

**Narrative Information Sheet – North Alabama Brownfield Coalition**

1. **Applicant Identification:** Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments (TARCOG), the City of Fort Payne, and Launch 2035 have established the North Alabama Brownfield Coalition (“the Coalition”), which requests consideration of the following EPA Assessment Coalition Grant proposal. Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments (TARCOG) is the lead applicant, with an address of 5075 Research Drive NW, Huntsville, Alabama 35805.
2. **Funding Requested:**
  - a. **Assessment Grant Type:** Coalition Assessment
  - b. **Federal Funds Requested:** \$1,500,000
3. **Location:** TARCOG and Launch 2035’s jurisdiction includes Limestone, DeKalb, Jackson, Marshall, and Madison Counties, Alabama. The City of Fort Payne’s jurisdiction includes Fort Payne, DeKalb County, Alabama.
4. **Target Area and Priority Site/Property Information:**
  - a. **Target Area(s):**
    - i. Easy Street Target Area (City of Athens, Limestone County) (Census Tracts 01083020600, 01083020700, 01083020900, and 01083021000)
    - ii. Walker Street Target Area (Town of Gurley, Madison County) (Census Tract 01089010902)
    - iii. Gault Avenue Target Area (City of Fort Payne, DeKalb County) (Census Tracts 01049961100 and 01049961000)
  - b. **Priority Site(s) Address(es):**
    - i. Easy Street Target Area: L&N Freight House: 100 Pryor Street West, Athens, Limestone County, AL 35611 (Parcel ID: 10-03-05-4-002-052.000)
    - ii. Walker Street Target Area: Clyde’s Grocery: 197 Church Street, Gurley, Madison County, AL 35748 (Parcel ID: 19-06-13-0-002-094.000)
    - iii. Gault Avenue Target Area: 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Alleyway Buildings: At the intersection of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (northeast of 115 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Northeast), Fort Payne, DeKalb County, AL 35967 (Parcel IDs: 23-03-08-3-003-012.001, 23-03-08-3-003-012.000, 23-03-08-3-003-017.000, 23-03-08-2-005-039.000, and 23-03-08-2-005-040.000)
5. **Contacts**
  - a. **Project Director:** Mr. Lee Terry, the Grant Manager will serve as the Project Director for this proposal. Mr. Terry’s contact information is as follows: Phone: 256-716-2483, Email: lee.terry@tarcog.us, mailing address: 5075 Research Drive NW, Huntsville, Alabama 35805.
  - b. **Highest Ranking Executive Official:** Ms. Michelle Jordan will serve as the highest-ranking executive official for this proposal. Ms. Jordan’s contact information is as follows: Phone: (256) 716-2440, Email: michelle.jordan@tarcog.us, mailing address: 5075 Research Drive NW, Huntsville, Alabama 35805.



**6. Population:**

- a. Limestone County Population: 103,570, Madison County Population: 388,153, DeKalb County Population: 71,608 (2020 Decennial Census)
- b. City of Athens Population: 25,406, Town of Gurley Population: 816, City of Fort Payne Population: 14,877 (2020 Decennial Census)

**7. Other Factors Checklist:**

<b>Other Factors</b>	<b>Page #</b>
Community population is 10,000 or less.	1
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian tribe or United States territory.	NA
The priority site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	NA
The priority site(s) is adjacent to a body of water (i.e., the border of the priority site(s) is contiguous or partially contiguous to the body of water, or would be contiguous or partially contiguous with a body of water but for a street, road, or other public thoroughfare separating them).	NA
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	NA
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	NA
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	5
The proposed project will improve local climate adaptation/mitigation capacity and resilience to protect residents and community investments.	4, 5
At least 30% of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/areawide planning activities, as described in Section I.B., for priority site(s) within the target area(s).	11
The target area(s) is located within a community in which a coal-fired power plant has recently closed (2013 or later) or is closing.	NA

**8. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority:**

See Attachment.

**9. Releasing Copies of Applications:**

Not applicable; no portions of the application are confidential.



**Alabama Department of Environmental Management**  
adem.alabama.gov

1400 Coliseum Blvd. 36110-2400 ■ Post Office Box 301463  
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-1463  
(334) 271-7700 ■ FAX (334) 271-7950

November 7, 23

Lee Terry  
Director of Economic Development and Planning  
TARCOG  
5075 Research Dr. NW  
Huntsville, Alabama 35805

Re: North Alabama Brownfield Coalition EPA Brownfield Grant Application

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) is pleased to support the North Alabama Brownfield Coalition (Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments, the City of Fort Payne, and the Singing River Trail) in your pursuit of a Brownfields Coalition Assessment Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

We understand that the North Alabama Brownfield Coalition is a voluntary association between Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments, the City of Fort Payne, and the Singing River Trail. TARCOG as the lead applicant is seeking to secure and utilize EPA assessment grant funds to re-vitalize downtown historic buildings within Fort Payne and Athens.

The ADEM Redevelopment Section routinely aids governments interested in brownfields redevelopment. Upon request, ADEM may participate in the various outreach activities needed to accomplish your brownfields project goals as well as entry of sites into the ADEM Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP)

We wish you and the citizens of the North Alabama Brownfield Coalition success in the pursuit of your grant. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Crystal Collins", is written over a white background.

Crystal Collins, Chief  
Redevelopment Unit  
Land Division



## 1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION

### a. Coalition Members, Target Areas, and Brownfields

#### i. Coalition Members

The Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments (TARCOG) was formed in 1968 to represent the 665,000 residents that live within DeKalb, Limestone, Jackson, Madison, and Marshall Counties to provide a wide range of services to the region's local governments which includes economic development, funding procurement, and comprehensive planning assistance to address regional economic challenges and opportunities. With recent brownfield redevelopment success in Jackson County, TARCOG has shifted its priority to DeKalb, Limestone, and Madison Counties to capitalize on economic growth opportunities associated with new technology and manufacturing industries moving into North Alabama. To prioritize sustainable development efforts and assess brownfield sites, the City of Fort Payne (population 19,826, American Community Survey (ACS) 2021) and local community partner and non-profit Launch 2035 have partnered with TARCOG, the lead applicant to form a modified North Alabama Brownfield Coalition. Located in northeastern Alabama, the City of Fort Payne has a cyclical economy that is historically linked to the success of the agricultural and textile industries. As a small city with limited resources, Fort Payne doesn't have the capacity to manage and apply for a grant on their own. Launch 2035 is a non-profit, community-based organization dedicated to improving the quality of life in the Tennessee Valley and has successfully completed the planning and implementation for the Singing River Trail (SRT), a multimodal 200+ mile greenway that spans northern Alabama. Launch 2035's ability to facilitate local partnerships provides the Coalition with a unique opportunity to utilize brownfield redevelopment to create new health, wellness, educational, economic, tourism, and entrepreneurial opportunities for residents and visitors across the Tennessee Valley. Although deeply involved with public outreach, Launch 2035's small team is a relatively new entity and does not possess the resources nor capacity to manage their own grant. Together, the Coalition is applying for an EPA Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant that will be used to prioritize and assess brownfield sites within DeKalb, Limestone, and Madison Counties.

