



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES \$95,000 IN *OPPORTUNITY RETURNS* GRANTS TO TRANSFORM BROWNFIELDS IN EAST CENTRAL REGION

SPRINGFIELD - Making a commitment to transform brownfields sites into new business and job opportunities through his *Opportunity Returns* initiative in the East Central region, Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced that Monticello and Rossville have been awarded brownfields grants to conduct environmental investigations and cleanups. These grants will be a part of his *Opportunity Returns* program for East Central Illinois – the Governor’s pro-active, comprehensive plan that will be unveiled shortly to promote economic growth and create more jobs throughout the region.

“In a short time, we will be formally rolling out an aggressive, locally-tailored economic development plan that is going to help restore economic opportunity for the people of the East Central region. But it’s important to note that the plan is already being implemented in the region, and the Brownfields program is a crucial example of that. These grants to Monticello and Rossville will act as a critical catalyst for business attraction and new job growth in these communities and are a symbol of the brighter economic forecast on the horizon for the region,” Governor Blagojevich said.

Monticello received a **\$17,500** grant out of the U.S. EPA Leaking Underground Storage Tank Brownfields Special Projects Fund allocation to Illinois. The grant will be used by the city to remove an underground storage tank at the former Pepsin pharmaceutical plant site at 416 W. Washington. The city recently acquired the property and plans on redeveloping it later this year. Monticello previously received \$118,176 in state brownfields grants for the site assessment and cleanup plans.

Rossville received a nearly **\$77, 000** Municipal Brownfields Redevelopment Grant that will be used for assessment and cleanup of two former gas stations in the downtown district, at 202 S. Chicago Street and 110 N. Chicago Street. The Village is hoping to attract new businesses, such as antique shops. In February 2004, a fire destroyed an entire block between the two sites, increasing interest in revitalization of the area as quickly as possible.

The funding is being provided through the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) as part of *Opportunity Returns*. The Brownfields program is proving that aggressive, responsive environmental policy can act as an effective economic development tool.

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IEPA Director Renee Cipriano recognized these grants during a ceremonial presentation Wednesday during the annual Illinois Brownfields Conference organized by IEPA. The conference was attended by hundreds of local officials, environmental consultants, developers and others who participated in workshops on the tools available from the Blagojevich administration 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 these communities to conduct environmental investigation and cleanup 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. This grassroots effort is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to business.

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