



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

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news

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GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES \$115,000 OPPORTUNITY RETURNS GRANT TO TRANSFORM SOUTHERN REGION BROWNFIELD

SPRINGFIELD - Delivering on an *Opportunity Returns* pledge to transform brownfield sites into new business and job opportunities, Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced that the city of Marion will be awarded a **\$115,000** grant to conduct environmental cleanup activities at the former Marion Court Motel and service station located at the intersection of West Main and Court Streets. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) is providing the funding through *Opportunity Returns*, the Governor's comprehensive economic development initiative for the Southern region.

"In cities across America, brownfields have come to be a symbol of job loss and economic decline," said Governor Blagojevich. "By cleaning up this site and converting it into a thriving business center, we are not just creating jobs, but also sending a message that Marion and Southern Illinois is well on its way to brighter economic times."

The Municipal Brownfields Redevelopment Grant will provide direct funding to Marion for cleanup of subsurface contamination left behind after years of operating a service station at the location. The grants are awarded to Illinois municipalities for environmental assessments of abandoned or underutilized properties in preparation for cleanup and redevelopment, enabling Marion to continue its planned redevelopment and transform the area into a new CVS Pharmacy store.

"It says a lot about the Governor's *Opportunity Returns* plan that he is willing to invest in projects like this cleanup, because it shows that he is attuned to what our community needs at the local level. This brownfield redevelopment, and other similar local initiatives, will make a real difference for the economy here in Southern Illinois," said State Senator Gary Forby (D-Benton).

IEPA Director Renee Cipriano announced the grant during a ceremonial check presentation today at the annual Illinois Brownfields Conference, organized by the Illinois EPA. The conference in Springfield was attended by hundreds of local officials, environmental consultants and others who learned about the many tools available to cleanup and redevelop brownfields sites and former industrial or commercial sites with potential contamination.

"Brownfield grants are one of many tools in the Governor's *Opportunity Returns* program that assist communities like Marion and provide funds to improve both the environment and the economy," IEPA Director Cipriano said.

(more)

Governor Blagojevich's *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. This grassroots effort for the Southern region is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. The more than 40 specific projects that the Governor announced in November for Southern Illinois are designed to be flexible and effective. This plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

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