#### ii. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area

Flanked by the Appalachian foothills in northern Alabama, the Tennessee Valley features scenic rolling hills, cotton fields, and winding waterways that dominate the landscape. The area's early beginnings reflect much of Alabama's traditional economy. Settlers took advantage of the fertile land, establishing large-scale agricultural operations which included farming and forestry, as well as Tennessee River, which allowed the practical and profitable transportation of goods. Although portions of the Region have experienced economic diversification from the technology field, most communities, including Ft. Payne, have sharply declined over the past several decades as the domestic agricultural sector has steadily been outsourced both nationally and internationally. Struggling to survive and searching for a new economic identify, these communities have been saddled with abandoned properties, decreasing tax revenue, and unknown environmental risks from brownfield sites.

The first Target Area is the **Easy Street Corridor**, located within downtown district of the City of Athens (pop. 24,082, ACS 2021) in Limestone County and is in north-central Alabama. As one of the state's oldest incorporated cities, Athens' economy was originally supported by cotton production, which supported the textile industry across the United States. Today, Athens serves in-part as a bedroom community for the booming City of Huntsville, which is located 25 miles to the east. Despite its proximity to Huntsville, Athens has maintained its southern charm and small-town feel. Within the downtown area, Easy Street Target Area is a 14-block area that is comprised of approximately 42 acres. Originally developed along the CSX railroad in the 1920s and 30s by prominent African American business owners, the target area became home to several small businesses that included barber shops, restaurants, and a veterinarian office. Today, the target area is lined by warehouses, single family residential homes, abandoned industrial buildings, vacant lots, retail spaces, and surface parking lots that support the CSX railroad. The Target Area comprised of four Census Tracts, which include Tracts 01083020600, 01083020700, 01083020900, and 01083021000, two of which (tracts of 01083020600 and 01083020700) are designated as disadvantaged by EPA's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), leaving 50% of the Target Area disadvantaged. According to EPA's Environmental Justice Screen (EJSCREEN), 40% of the target area population is considered low income, earning less than \$29,160 annually, and the per capita income is 10.8% less than the entire City of Athens, 16.4% less than Limestone County (EJSCREEN; ACS). Furthermore, the Target Area's Census Tracts rank above the 63<sup>rd</sup> percentile nationwide for unemployment (with Census Tract 01083020700 reaching 93<sup>rd</sup> percentile) with the average unemployment rate of 7% (with Census Tract 01083020700 reaching 11.3%) (CEJST; ACS) approximately 2% higher than the County's. To revitalize the Area, the City of Athens plans to create an Art Trail along the CSX railroad to foster a new tourism-based economy to attract visitors to the area and create opportunities for new small businesses.

The **Walker Street Corridor** is the second Target Area and is located within the eastern portion of Madison County, within the Town of Gurley (pop. 601, ACS 2021). The town is a bedroom community to the City of Huntsville. Gurley is situated within a snug valley, with Gurley Mountain to the north, Paint Rock River to the east, Keel Mountain to the south, and Flint River to the west. Originally known as "Gurley's Tank", the Town was settled in 1857 as a stop along the Memphis & Charleston Railroad where trains restocked water and coal. To accommodate water needs for the railroad, a large cedar water tank was constructed that was supplied from a spring

on Keel Mountain by pipe. As the town grew, new economies that included forestry, agriculture, and the processing of these raw materials emerged. Over the past several decades, the town's population has experienced a 20% drop as the manufacturing sector has declined, resulting in a multitude of brownfield sites. Walker Street Target Area is located within the disadvantaged Census Tract 01089010902, just north of the US Highway 72 corridor. Comprised of approximately 64 acres, the Target Area is characterized by a two-lane road that lacks striping, sidewalks, and pedestrian crossings. The entirety of the right of way is covered by grass and/or asphalt parking lots. Approximately 68 residents live within the Target Area of which 53% is considered low income (EJ SCREEN). The per capita income is approximately 62% less than the entire Town of Gurley, and has an unemployment rate of 8%, which is nearly double the state average (4.3%) (EJ SCREEN; ACS).

The third and final Target Area **Gault Avenue Corridor**, located within the City of Fort Payne (DeKalb County) in northeastern Alabama, and is situated a valley, between Lookout and Sand Mountains. The City was settled by an influx of European-American prospectors in 1889, claiming to have found an extensive source of quality coal and iron ore. Fort Payne's "Boom Days" of 1889-1891 fostered a **population increased by 680%** (fortpayne.org) which prompted the development of the most advanced sanitation, electric grid, and drinking water technology at the time, to meet the needs of several churches, an opera house, a courthouse, and post office. Later, investors utilized Fort Payne's infrastructure, repurposing the vacant buildings into successful hosiery mills. The town was again booming, supporting both commercial industries and war efforts, eventually becoming known as the "the Sock Capital of the World". At the onset of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which took full effect in the mid-1990s, the City experience a sharp economic decline as the City's manufacturing centers were outcompeted by foreign manufacturers, leaving only a handful of mills operating in the City. The after effect of this decline has been realized through TARCOG's and the City's joint effort to create a brownfield inventory that consists of 207 sites. The 75-acre **Gault Avenue Target Area** is home to 48 of these sites, and is located within Census Tracts 01049961100 and 01049961000, both of which are considered disadvantaged by CEJST. Inventoried brownfields within the Target Area consist of former commercial buildings, hotels, hosiery factories, lumber treatment and storage facilities, agricultural warehouses, and auto repair garages. Although restoration and infill efforts for the City have been focused on Gault Avenue, 25 storefronts within the Target Area remain vacant today. Within a mile of the Target Area, 3,758 residents call the area home (EPA's Environmental Justice Screen (EJ SCREEN)), of which 33% of the population is minority compared to the County average of 21.3% (ACS). Furthermore, 29% of the population has limited English-speaking capabilities, which is in the 87<sup>th</sup> percentile for the state and in the 68<sup>th</sup> percentile nationwide (EJ SCREEN).

