



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 13, 2004

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GOVERNOR BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES ALMOST \$320,000 IN *OPPORTUNITY RETURNS* FUNDING TO CLEAN UP BROWNFIELDS AND SPUR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHEAST REGION

SPRINGFIELD - Making a commitment to transform brownfields sites into new business and job opportunities through his *Opportunity Returns* initiative in the Northeast region, Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced that Geneva, Morton Grove, Rosemont, Sycamore, and Wauconda have all been awarded brownfields grants to perform environmental assessment and investigation for redevelopment of abandoned businesses.

The funding is being provided through the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) as part of *Opportunity Returns*, the Governor's soon-to-be-unveiled economic development plan designed to spur economic growth and create jobs in the Northeast region and throughout the state.

"The fundamental idea behind *Opportunity Returns* is to create better opportunities for the people of the region to earn a decent living. Again and again, we've seen contaminated, vacant plots of land that have acted as deterrents to business and community development being transformed into viable future business sites. The Brownfields program is sparking renewal in communities across the state, and I know it will help achieve the same results throughout the Northeast region," Governor Blagojevich said.

Sycamore was awarded a **\$119,479** Municipal Brownfields Redevelopment Grant, which will be used to conduct environmental assessment and cleanup at the former Harvester Square Facility, located at the intersection of South Street and Edwards Street, in Sycamore. Once remediated, this 4.5-acre brownfields site will allow for badly needed expansion of a garden center and a moving and storage company adjacent to the location. Sycamore will use this grant to conduct site assessment work and provide oversight work under the authority of the Illinois EPA's Site Remediation Program.

Grant funds in the amount of **\$101,210** were awarded to Wauconda to assess the former J.R. Circuit facility located at 111 West Mill in downtown Wauconda. Due to contamination remaining at the site, U.S. EPA performed a court ordered immediate removal action in 2002, which included demolishing existing buildings. While surface contamination was removed, investigation of subsurface soils is still needed. Wauconda has recently purchased the property and plans to use it as a parking lot for its downtown businesses.

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Morton Grove has been awarded more than **\$56,000** to conduct an environmental investigation of the LeHigh/Ferris area, an area bounded by Dempster Street, Ferris Avenue, Main Street and the Cook County Forest Preserve District. Work will begin immediately. Once the initial planning, investigation and study are completed, Morton Grove will likely amend its grant to more closely study and plan any cleanup activities that may be needed. Morton Grove would be eligible to leverage its municipal grant into additional funds available under *Opportunity Returns* or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In addition to the grant, the Illinois EPA will provide direct technical support and oversight and continue to assist Morton Grove with environmental issues until redevelopment is initiated.

“This Brownfields program is proving that aggressive, responsive environmental policy can act as an effective economic development tool. Through the Governor’s leadership, this program is successfully working with communities to turn contaminated and abandoned industrial and commercial eyesores into projects that provide jobs and community resources again. This grant will certainly help accomplish that in Morton Grove,” State Senator Ira Silverstein (D-Chicago) said.

Rosemont will use its **\$32,945** grant to assess and cleanup a former industrial park at the northeast corner of Pearl Street and Bryn Mawr Avenue. The Village plans to actively market the site and adjoining properties for commercial redevelopment. A proposed use of the site involves the construction of a sports and entertainment complex that complements their existing convention and entertainment business.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for Rosemont to create something where nothing has stood for far too long. The Governor's economic vision will continue to spark growth and create jobs for the hardworking men and women throughout the region and across the state," State Senator Don Harmon (D-Oak Park) said.

Geneva was awarded **\$9,220** to conduct an environmental assessment at a former gas station located at 637 East State Street. It currently houses a firewood and mulch sales and storage business. Once cleaned up, Geneva plans to market the site for redevelopment as a retail convenience store.

IEPA Director Renee Cipriano announced the grants during a ceremonial check presentation Wednesday at the annual Illinois Brownfields Conference organized by IEPA. The conference was attended by hundreds of local officials, environmental consultants and others who participated in workshops on the tools available to spur redevelopment of brownfields, which are potentially contaminated industrial or commercial sites that are not currently in use.

“The Municipal Brownfields Redevelopment Program is one tool under the Governor’s *Opportunity Returns* initiative to assist communities and provide funding needed to cleanup and redevelop these abandoned sites. The grants will allow the communities to study and assess numerous brownfields sites and conduct environmental investigation activities to ensure their safe and effective redevelopment,” said IEPA Director Cipriano.

The *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois’ history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn’t work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. Each plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

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