Market, the City will directly combat these food desert conditions. Given the high percentage of sensitive populations within the community, healthy food options are increasingly important to reduce health risks associated with a nutrient-sparse diet.

Crime in the target area is disproportionately high. For example, according to the City of Aiken Public Safety Crime Data, within the Downtown/NSD, 257 crimes were reported in only a thirty-day period (July 1, 2023–July 31, 2023).<sup>5</sup> In contrast, during the same period the Southside reported nearly 32% less crime, and this trend is similar for almost any time range selected. The rise of unemployment and poverty are directly associated with the lack of investment in the community, which in turn results in higher crime. The City implemented the Aiken Safe Communities Initiative in 2012 to reduce high levels of crime and recidivism; however, there is still the perception of significant crime, therefore deterring redevelopment opportunities. By

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<sup>4</sup> Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool

<sup>5</sup> [webapps.cityofaikense.gov/crime\\_analytics/](http://webapps.cityofaikense.gov/crime_analytics/)



removing blight, the City can mitigate crime and the perception of crime that lingers. Revitalization of the target area using an EPA Brownfield Grant will identify contaminants and reduce safety threats affecting target-area residents' health and welfare.

(2) Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions: Target-area and City-specific data are not available; however, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) published the Aiken County Cancer Profile dated June 2022.<sup>6</sup> The profile noted 487 new cancer cases per 100,000 in Aiken County from 2015 to 2019 compared to the state's 395 per 100,000. According to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the reported types of cancers analyzed in the profile can be directly linked to exposure to the asbestos, petroleum compounds, and PAHs suspected at Priority Sites 1 and 2 and likely present in much of the NSD. The cancer mortality rate for white people across Aiken County is 161, while the rate for Black people was 167. These rates are at or above the statewide rate of 161. Given the target area's 72% minority population compared to the City's 33% total minority population, the sensitive populations within the target area bear an undue health deficit compared to the rest of the City.<sup>1</sup> When compared to the State, the target area is in the 69<sup>th</sup> and 97<sup>th</sup> percentile for PM2.5<sup>7</sup> and the 93<sup>rd</sup> percentile for asthma.<sup>7</sup>

Among children, the leading causes of death for newborns are birth defects. **Minority populations within Aiken County have an infant mortality rate of 14.4 (2019 to 2021), more than four times the rate for Caucasian people within the County.<sup>8</sup> Based on the racial makeup of the target area versus the City as a whole (61% minority population versus 41%), the incidence of birth defects and infant mortality are higher within the NSD/Downtown.<sup>1,8</sup>** According to ATSDR, many pollutants suspected to be present at priority sites and across CT 214 are mutagens and/or teratogens. The assessment grant will identify which of these carcinogens/mutagens/teratogens are present and will support the development of appropriate remediation/reuse planning to reduce the threat of disproportionate health and environmental risks from those contaminants.

(3) Environmental Justice (a) Identification of Environmental Justice Issues: The target area has a high minority population (61%) with high poverty (44%).<sup>1</sup> Compared to 51% across the City, employment in the target area was last measured at 36%.<sup>1</sup> The housing stock in the area is dated, with much of it original to the 1950s when housing was constructed for SRS workers. The City is looking at rezoning within the NSD, as current zoning is restrictive on housing and mixed-use redevelopment and perpetuates the cycle of blight within the NSD. Over 23% of workers in the target area must commute; however, the public transit system operates its three routes only on weekdays.<sup>1</sup> This situation fuels isolation of the NSD residents. According to the Economic Justice Screening Tool, the target area is in 83<sup>rd</sup> percentile in the state for proximity to hazardous waste sites. The City is home to more than 200 regulated underground storage tank (UST) facilities (SCDHEC UST Registry) and four SCDHEC Dry Cleaner Restoration Trust Fund facilities (data limited to the target area was unavailable). One State Superfund Site is located approximately one mile northeast of residents within the target area along the County's industrial corridor (US Highway 1) north of the City's center. A former landfill is located in the target area adjacent to residential properties and the City's dog park, and multiple residences border Priority Sites 1 and 2. This proximity, coupled with the sensitivity of the predominantly sensitive populations, indicates the target area, and especially the NSD, bear an increased risk of negative health impacts