The Coalition is committed to the redevelopment the redevelopment of the target area's brownfields, thus enabling these communities to reshape their local economy by embracing local redevelopment initiatives, diversifying the local economy, and providing support to the larger population by ways of employment, affordable housing, retail tax revenue, social well-being, and improved health. Due to the vast size of the Region and abundance of brownfield sites, TARCOG is requesting a \$1,500,000 Coalition Assessment Grant to carry out the projects described within this application. Additional sites within the three-county region are included in a secondary inventory and will be assessed as part of this program.

### iii. Description of Priority Brownfield Sites

TARCOG has established a brownfield inventory of 53 sites within the three Target Areas by compiling data garnered from EPA databases and the participating communities. From this inventory, three brownfields were identified as priority sites within the three Target Areas, carefully selected based on community input and environmental, economic, and human impacts. The former **L&N Freight House** is located within the **Easy Street Target Area**. Constructed in 1913, the building originally served to temporarily hold rail freight for pick up. The Freight House was decommissioned and later converted into the Alabama Veteran's Museum. Today, the Museum has relocated, and the County-owned building needs repairs, including a new roof. Due to the early build date, the Freight House was likely constructed using Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs) and Lead Based Paint (LBP). As the historic building has a leaky roof, it is safe to assume building material has been exposed to the elements, becoming friable. Once asbestos becomes friable, it is easily inhaled, which can cause and worsen a variety of lung conditions, asthma included. Additional contamination likely stems from the storage of various materials, which could have included coal, fertilizers, fungicides, fumigants, and pesticides, and cotton inundated with such agricultural chemicals. As most of the Freight House's operation was prior to environmental regulations, the degree and scope of contamination is unknown. Additional contamination stemming from the railroad includes chemicals relating to railroad ties and herbicidal defoliants. Creosote, a known carcinogen, is typically applied to railroad ties to preserve the wood (Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ASTDR)). Herbicidal defoliants vary in chemical composition and stand to include nontraditional products such as diesel fuel, leaded gasoline, or waste oil to save money. Dermal contact with residual diesel fuel could cause adverse health effects as it is a possible carcinogen (World Health Organization (WHO)). Arsenical herbicides, a group of older herbicides that have been used since the 1950s, may have also been applied. Toxicity of the herbicide depends on its form; however, arsenic is recognized by the EPA as a confirmed human carcinogen (ASTDR). With the nearest resident only 185 feet from the property, the Freight House is a priority site due to the perceived contamination within close proximity to disadvantaged populations, and planned redevelopment.

The second priority site, **Clyde’s Grocery** is located within the **Walker Street Target Area**. Built in 1965, the gas station is listed on ADEM’s database as a having closed release. A 1,290 square foot convenience store and canopy still remain on the 0.33-acre property. Grass sprouts through the cracked asphalt covering the front portion of the property and a small storage shed sits in the grassy lot behind the store. Three above ground storage tanks (ASTs) are visible along the western side on the building and an unidentified 55-gallon drum sits at the store’s entrance. Although the release has been officially closed, petroleum products may still linger underground, which is a cause for concern as the Target Area is less than half a mile from a floodway Zone A (FEMA). Contamination could easily migrate off site during into a waterway during a heavy rain event. The contents of the three ASTs could also migrate in a similar situation if the tanks are in poor condition. Furthermore, due to the build date of the structure, ACMs and LBP are likely incorporated within the building materials. With residents as close as 25 feet from the property, Clyde’s Grocery is a priority site due to the proximity of residential properties and future redevelopment plans for the Target Area.

Within the **Gault Avenue Target Area** is the **2<sup>nd</sup> Street Corridor**, the third priority site. Situated behind Gault Avenue, the small corridor spans two City blocks. The three-acre area is divided into four parcels and is comprised of six separate buildings. Industrial and warehouse of nature, the buildings span a total of approximately 79,000 square feet and were constructed between 1935 and 1984. The now vacant buildings were acquired by the City and previous operations included cotton and lumber storage, auto repair garages, a textile factory, and a metal fabrication shop. Historical interior waste streams associated with the former operations would have consisted of general hazardous substances and/or petroleum products. See L&N Freight House description above for additional details regarding contamination stemming from cotton storage. Lumber storage may have resulted in the leaching of chemical compounds during wet conditions. Commonly used compounds during this period included chromated arsenicals, creosote, and pentachlorophenol. These wood preservatives are considered Polyaromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) and Semi-Volatile Organic Chemicals (SVOCs) and are derived from chromium, copper, and arsenic, wood or coal tar, and other toxic chemicals (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)). Health effects from swallowing, breathing in, or dermal contact include damage to the liver, kidneys, blood, skin, lungs, nervous system, immune system, and/or gastrointestinal tract (ATSDR). Consumption can also cause unconsciousness, cancer, and even death (ATSDR). Spills, leaching, and/or poor waste management practices could contaminate the groundwater, and/or the ground’s subsurface. Early textiles used degreaser to clean machine parts, which were sourced from a variety of chemicals. Trichloroethylene (TCE), a popular degreaser, is a human carcinogen and is also associated with male reproductive toxicity, conjunctival irritation, headache, nausea, damage to the liver, kidney, heart, central nervous system, and immune system (EPA). Furthermore, metal fabrication can introduce contamination through lubricants, degreasers, and cleaners, which are considered Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). Ingestion and/or inhalation of VOCs may cause conjunctival irritation, headache, nausea, damage to the liver, kidney, heart, central nervous system, immune system, and male reproductive system (EPA). Additionally, an Aboveground Storage Tank (AST) of unknown contents is located outside of the northern most building. Benzene, a known carcinogen, is found in both gasoline and diesel and exposure to the chemical has been associated with development of acute myeloid leukemia (CDC). Finally, due to the early construction dates of the buildings, asbestos and lead based paint are certainly to be found throughout the structures (see L&N Freight House priority site description above for additional ACM and LBP details). 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Corridor is a priority site due to the extensive perceived contamination which disproportionately affects nearby low-income residents and hinders connectivity between Downtown’s Gault Avenue and the north adjoining City Park.

