



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 MORE THAN \$52,000 IN *OPPORTUNITY RETURNS* GRANTS TO TRANSFORM SOUTHWEST REGION BROWNFIELDS

SPRINGFIELD - Delivering on an *Opportunity Returns* pledge to transform brownfields sites into new business and job opportunities, Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced that East St. Louis and New Athens, which are both in St. Clair County, have been awarded brownfields grants to do environmental investigations for redevelopment of abandoned businesses.

“A major facet of *Opportunity Returns* is turning sites that have become useless from years of neglect into exciting places where people can live, work and thrive,” said Governor Blagojevich. “Initiating the cleanup process for these sites will begin to make this kind of transformation a reality.”

East St. Louis will be awarded a **\$28,500** grant to conduct an environmental investigation at the site of a former dry cleaners, located at 13th Street and Gaty Avenue. Upon completion of the cleanup and rehabilitation of the area, it will be developed as housing by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

East St. Louis is providing more than \$8,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and nearly \$4,000 in in-kind services to meet the 30 percent local matching funds obligation required to receive the grant. Once the environmental study and necessary redevelopment is complete, East St. Louis will utilize CDBG Operations to develop the site into federal Housing and Urban Development housing units.

“Projects like this one show that Governor Blagojevich has his ear to the ground in Southwestern Illinois,” said State Senator James Clayborne (D-East St. Louis). “Funds to start this project will make a real difference to families who will be provided with affordable, high quality housing.”

New Athens will receive a **\$24,112** Municipal Brownfields Redevelopment Grant to do an environmental assessment and cleanup plan of a former boat sales and service site. Muddy Water Marine Corp. is providing most of the Village’s grant match and plans on rehabbing the current building and reopening the site as boat marine sales business.

“The Governor is taking an innovative approach to economic development by looking at all avenues that impact business growth and job creation. By cleaning up environmentally contaminated areas and making them business ready, we are providing more opportunities for the local economy to add jobs and prosper,” State Representative Dan Reitz (D-Sparta) said.

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The grants, provided through the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's (IEPA) Site Remediation Program as part of the Governor's *Opportunity Returns* initiative, will be used to conduct an investigation and provide oversight for the rehabilitation projects. Once the investigation is completed, a corrective action plan and cost estimate for the cleanups will be prepared and submitted to IEPA.

IEPA Director Renee Cipriano announced the grants during a ceremonial check presentation on Wednesday 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 under the Governor's *Opportunity Returns* initiative that help communities improve environmental conditions, the economy and quality of life," IEPA Director Cipriano said.

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 Southwest region was the 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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