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<sup>6</sup> [scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Aiken%20County%20Cancer%20Profile%202022.pdf](https://scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Aiken%20County%20Cancer%20Profile%202022.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>

<sup>8</sup> [scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/CR-012142.pdf](https://scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/CR-012142.pdf)





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relative to the rest of the City. The proximity and connection of health effects to brownfields is the ideal application for the Justice40 initiative. Expenditure of brownfield funds within the target area and on the priority sites will deliver more benefits to the communities that need it the most and cause both economic and noneconomic quality of life benefits for all residents. (b) Advancing Environmental Justice: CT 214 is a CEJST designated “disadvantaged” area for low income, ranking in the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile for low income; 90<sup>th</sup> percentile for low median income; 92<sup>nd</sup> percentile for poverty; and 91<sup>st</sup> percentile for unemployment.<sup>4</sup> The City **does not anticipate displacement of any commercial or residential occupants**; rather, the strategy is focused on attracting mixed-use opportunities. Expanding mixed-use redevelopment and creating entry level/low barrier to entry jobs within walking distance for the residents of CT 214 via Priority Site 2 would significantly lessen the socioeconomic and health disparities that the disadvantaged residents harbor. The reuse strategy of Priority Site 1 would provide increased access to fresh local food/produce to the residents of CT 214 within walking distance.

**b. Community Engagement** i. Project Involvement & ii. Project Roles: The following community organizations will assist in the process of site selection, prioritization, cleanup, and future redevelopment of the priority brownfield sites for this project.

Name of Org. & Mission	Point of Contact	Specific involvement in the project
<b>Aiken Chamber of Commerce:</b> Catalyst for business growth, the convener for leaders and influencers, and the champion for a stronger community.	David Jameson, President and CEO <a href="mailto:djameson@aikenchamber.net">djameson@aikenchamber.net</a>	<b>Site Identification:</b> The Chamber will help inform businesses/developers/ investors who may not be aware of the program.
<b>Aiken Municipal Development Commission:</b> Combine technical assistance, financial assistance, and other incentives to leverage and facilitate development in the City of Aiken.	Sabina Craig, ED Project Manager <a href="mailto:scraig@CityofAikenSC.gov">scraig@CityofAikenSC.gov</a>	<b>Cleanup/Future Reuse Planning:</b> The Development Commission has experience with state brownfield projects and will be a strong addition in this role.
<b>Western SC:</b> Regional economic development organization that represents the four counties of Western SC.	Will Williams, President and CEO <a href="mailto:wwilliams@westernSC.org">wwilliams@westernSC.org</a>	<b>Site Selection:</b> Western SC is familiar with regional economics and will recommend on-site selection with an emphasis on feasibility of success.
<b>Second Baptist Community Development Corporation:</b> Local community grassroots organization that provides affordable housing and training/mentoring opportunities.	Harvey Ramseur, Executive Director [REDACTED]	<b>Site Prioritization and Outreach:</b> The Second Baptist CDC is the lead community liaison and will advise in site prioritization and reuse suggestions relevant to community needs via direct outreach.

iii. Incorporating Community Input: Aiken understands the importance of keeping the public informed when making changes within the community, especially those underserved residents most affected by the project. At a recent public meeting, citizens expressed a desire for the City to update the brownfields inventory, since the previous inventory will be over five years old at the time of funding. A Community Involvement Plan (CIP) was developed and updated as part of the FY18 and FY21 assessment grants, respectively, and contains information on the planned community engagement activities, schedule, project background, and key players of the Brownfields Project. The City also uses all forms of social media outlets, in addition to broadcasts on local Channel 4, to list information and provide updates for City residents on the Brownfields



Project. The City maintains a brownfields website to publicize information about active grants and provide contact information for feedback. The website allows ease of access to site selection and suggestion forms.