### **iii. Identifying Additional Sites**

TARCOG utilize the site nomination form and evaluation process that was previously developed under its last assessment grant to appropriately rank and select candidate brownfield sites to ensure the prioritization of underserved communities and disadvantaged Census Tracts. The site nomination form will be used as a first step for TARCOG to gather information about a project. At a minimum, the form will request the following information: A) site location and degree to which underserved communities are being served, B) proposed uses and ability to address specific community needs (i.e. affordable housing, grocery stores, health care, etc.), C) site history; perceived or actual degree of contamination, D) level of future/obtained investment, and E) future economic impact; potential to catalyze additional redevelopment projects and estimated job creation and tax base increase. Site nomination forms will be publicly available (i.e., at public meetings and online) so that the community can nominate sites. A scoring system will be utilized to provide more weight to the projects that will support underserved communities. Nomination forms will be readily available online, in our offices, and at all public input meetings as described within section 2.b.iii. Each public meeting will begin with an opportunity to identify sites and discuss with the public. Our community partners will also maintain the form for distribution to the residents they represent.

#### **b. Revitalization of the Target Area**

##### **i. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans**

The Target Area and priority sites were chosen based on both regional and Target Area specific planning efforts. The 2018-2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a regional planning and

implementation process designed to foster a more stable and diversified economy, improve lives, and coordinate economic development efforts. Goals from the CEDS include 1) improving accessibility of Regional programs that **support entrepreneurs to start and maintain businesses**; 2) **cultivating new “places”** by leveraging unique competitive advantages, i.e., inherent social, environmental, economic, and cultural assets; and 3) **designing livable, walkable neighborhoods and communities**.

Local planning for the Easy Street Target Area includes Athens Future Land Use Development Plan and the Athens 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Goals from the Land Use Plan include A) **improving the appearance and design of all uses**, particularly along and within key corridors and gateways by **promoting the community’s unique identity**; B) **promoting well connected and appropriate infill development in areas where public infrastructure already exists**, taking advantage of public capital investments already in place so as to connect neighborhoods, shopping areas, and employment centers; and C) **providing an integrated network for travel by bike or on foot to reach destinations throughout the city**. In order to support Athens’ growing economy and Easy Street Art Trail, the L&N Freight House will be redeveloped as a makers’ space. The building is envisioned to house rentable artist booths, open working stations, installation spaces, and a communal lending library for art supplies and crafting tools. Affordable working spaces and free equipment will help offset costs for startup artistic businesses, thus achieving CEDS goal 1. Renovations of the makers’ space will fulfil Athens’ planning goals A and B as aesthetic improvements are made to the existing building which also incorporates infill. The new, unique space will accomplish CEDS goal 2 as well. Following redevelopment, the Freight House will support the Easy Street Art Trail as a trailhead and as a whole, the pedestrian Trail meets Athens Land Use Plan goal C and CEDS goal 3. Additional planning for the Target Area is found within the Athens 2040 Comprehensive Plan which addresses the need to utilize green infrastructure practices like rain gardens, solar panels, bioswales, and community gardens in order to promote urban sustainability.

Redevelopment for the Walker Street Target Area is based upon Gurley’s Transportation Alternative Program grant application which includes plans to develop an 8-foot-wide pedestrian path which meanders parallel to Highway 72, along Walker Street. The path will connect the post office to Charles Stone Park, improving connectivity between the two civic properties. The pedestrian Path will be a part of the larger Singing River Trail, which will eventually span all of north Alabama, from east to west by connecting existing trails. Planning for the Singing River Trail is documented within the SRT Master Plan, published in 2019. Goals outlined in the Master Plan include A) **improving access to outdoor recreation for health and wellness**, B) **supporting economic development**, and C) **creating additional transportation options for residents**. The City envisions Clyde’s Grocery as a general store/café, providing cyclists a place to stop and rest along the expansive trail. Grab and go beverages, cold sandwiches, as well as made to order meals will be available for purchase. A wrap around, covered porch will provide ample space for travelers to relax out of the elements, while keeping their bicycles at their side. A bike repair station and bike parking racks will be installed in front of the building so that cyclists can make any necessary repairs before heading back onto the Trail. Additionally, the concrete and pavement will be removed and replaced with permeable pavers and native landscaping to improve permeability for stormwater during heavy rain events. The redevelopment of Clyde’s Grocery will meet CEDS goals 2 and 3 and SRT Master Plan goals A and C by supporting the Walker Street Path, thus improving the walkability/cyclability of the community. The general store/café will also achieve the Master Plan goal B by improving the local economy by providing food and novelty products, contributing sales tax and property tax to the local municipal revenue pool.

Within the Gault Avenue Target Area, the City-owned 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Corridor will be redeveloped with retail shops and boardwalk. A small amphitheater will provide a venue for monthly 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday events which feature food, live music, and an antique car show, and will serve as rentable revenue generating event space during other times. Seating, trash receptacles, lighting, and native plantings will add charm to the Corridor. As a retail hub and venue, CEDS goal 2 will be met. Furthermore, by activating the Corridor, walkability will be improved as shoppers will be able to safely access the site, achieving CEDS goal 3.

Because all priority sites lack adequate planning documentation, this grant will provide area wide plans for each Target Area to ensure viability of each reuse and to prioritize community needs. These plans will provide a guide for future redevelopment strategies and resource leveraging.

## **ii. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy**

These redevelopments aim to improve infrastructure and quality of living for North Alabama residents. Outcomes and benefits include those that are outlined within the table below, in addition to catalyzed investment throughout Target Areas and increase tax revenues. Numerous land development policies are addressed within applicable planning documents which seek to protect local life, and property, and public resources by taking advantage of resources and opportunities that are exemplified in the above revitalization strategies. Specifically, all priority site redevelopments will improve accessibility and walkability, thus resulting in a decrease in motor vehicle use, reducing localized carbon dioxide emissions, improving climate resiliency.

Building Reuse	Outcomes and Benefits	Align with Redevelopment Plan Goals
<b>L&amp;N Freight House</b>		
YES; ~12,000 SF existing building reused	~5 jobs; maker’s space; restores and utilizes historic buildings; supports the arts; creates a trailhead for the Easy Street Art Trail; improves walkability; incorporates energy efficient improvements including HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and installation through renovation of a historic structure.	CEDS 1, 2, 3; Athens Land Use Plan A, B, C
<b>Clyde’s Grocery</b>		
YES; 1,920 SF existing building reused	~4 jobs; general store/café providing both grab and go and hot meal options; supports the Walker Street Path and SRT as a whole; improves walkability; incorporates energy efficient improvements including HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and installation; permeable pavers and native landscaping elements improve drainage.	CEDS 2,3; SRT Master Plan A, B, C
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Street Corridor</b>		
YES; ~79,000 SF of existing buildings reused	~49.5 jobs*; restores and utilizes historic buildings; increased sales and property taxes and values; encourages local shopping and entrepreneurship; incorporates energy efficient improvements including HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and installation through renovation of historic structures; improves walkability and connectivity between Gault Avenue and north adjoining City Park.	CEDS 2, 3

\* U.S. Energy Information Administration

**c. Strategy for Leveraging Resources**

**i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse**

A readily available inventory of incentives and grants listed below will allow TARCOG and coalition partners to maximize the leveraging of resources within the Target Areas. TARCOG and/or coalition partners will be eligible to apply on behalf of or in partnership with another municipal entity and/or developer for all leveraging resources.

