

Brownfields redevelopment grants to provide momentum for eight projects statewide

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Eight West Virginia towns will be receiving funding through West Virginia University to create visions and plans for the redevelopment of abandoned and dilapidated former industrial sites within their boundaries.

[The Northern WV Brownfields Assistance Center](#) at WVU, through its 2012 FOCUS WV Brownfields Program, is supporting the communities with \$5,000 grant awards.

FOCUS stands for Foundation for Overcoming Challenges and Utilizing Strengths. Brownfields are properties that sit undeveloped because of a variety of real or perceived environmental barriers. Examples of brownfields are former gas stations, glass factories, machine shops, manufacturing and processing facilities, dry cleaners and mine scarred lands that pepper communities across the state.

“The FOCUS WV program provides financial, programmatic, and technical assistance to West Virginia communities so they can create redevelopment visions that help overcome major obstacles in turning problem sites into community resources,” Luke Elser, NBAC project manager said. “These grants are designed to get the ball rolling on projects that may have otherwise remained off the radar for years.”

The grant recipients for this year’s round of funding, who will use the awards to create community-based revitalization plans, include:

- ***Charleston West Side Main Street, Inc.***, to restore the Staats Hospital and help preserve the historic Elk City District. FOCUS funds will help conduct environmental assessments and hold public meetings to determine potential re-uses of the site.
- ***Morgan County Commission***, to conduct capacity building, education, site assessment, and revitalization planning of the Route 522 Morgan County Recreation Area (East). The Commission’s long-term vision is to create a multi-acre recreation complex to serve the area’s growing demand for recreation space.
- ***Town of Wardensville***, to conduct an adaptive reuse study, engage local community members, and create a business plan for the reuse of the former Wardensville School Cafeteria.
- ***Upshur County Commission***, to conduct a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment on a portion of a former wood alcohol processing plant leading to potential use of the site by the Upshur County Youth Camp.
- ***Brooke-Hancock Regional Planning & Development Council***, to bring together public and private stakeholders to visualize a reuse of the former Brooke Glass factory in downtown Wellsburg.
- ***Friends of the Cheat, Inc.***, to determine community needs and wants for the redevelopment of the former West Virginia Northern Railroad Maintenance Facility and incorporation of the site into ongoing rails-to-trails projects in the area.
- ***City of Thomas***, to conduct an environmental site assessment and community re-use activity for the abandoned Western Maryland railroad bed and adjacent former Davis Coal & Coke Company property.

- ***Woodlands Development Group***, to conduct environmental assessments and build community support for the redevelopment of the former Highlander Village Inn.

Funding for the FOCUS WV Brownfields program is provided by the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation through the West Virginia University Foundation. The FOCUS WV Program began in 2009 and has so far provided \$308,000 in funding to 40 projects across West Virginia. These projects have successfully raised \$5.95 million in additional funding from state and federal programs, private foundations, investors and developers, and through creating public/private partnerships to turn their underutilized, contaminated brownfield sites into productive, clean properties.

The FOCUS WV program is separate from another NBAC program known as the WV Redevelopment Collaborative which is set to announce grant awards for brownfields work later this month. Under that program Eight West Virginia communities – Chester, Moundsville, Wheeling, Osage, Fairmont, Berkeley Springs, Shinnston and Parkersburg – were invited to have their brownfields projects represented in the “Extreme Makeover: Brownfields Edition” event. Four communities will then be selected to receive more than \$20,000 in funding as well as the opportunity to collaborate with teams of professors and faculty who have expertise in a range of disciplines to help them toward their goals.

Information about the FOCUS WV Brownfields Program and Northern WV Brownfield Assistance Center can be found at www.wvbrownfields.org. The Northern WV Brownfields Assistance Center is a program of the West Virginia Water Research Institute at WVU’s National Research Center for Coal & Energy.

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