The City has organized a Brownfields Steering Committee that meets twice annually, **or as needed**, to discuss program direction, eligible commercial sites, and any other grant-related concerns. The City hosts in-person community meetings with an option for free on-line video conferencing. Local faith-based groups help keep the community informed of upcoming meetings and brownfield news. An updated program brochure explaining the community-wide assessment program will be shared throughout the community. Press releases to the local media will keep the community up to date on project milestones and events. City staff will provide Brownfield Program information during city council meetings. In our experience, community feedback (outside of public meetings) usually comes through two routes: via phone interactions resulting from public notice signage posted when a site is enrolled in the VCP or through direct phone calls to our Brownfields Program Director via her contact information on the brownfields website. Feedback and comments are typically addressed immediately or are provided to the Steering Committee via email for action at the next meeting.

**3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS**

**a. Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs:** The City is requesting \$500,000 to implement this Brownfield Project based on the number of remaining sites in the inventory from the FY18 & FY21 grants and the anticipated additional sites found determined through the Site Inventory Task.

**Task 1: Outreach**

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|------|---|
| i.   | <i>Project Implementation:</i> The City’s Brownfield Project Director will update the existing Community Involvement Plan (CIP), outreach materials, Brownfield Project website, and social media posts with the assistance of the environmental contractor (EC). City staff will lead the community meetings to keep the public informed on project plans and updates. Supplies are budgeted for the printing of outreach materials (brochures/handouts), office supplies, and software to manage the grant. |
| ii.  | <i>Anticipated Project Schedule:</i> Updated CIP created within 3 months of award (upon completion a more concrete schedule will follow). Community meetings held 1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> quarters of each year (excluding 3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter of Year 1 when project is kicking off). Website and outreach materials created in the 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter and posted quarterly throughout the grant project.   |
| iii. | <i>Task/Activity Lead:</i> City: Mary Catherine Lawton, Brownfield Project Director   |
| iv.  | <i>Outputs:</i> Updated CIP, Updated Brownfield Website, 7 Community Meetings, Brochures/Handouts, Social Media Posts, Summary of Community Meetings in EPA required Quarterly Reports.   |

**Task 2: Site Inventory**

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|------|--|
| i.   | <i>Project Implementation:</i> The City’s Brownfields Project Director will work with the residents living in the target area during community meetings to <b>update the existing site inventory</b> for assessment. Abandoned and underused properties identified by the residents of the target area will be researched further by City staff using the Aiken County tax assessor’s website. Once a list is updated, the EC will use the evaluation ranking tool from the FY18/FY21 assessment grants to determine the order in which the sites will be addressed. |
| ii.  | <i>Anticipated Project Schedule:</i> Community meeting held in 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter will bolster the site inventory list from FY18/FY21 and will implement the established evaluation ranking tool in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter and continuing throughout the grant project.  |
| iii. | <i>Task/Activity Lead:</i> City: Mary Catherine Lawton, Brownfield Project Director  |
| iv.  | <i>Outputs:</i> Evaluation Ranking Tool, Site Inventory List   |

**Task 3: Assessment**

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|----|--|
| i. | <i>Project Implementation:</i> The consultant will conduct Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) activities at sites selected and ranked through the Site Inventory Task, <b>starting first with the two priority sites listed</b> |
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	<b>in this application.</b> ASTM-AAI compliant Phase Is; Generic Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP); Phase IIs, which will include the SS-QAPP. Prior to assessment, site access agreements and property eligibility determinations approval will be obtained.
ii.	<i>Anticipated Project Schedule:</i> Assessment activities begin in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter and continue throughout the grant project.
iii.	<i>Task/Activity Lead:</i> The EC will implement the technical aspects of the project with oversight from the City: Thomas Parrott, City Engineer.
iv.	<i>Outputs:</i> 20 Phase I ESAs; 1 Generic QAPP; 10 Phase II ESAs, including SS-QAPP; Site Access Agreements and Property Eligibility Determinations.