Grant Source	Purpose /Role (Assessment/Remediation/Reuse)
U.S. Department of the Interior: Federal Historic Tax Credit	<b>Reuse:</b> The County-owned L&N Freight House is an eligible building to receive a 20% return on investment income tax credit through the Federal Secretary of the Interior. The City of Athens intends on applying for this credit following assessment.
Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area: Community Grants Program	<b>Reuse:</b> Grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$7,500 are available to aid in preserving the L&N Freight House. Athens Main Street will apply for this grant March 15, 2024, requesting the maximum award amount. A 50% match is required.
National Endowment for the Arts: Our Town	<b>Reuse:</b> Through project-based funding, the Our Town grant supports activities that integrate arts, culture, and design into local efforts that strengthen communities over the long term. Our Town projects engage a wide range of local stakeholders in efforts to advance local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes in communities. The competitive grant provides funding which ranges from \$25,000 to \$150,000, which will be used to design artist spaces, cultural facilities, and public spaces within the Freight House. A 50% cost share is required. With applications due annually in August, the City of Athens will encourage Athens Art League to apply following remediation.
Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) Grant	<b>Reuse:</b> The secured TAP Grant allocates \$730,000 federal dollars and \$183,000 of local funding to install sidewalks along the Walker Street Path within the Town of Gurley.
PeopleForBikes’ Bike Industry Community Grant Program	<b>Reuse:</b> This program supports bicycle infrastructure projects and targeted initiatives that make it easier and safer for people of all ages and abilities to bike. Grant amounts range from \$5,000 to \$10,000 with applications due in October of each year. Launch 2035 or the Town of Gurley will apply for funding to install a bicycle repair station at Clyde’s Grocery to support the Walker Street Path and SRT as a whole.
National Association of Realtors: Placemaking Program	<b>Reuse:</b> This program allocates grant funds from \$1,500 to \$5,000 to create a new, outdoor public space at the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street Corridor, which will increase community livability. Eligible activities include furniture, paint, signage, material, landscaping, site preparation, etc. Fort Payne will apply for this grant following any necessary remediation.



<p>ADEM: State Revolving Fund (SRF)</p>	<p><b>Remediation:</b> In the event that soil and/or groundwater contamination is identified, a local unit of government can apply to ADEM’s SRF for remediation activities. The SRF is 10-year fixed rate loan with a below market interest rate (the rate is to be determined each year). This funding is available for all target sites following assessment.</p>
<p>ADEM: Redevelopment and Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP)</p>	<p><b>Assessment/Remediation:</b> ADEM’s VCP was established with the goal of encouraging prospective purchasers to redevelop brownfield properties by limiting the liability for new owners and providing oversight in the investigation and clean-up process. The VCP can assist with assessment, reuse planning, and remediation for priority site brownfields up to \$375,000. This funding is available and will be pursued for all target sites following assessment.</p>

**ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure**

The Coalition will utilize current municipal and building infrastructure wherever possible in order to prioritize funding and sustainability. All priority brownfield sites have direct access to municipal utilities that are readily available. These utilities include municipal water, sanitary sewer, natural gas, electrical, and high-speed telecommunications. However, sites will require updated connections. Street and/or onsite parking is available for all priority sites.

**2. COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**a. Community Need**

**i. The Community’s Need for Funding**

The Target Area is encompassed by Census Tracts 01083020600, 01083020700, 01083020900, 01083021000 (Athens), 01089010902 (Gurley), 01049961100, and 01049961000 (Fort Payne). According the EJSCREEN, the average per capita income is only \$26,953 and 44% of households are considered low-income, earning less than \$29,160 annually. These low-income statistics imply that the Target Areas’ residents have limited funding to provide a reasonable protective financial buffer to care for their sensitive populations at home. Limited personal budgets and small municipal populations play a substantial role in allowing each individual community to collect municipal taxes to utilize for the maintenance of and redevelopment of the affected Target Areas in discussion. Due to these factors, local governments are forced to focus on providing only essential governmental services (i.e., police, fire, public utilities, etc.) and don’t have the additional budgets to use to assess potential brownfield sites. Redevelopment of these sites would not only provide jobs for the population of the Target Areas but would also provide new attractions for locals and tourists alike, offsetting leakage of various retail sectors, increasing tax revenue, and allowing the community to invest in future economic development.

**ii. Threats to Sensitive Populations**

**(1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations**

Children, low-income, and minority individuals have been identified as sensitive populations living near priority sites. Although the average rate of children within the Census Tracts of the Target Areas is below the national average at 21.1%, the average youth poverty rate is 23%, 34% greater than the national average. In fact, youth poverty rates reach 65.2% in Census Tract 01083020700 within the Athens Target Area. Additionally, the average poverty rate within the Census Tracts is 14.9%, spiking at 37% within Census Tract 01083020700 within the Athens Target Area. According to EJSCREEN, The average per capita income of the Target Areas is only 26,953, 33% less than the national average of \$37,638 (ACS). These Census Tracts average an unemployment rate of 5.8%, 30% greater than the state and national rate of 4.3% (ACS). With statics similar to youth rates, the minority populations within the affected Census Tracts is relatively low, but corresponding poverty rates are disproportionately elevated. The average minority poverty rate for these Tracts is 31.3%, twice as high as the national average (ACS). Furthermore, minority poverty rates are highest within Athens’ Census Tract 01083020700 at 58%, followed by Fort Payne’s Census Tract 01049961000 at 49.3% (ACS). A combination of unemployment and underemployment has left the most vulnerable without resources to improve their situation. Redevelopment following assessment will reduce environmental threats at all priority sites. The additional commercial space within all priority sites will create a competitive job market, offering higher wages for hourly employees. Furthermore, the increase in downtown spending within Athens and Fort Payne will allow the local government to reinvest tax revenue back into their respective communities, thus providing resources for sensitive populations experiencing financial hardships.

**(2) Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions**

In 2022, Alabama was ranked as having the 4<sup>th</sup> worst overall health outcomes by America’s Health Rankings (United Health Foundation). Health outcomes include cancer deaths, cardiovascular deaths, diabetes, disparity in health status, frequent mental and physical distress, premature death, and infant mortality. This statement is backed by statics published by County Health Rankings (CHR). For example, within the Target Area Census Tracts, on average, the occurrence of asthma is within the 66<sup>th</sup> Percentile, which may be correlated to friable asbestos exposure, contamination likely present at all priority sites. Additionally, the Target Area Census Tracts’ average percentile for diabetes and heart disease is above the 77<sup>th</sup> and 79<sup>th</sup> percentile, respectively. The mortality rate for

heart disease per 100,000 for the respective counties ranges from 512.8 (Madison County) to 631.9 (DeKalb County) (2018-2020, CDC). With the national average of 422.4, the average county rate (579.0) is 31.3% greater (2018-2020, CDC). Furthermore, the three-county average suicide rate per 100,000 is 17.7, 23.3% greater than the national rate (CHR). Likewise, premature death rates are on average 21.6% greater within the three-country region compared to the national average (CHR). Within this region, the highest premature death rate is within DeKalb County, with a trend that continues to worsen (CHR). Finally, as childhood health is a good indicator for a community’s general well-being, consider the March of Dimes 2022 Premature Birth Report Card graded the State of Alabama as an “F”. The preterm birth rate for the state is 13.1% and the infant mortality rate is 7.2 per 1,000 live births (March of Dimes). Compare the state’s infant mortality rate to the national average of 5.4 to find a discrepancy of 28.6% (March of Dimes). The successful identification of contaminants will contribute to identifying and mitigating causes of elevated diseases, cancers, and premature death, leading to long-term public health improvements. As physical inactivity is a major contributor for diabetes and heart disease, the facilitation of the walking paths at the Easy Street and Walker Street Target Areas, will help ease these disease rates.

**(3) Environmental Justice**

**(a) Identification of Environmental Justice Issues**

With portions of the Target Areas defined as disadvantaged, 83.3% of all Target Areas are within an affected Census Tract, which include Tracts 01083020600, 01083020700, (Athens), 01049961100, and 01049961000 (Fort Payne), and 01089010902 (Gurley) (CEJST). On average, these Census Tracts experience low life expectancy above the 81<sup>st</sup> percentile, low income above the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile, and transportation barriers above the 72<sup>nd</sup> percentile (CEJST). Environmental contamination including heavy metals, VOCs, PAHs, ACMs, petroleum products, and SVOCs stemming from long vacant and underutilized priority sites endangers the health of nearby low-income residents and sensitive populations. In fact, residents live as close as 25 feet to priority sites. The combination of long-term exposures from vacated brownfields, a lack of health insurance coverage in the Target Areas (average uninsured population is 13.7%), and low-income rates (average of 44% in the Target Areas, EJSCREEN) create longstanding environmental injustices for the identified sensitive populations. Injustices are exemplified by the elevated average poverty rate for minorities and children (explored within section 2.a.ii.1) as well as the disproportionate negative health outcomes. For example, in Alabama, the preterm birth rate among Black women is 50% higher than the rate among all other women (March of Dimes). Similarly, Black infants are on average (within the three counties) 92.3% more likely to die than their White counterparts (Kids Count). Lastly, this population’s demographics combined with proximity to sources of contamination place the Target Areas in the upper quartile nationwide for three Environmental Justice Indexes, including National Air Toxics Assessment Respiratory Health Index (78<sup>th</sup> percentile) and Toxic Releases to Air (82<sup>nd</sup> percentile) within Athens and Toxic Releases to Air (81<sup>st</sup> percentile) within Gurley (EJSCREEN).

**(b) Advancing Environmental Justice**

This grant will assist TARCOG in locating environmental hazards throughout the Target Areas and beyond. Following assessment, additional financial resources will be utilized to eliminate exposures. The consequential redevelopment will create job opportunities for the Region as we fight to become competitive in the national market. New job opportunities along with remediation of the contaminated brownfields will help to alleviate both environmental and economic stressors for our low-income minority populations by providing adequate, equitable employment and livable wages in clean, revitalized communities. No businesses nor residents will be displaced by the planned assessment and future reuse plans for the priority site. To minimize the potential for unintended displacement, TARCOG will work with our local governments and community-based organizations such as Athens State University to incorporate strategies through planning and visioning that preserve affordable housing and small business opportunities in the Target Areas. Such efforts will include providing ample notice for any required relocation, providing relocation costs, and assisting businesses/residents in identifying alternative locations that are of similar or better circumstances.

**b. Community Engagement**

**i. and ii. Project Involvement and Project Roles**

A table with names and contact information for partners providing their commitment to the brownfield program is provided below. TARCOG and the City will continually build upon this list to ensure inclusion of all stakeholders.

<b>Organization &amp; Point of Contact</b>	<b>Role</b>
Alabama Tourism Department: Sweet Home Alabama Lee Sentell, Director (334) 242-4169 info@tourism.alabama.gov	The Alabama Tourism Department is an award-winning online resource for attracting tourism to Alabama through feature articles which advertise various local events, restaurants, and historic destinations. The Department also connects tourists with local destination marketing organizations such as chambers of commerce, welcome centers, and tourism associations. Due to their commitment of promoting tourism and economic prosperity throughout our Sweet Home, the Department will assist in advertising TARCOG’s grant program and its associated benefits.