**Task 4: Remediation/Reuse Planning**

i.	<i>Project Implementation:</i> For projects identified for cleanup, the EC will prepare the Analysis for Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA) and/or Cleanup Plans. Cleanup planning will include evaluating cleanup alternatives, calculating cleanup costs, and determining site appropriate remediation and/or reuse planning to reduce health/environmental risks. A planner will prepare a Brownfields Revitalization Plan for the City. The EC will assist the City in hosting charrettes/visioning sessions to be held for key properties.
ii.	<i>Anticipated Project Schedule:</i> Plans & Charrettes begin 6 <sup>th</sup> quarter and continue throughout the grant project.
iii.	<i>Task/Activity Lead:</i> The EC will implement the technical aspects of the project with oversight from City: Mary Catherine Lawton, Capital Projects Sales Tax Admin., Brownfield Project Director
iv.	<i>Outputs:</i> 4 ABCAs, 2 Vision Sessions/Charrettes, 1 Brownfields Revitalization Plan

**Task 5: Programmatic Support**

i.	<i>Project Implementation:</i> The City’s Brownfields Finance Director will lead the process in procuring an EC to assist with the Brownfield Grant Project and track the grant progress/outputs. The City’s Brownfields Finance Director will assist the Brownfield Project Director with grant implementation and administration to ensure compliance with the EPA Cooperative Agreement Work Plan, schedule, and terms and conditions. The EC will assist the City in completing ACRES Database Reporting, Yearly Financial Reporting, Quarterly Reporting, MBE/WBE Forms, and all additional Programmatic Support for the four-year term of the Grant. The City staff travel budget allows for two staff to attend four national/regional/grantee brownfield training conferences/workshops.
ii.	<i>Anticipated Project Schedule:</i> ACRES Reporting begins in the 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter & Quarterly Reporting begins in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter and continues throughout the grant project. Annual Reporting and Forms created in the 5 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> , and 13 <sup>th</sup> quarters and during final close out.
iii.	<i>Task/Activity Lead:</i> City: Kymberley Rooks, Finance Direction with oversight from Mary Catherine Lawton
iv.	<i>Outputs:</i> ACRES Database Reporting, 4 Annual Financial Reports, 16 Quarterly Reports, 4 MBE/WBE Forms, Programmatic Support for the four-year grant period. Two staff to attend four conferences.

**b. Cost Estimates:** Below are the anticipated cost estimates for this project *based on past brownfield projects as determined by local market standards with contractual hourly rates based on the skills needed for the specific tasks.* The budget for this project includes travel, supplies and contractual costs only. **Of the budget, 72% will be spent on site-specific activities through the Assessment Task.**

**Task 1 Outreach Contractual:** Community Involvement Plan Update \$1,500 (15hrs x \$100/hr); Brownfield Website, Outreach Brochure/Handouts, Social Media Posts \$2,000 (20hrs x \$100/hr); 7 Community Education Meetings \$7,000 (70hrs x \$100/hr; \$1000/meeting). **Supplies:** Outreach Supplies (software, printouts) \$1,500. **Task 2 Site Inventory: Contractual:** Updated Brownfield Site Inventory and Evaluation Ranking Update \$4,000 (40hrs x \$100/hr). **Task 3 Assessment: Contractual:** 20 Phase I ESAs \$4,000 each for a total of \$80,000; 1 Generic QAPP \$5,000; 10 Phase II ESAs including SS-QAPP at \$28,000 each for a total of \$280,000. **Task 4**



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**Remediation/Reuse Planning:** Contractual: 4 ABCAs \$28,000 (\$7,000 each); 2 Vision Sessions/Charrettes \$6,000 (\$3,000/mtg); 1 Brownfields Revitalization Plan \$50,000 (Planner: 130hrs x \$150; Market Analysts: 112hrs x \$125; Environmental Professional: 110hrs x \$150). **Task 5 Programmatic Support:** Contractual: ACRES Database Reporting, Yearly Financial Reporting, Quarterly Reporting, MBE/WBE Forms, Programmatic Support for the four-year grant period \$25,000 (250hrs x \$100/hr). Travel: Two staff to attend four conferences \$10,000 (flights at \$500, 3 nights in hotel at \$175 each, incidentals and 3-day *per diem* at \$75 x 4 conferences).