<p>City of Athens Holly Hollman, Grant Coordinator/Communications Specialist hhollman@athensal.us 256-262-1399</p>	<p>Although not acting as a coalition partner within this grant, the City of Athens' Target Area is represented under TARCOG's jurisdiction. As a project partner, the City agrees to coordinate site access, assist in site selection, and provide community-based input on site prioritization.</p>
<p>Athens Main Street Association Tere Richardson, Executive Director (256) 232-9040 tererichardson@athensmainstreet.org</p>	<p>Athens Main Street Association is a community-based non-profit organization dedicated to the renovation, revitalization, and future growth of the City of Athens downtown area. The Association fulfills its purpose through public/private partnerships with the City of Athens, Limestone County Commission, organizations, businesses, and individuals. Due to this position, the Association will continue to act as liaison between these groups, sharing information regarding the brownfield project and downtown redevelopments as a whole. Additionally, Athens Main Street will aid in site selection following award.</p>
<p>Athens Arts League Garth Lovvorn, President (256) 262-9022 athensartsleague@gmail.com</p>	<p>Athens Arts League is a non-profit art organization that supports artists, promotes art education, and brings cultural events to Athens Limestone County. The League will work with Main Street to coordinate the Freight House's renovations.</p>
<p>Athens Historic Preservation Commission Wayne Kuykendall, Chairman (256) 233-8004</p>	<p>The Historic Preservation Commission is responsible for governing the alteration of buildings located in historic districts. With a portion of the Easy Street Target Area falling within the Beaty Historic District, associated building alterations must first be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission will also assist with historic renovations by providing their expertise knowledge for navigating applicable resources.</p>
<p>Athens State University: The Center for Lifelong Learning Kimberly Dunnivant, Program Manager (256) 233-8276 kimberly.dunnivant@athens.edu</p>	<p>Located just west of the Easy Street Target Area, the Center for Lifelong Learning is the continuing education and outreach extension of Athens State University. The Center's mission is to provide opportunities for students and the surrounding community to participate in educational opportunities that meet the career development and personal enrichment needs of the region. The Center will aid in community engagement and will assist TARCOG in coordinating locals individuals with quality employment opportunities as a result of this grant.</p>
<p>Landmarks of DeKalb County Alabama (256) 845-6888 landmarksdekalb@bellsouth.net</p>	<p>With their office located within Downtown Fort Payne, the non-profit has done an excellent job of inventorying historic buildings and assisting in registering them to local, state, and national archives. Landmarks has also completed multiple historic renovations by utilizing a variety of available funding. Landmarks will use this previous experience to assist TARCOG and applicable parties in navigating additional redevelopment tools. Furthermore, Landmarks will catalog and assist in preserving historic artifacts found in the 2nd Street Corridor. When appropriate, artifacts will be incorporated into the buildings' redesigns. Artifacts kept at Landmark's office/museum will be displayed for public viewing.</p>
<p>Lions Club Ed Soule, Treasurer (256) 533-4547 [REDACTED]</p>	<p>Chartered in 1948, the Lions Club of Gurley meets the first Thursday of every month at the Gurley Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The nonprofit takes an active interest in the civic, cultural, social, and moral welfare of the community. In 2003, in partnership with the Lioness Club, the Lions Club contributes within Gurley through volunteering and community engagement. Relevant volunteer involvement include assisting in landscaping the Charles Stone Park. Due to the group's active contributions, TARCOG will utilize the group to conduct community engagement within Gurley. The Club will also assist in site selection and prioritization through the grant.</p>
<p>Gurley Church of Christ Bill Brinkley, Preacher (256) 776-2244 gurleychurchofchrist@gmail.com</p>	<p>Located at the end of the Walker Street Path, east of Charles Stone Park, the Gurley Church of Christ has been a staple place of worship and fellowship since 1936. The Church will act as another point of community engagement for the Town of Gurley, providing relevant project information to the community during weekly worship services and monthly community meals.</p>

The EPA, Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), and DeKalb, Limestone, and Marshall County Health Departments are also established partners and/or will be involved throughout the grant cycle, each contributing to their own capacity. Specifically, ADEM will be responsible for assisting in community engagement and education, the technical review and approval of documents, including the Generic Quality Assurance Project Plan (GQAPP), as well as assisting the TARCOG, coalition partners, and project partners with applicable cleanup incentives.

### **iii. Incorporating Community Input**

Following this grant's award, a project kick-off meeting will be held. This meeting will provide an opportunity to establish a Brownfield Advisory Committee (BAC) consisting of representatives from local stakeholders. The Committee will review projects and make decisions to prioritize site assessments based upon the hierarchy outlined in Section 1.a.iii. The kick-off meeting will also outline the goals of the grant, how residents and business owners can provide public input and how the funds can be utilized, ensuring an educated public and allowing for additional community involvement. Ongoing communication throughout the life of the grant will be conducted in a variety of ways, including regularly held public meetings and charettes that are organized in partnership with community organizations such as those listed in 2.b.i. As a large population of Hispanic people live within the Region, communication and information will be provided in both English and Spanish. Meetings will be held in person at the city hall closest to the applicable site so as to ensure close proximity to the Target Area's residents. Meetings will be held at hours agreeable to most schedules to ensure a high level of attendance and involvement. Additionally, those that cannot be present during the live meeting, can access the recorded meeting online, at TARCOG's website and/or can utilize a call in number for the meeting. Meetings will provide a platform for public comment to identify additional brownfield sites, reprioritize known brownfield sites based on established criteria, and voice potential concerns. Commentary will be collected through comment cards and via email to the project manager so that affected parties' input can be captured and documented for use in decision making when selecting and prioritizing sites. These meetings will also be utilized to present potential redevelopment opportunities to interested developers by showcasing available brownfield sites and providing developers technical assistance in obtaining additional financial incentives for planned redevelopment. Input will be considered during public meetings in an open manner that embraces the diversity of the community and focuses on a constructive, forward-looking vision for the Region. Additional communication regarding grant updates and opportunities will be conducted in a variety of ways including press releases with the local newspaper which will include Times-Journal, Southern Torch, Lookout Mountain, Alabama (online and in print). Brownfield related announcements will also be featured on TARCOG's, coalition partners', and project partners' websites, local news stations, and flier distribution via local businesses and community organizations. The following Facebook pages will be used as well: "Athens Main Street", "What's Happening in Athens", "What's Happening in Huntsville, Madison, Athens?", "The City of Fort Payne", "Fort Payne Times-Journal", "Fort Payne-Main Street Association Alabama", "What's Happening in Fort Payne?", "Gurley Lions Club", and "Charles Stone Park (Gurley City Park)" reaching over 102,600 followers.

## **3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS**

### **a. Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs**

#### *Task 1: Cooperative Agreement Oversight*

- i.** Project Implementation: General grant management; develop Brownfield Advisory Committee (BAC); Qualified Environmental Consultant (QEC) selection based on a competitive bid process (per 40 CFR 30); meeting facilitation with the BAC, ADEM, and EPA; required reporting; budget reconciliation.
- ii.** Schedule: Quarters 1-16: The BAC will be developed within 1 month of funding and meetings will be held at regular intervals throughout the project. A QEC will be selected within 1-2 months of funding. Quarterly reports will be submitted on a quarterly basis and MBE/WBE reports will be submitted annually. ACRES will be updated throughout the grant period.
- iii.** Task Lead: TARCOG will oversee this task, with assistance from the BAC and selected QEC.
- iv.** Outputs: BAC development, 1 Work Plan, 1 Community Involvement Plan, 16 Quarterly Reports, 1 Close-Out Report, regular ACRES reporting, EPA Form 5700-52A for Minority and Women Business Entity Utilization, and Federal Financial Reports SF-425

#### *Task 2: Inventory and Community Outreach*

- i.** Project Implementation: Develop marketing materials, which will be available online and in hard copy; notify the community of site-specific public information meetings and assessment schedules; advertise for public meeting through online and in-person methods; hold public meetings to solicit input, inform, educate, and update the community regarding assessment and redevelopment activities; provide updates as necessary at local development council meetings. Main Street will also attend various brownfield conferences.
- ii.** Schedule: Quarters 1-16: Community outreach will be performed for the duration of the grant period. The first public meeting will be held within 3 months; the 2nd public meeting will be held after the first round of assessments have been completed; the 3rd public meeting will be held after the second round of

assessments have been completed; and the 4th public meeting will be held when assessments are nearing completion and reuse planning begins.