Category	Tasks					Totals
	Outreach	Site Inventory	Assessment	Remediation/Reuse Planning	Programmatic Support	
Travel					\$10,000	\$10,000
Supplies	\$1,500					\$1,500
Contractual	\$10,500	\$4,000	\$365,000	\$84,000	\$25,000	\$488,500
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>	<b>\$365,000</b>	<b>\$84,000</b>	<b>\$35,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>

**c. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results:** To ensure this EPA Brownfield Project is on schedule, the City’s Brownfields Director, Mary Catherine Lawton, and the EC will meet quarterly to track all **outputs identified in 3.a.** using an Excel spreadsheet and will report all progress in fulfilling the scope of work, goals, and objectives to the EPA via quarterly reports. In addition, project expenditures and activities will be compared to the projects schedule to ensure the grant project will be completed within the four-year time frame. Site specific information will be entered and tracked in the ACRES database. The outputs to be tracked include the number of neighborhood meetings, public meetings, meetings with community groups and community partners, environmental assessments, ABCAs, and cleanup redevelopment plans. The outcomes to be tracked include community participation, acres assessed, acres ready for reuse, redevelopment dollars leveraged, and jobs created. In the event the project is not being completed in an efficient manner, countermeasures are in place to address this problem. The City will make monthly calls to the EPA Project Officer and, if needed, will revise the Work Plan to get back on schedule.

**4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE**

**a. Programmatic Capability** i. Organizational Capacity, ii. Organizational Structure, & iii. Description of Key Staff: This grant will be administered by the Aiken City Manager’s Office. The City Manager’s Office is responsible for directing and coordinating City department plans. The City Manager serves as the Chief Executive Officer for the City and is assisted by a city clerk and assistant city manager. The City Manager is responsible for informing and advising City Council about services, overseeing department administration, and supporting City Council by providing city recorder functions; managing recruitment for committees, commissions, and boards; providing public information and financial/budget management; and coordinating intergovernmental relations. Mary Catherine Lawton, Capital Projects Sales Tax Administrator appointed in 2023, will serve as the **Brownfields Project Director**. Ms. Lawton works in the City Manager’s Office and administers special projects for the City. Ms. Lawton will be responsible for the completion of administrative/financial requirements, review of deliverables, and compliance with grant schedules and will assist contractors in the program’s technical requirements. Ms. Lawton served as the City’s Assistant City Manager for two years and in the City’s Planning Department prior. She has managed multiple state and federal grants on behalf of the City. Prior to working for the City, Ms. Lawton worked for the City of Hartsville, South



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Carolina, as their Assistant City Manager. Kymberley Rooks, **Finance Director** for the City since 2019, will assist regarding the grant's financial requirements. Prior to working for the City, Ms. Rooks worked in the finance department of Aiken County for nearly 22 years and has held a designation as Certified Government Finance Officer since 1996. Both Ms. Rooks and Ms. Lawton are familiar with the ASAP system, having used it on both previous grants. Technical advisory will be provided by Thomas Parrott, **City Engineer** since August 2021. Mr. Parrot is the City's engineer for infrastructure projects and has experience as a project engineer at Cranston Engineering Group since 2013. If any additional contractor/expert assistance is needed, the City will solicit through its established procurement procedures for expertise and performance. The team will also be advised by Joy Lester, who served as the City of Aiken's Brownfield Project Director for both the FY18/FY21 grant cycles.

iv. Acquiring Additional Resources: The City will procure a qualified environmental consultant and subconsultants to assist with technical and reporting aspects of the Brownfield Community-wide Assessment. Procurement procedures will comply with the local contracting/procurement process and with EPA "Professional Service" requirements (2 CFR §§ 200 and 1500). Employment outreach during the lifecycle of brownfield sites can be made through local businesses as well as local organizations that offer technical training and hiring assistance to residents of the City such as Second Baptist Community Development Corporation.

**b. Past Performance and Accomplishments** i. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant (1) Accomplishments: The City has been awarded two EPA Assessment Grants in FY18 and FY21 in the amount of \$300,000 each. The FY18 grant outputs included 6 Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESA), 5 Phase II ESAs, and 1 Property Condition Assessment (PCA). **The current FY21 Assessment Grant exhausted over 76.6% of funds in the first year and 85% by the end of the second year.** The City has used the Grant to facilitate 6 Phase II Assessments and initiate State Voluntary Cleanup Contracts at those same six sites, including five that the City has acquired to facilitate redevelopment. Over 85% of funds drawn down as of October 1, 2023, have been spent directly on Phase II Assessments. All outcomes/outputs have been recorded in the ACRES database.

(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements: The City has implemented a very successful Brownfields Program. All deliverables were on time for the FY18 grant (opened October 2018 and closed December 2020). Both grants have been facilitated in strict conformance with the Work Plan and complied with required schedules implemented by the US EPA for on-time submittal of quarterly reports, ACRES reporting, and deliverable submittals. This attention to detail and dedication to process has supported a strong partnership with the US EPA Project Manager and led to the use of 85% of grant funds to date on the current FY21 grant. The FY21 open grant held by the City was started on October 1, 2021, with an original projected end date of September 30, 2024; however, the grant has a current balance of \$45,069.83, as of October 1, 2023. The remaining grant funds are anticipated to be exhausted by February 2024, through completion of one assessment report and grant closeout activities. Through their dedication, the City now has an extensive understanding of the requirements and processes necessary to make the current and future programs a success for their community with the support of US EPA grant funding.



**City of Aiken, SC  
FY24 Brownfield Assessment Grant  
Threshold Criteria**



## Threshold Criteria

### 1. Applicant Eligibility

a. The City of Aiken, South Carolina, is eligible to apply for the EPA Brownfields Community-wide Assessment Grant as a local government as defined under 2 CFR § 200.64.

b. The City of Aiken, South Carolina, is not exempt from Federal taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code.

### 2. Community Involvement

Aiken understands the importance of keeping the public informed when making changes within the community. The City's proudest "brownfields related" moment was the April 2019 opening of the Lessie B. Price Aiken Senior & Youth Center at the Eustis Park expansion state brownfield site. For both the FY18 and FY21 grants, we held brownfield community meetings at the Center. Holding the brownfield meeting at a brownfield site was a powerful reminder to our community of the positive impact one individual brownfield project can have. In August 2022, the City held a public meeting at the Center to discuss the City's intent to reapply for assessment funding. At that meeting, citizens expressed a desire for the City to update the brownfields inventory, since the previous inventory will be over five years old at the time of funding. A Community Involvement Plan (CIP) was developed and updated as part of the FY18 and FY21 assessment grants, respectively, and contains information on the planned community engagement activities, schedule, project background, and key players of the Brownfields Project. The City also uses all forms of social media outlets, in addition to broadcasts on local Channel 4, to list information and provide updates for City residents on the Brownfields Project. The City maintains a brownfields website to publicize information about active grants and provide contact information for feedback. The website allows ease of access to site selection and suggestion forms.

The City has organized a Brownfields Steering Committee that meets twice annually to discuss program direction, eligible commercial sites, and any other grant-related concerns. To maintain community interaction, the City posts updates through the brownfields website and solicits feedback through that platform. The City hosts in-person community meetings with an option for free online video conferencing. Local faith-based groups help keep the community informed of upcoming meetings and brownfield news. An updated program brochure explaining the community-wide assessment program will be shared throughout the community and strategically placed at City offices and at the new community center. Press releases to the local media will keep the community up to date on project milestones and events. City staff will provide Brownfield Program information during city council meetings.

In our experience, community feedback (outside of public meetings) usually comes through two routes: via phone interactions resulting from public notice signage posted when a site is enrolled in the Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP) or through direct phone calls to our Brownfields Program Director via her contact information on the Brownfield Program website. Feedback and comments are typically addressed immediately or are provided to the Steering Committee via email for action at the next meeting.



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**3. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds**

The City of Aiken has a current EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant drawn down by 85% as of October 1, 2023. A copy of the October 1, 2023, Automated Standard Proposal for Payments (ASAP) printout is attached.

The City affirms that it does NOT have an existing Multipurpose Grant.

**4. Contractors and Named Subrecipients**

Not Applicable.