- iii. Task Lead: Main Street will oversee this task, with assistance from the BAC, ADEM, QEC, and community partners.
- iv. Outputs: Public meeting advertisements; press releases and project update reports; educational materials to support public meetings (PowerPoint presentations and handouts); kick-off meeting; 4-6 public meetings; one-on-one meetings with property owners as needed; updated brownfield inventory; attend various brownfield conferences, including two EPA Region 4 Conferences and the National Brownfield Conference.

*Task 3: Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs)*

- i. Project Implementation: ASTM-compliant Phase I ESAs; Phase II ESAs; ADEM and EPA reviewed Generic Quality Assurance Project Plan (GQAPP) and Site-Specific Quality Assurance Project Plans (SSQAPPs); Hazardous Material (Haz Mat) Surveys. Costs for these activities include contractual consulting and reporting expenses and printing.
- ii. Schedule: Quarters 1-14: A QAPP will be completed within 1 month of selection. Once approved by ADEM/EPA, site-specific assessment activities will begin within 1 month. Assessment and reporting will occur throughout the grant period, with the goal of completing assessment activities by quarter 10.
- iii. Task Lead: The QEC will oversee this task, with assistance from TARCOG and the BAC.
- iv. Outputs: Priority Sites: 4 Phase I ESAs, 4 Phase II ESAs, 3 Haz Mat Surveys (Due to its size, 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Corridor priority site will require 2 Phase I and Phase II ESAs and 2 Haz Mat Surveys); Additional Sites: 28 Phase I ESAs, 21 Phase II ESAs, 15 Haz Mat Surveys

*Task 4: Cleanup Planning and Planning Activities*

- i. Project Implementation: Creation of cleanup plans and implementation strategies for developing and utilizing resources; development of Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives (ABCAs) for priority sites that require remediation based on Phase II ESA data. The ABCAs will include remedial actions for each identified regulated contaminant that exceeds applicable guidelines. Remedial actions will be compared based on metrics such as cost, feasibility, and effectiveness in protecting human health and the environment. ABCAs will be developed through considering the potential reuse scenario(s) for each site. A public meeting will be held during this reuse planning period to solicit input from the public and community partners; we envision this meeting as a design charettes to encourage public participation. The total estimated budget for this task includes travel to attend meetings with stakeholders related to redevelopment plans, which will incorporate community input, market data, feasibility analysis for various reuse scenarios. The Plans will provide financial projections/estimates, potential leveraging opportunities, incorporate input from project partners, stakeholders, and community members, and respond to the surrounding market and environmental conditions and challenges.
- ii. Schedule: Quarters 5-14: ABCAs will be completed within 3-6 months of finalizing the Phase II ESA reports. The public meeting/design charette will be held after the draft ABCAs are complete, but before they are finalized.
- iii. Task Lead: The QEC will oversee the completion of ABCAs. TARCOG will oversee the public meeting/design charettes with assistance from the QEC and BAC.
- iv. Outputs: 15 ABCA reports; 3 revitalization plans with public meetings/charrettes and associated documents

**b. Cost Estimates**

The following list outlines how costs were derived for each task. Allocation of grant funds is included within the table below.

*Task 1: Cooperative Agreement Oversight*

- Personnel: 187.5 hours at an average rate of \$80/hour\* = \$15,000 for programmatic costs such as financial and performance reporting. \*Personnel costs have been developed based upon prior grant oversight experience.
- Supplies: Office supplies will include copies, maps, and handouts. Estimated cost: \$695
- Contractual: 150 hours at an average rate of \$100/hour = \$15,000 to assist in reporting needs throughout the grant's lifecycle.

*Task 2: Inventory and Community Outreach*

- Personnel: 187.5 hours at an average rate of \$80/hour = \$15,000 for outreach coordination and meeting attendance.
- Travel: Estimating one staff member traveling for two national conferences averaging three days each; \$400 registration, \$900/round trip flight, \$200/hotel room per night (assuming 3 nights each), and \$60/day per diem (totaling \$4,160). Additionally, one staff member traveling for two local conferences averaging three days each; \$400 registration, \$100 in gas for travel, \$200/hotel room per night (assuming 3 nights each), and \$60/day per diem (totaling \$2,560) = \$6,720
- Supplies: Office supplies will include copies, maps, and handouts. Estimated cost: \$695

- Contractual: 150 hours at an average rate of \$100/hour = \$15,000 to assist in both information gathering for growth of the inventory and community engagement presentations.

**Task 3: Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs)**

- Personnel: 187.5 hours at an average rate of \$80/hour = \$15,000 for report reviews and securing site access.
- Supplies: Office supplies will include copies, maps, and handouts. Estimated cost: \$695
- Contractual: \$883,000 (58.9% of budget)
  - Priority Sites: \$138,000
    - 4 Phase I ESAs: estimated cost of \$4,000 per ESA = \$16,000
    - 4 Phase II ESAs: estimated cost of \$23,000 per ESA = \$92,000
    - 3 Hazardous Materials Surveys: estimated cost \$10,000 per survey = \$30,000
  - Secondary Sites: \$745,000
    - 28 Phase I ESAs: average estimated cost of \$4,000 per ESA = \$112,000
    - 21 Phase II ESAs: average estimated cost of \$23,000 per ESA = \$483,000
    - 15 Hazardous Materials Surveys: estimated cost \$10,000 per survey = \$150,000

**Task 4: Site Specific Cleanup Planning and Planning Activities**

- Personnel: 187.5 hours at an average rate of \$80/hour = \$15,000 for programmatic expenses associated with cleanup planning, review of reports, and meetings.
- Supplies: Office supplies will include copies, maps, and handouts. Estimated cost: \$695
- Contractual: \$517,500
  - 15 ABCAs: average estimated cost of \$4,500/ABCA = \$67,500
  - 1 Community-Wide Revitalization Plans: \$150,000/Plan = \$450,000 (30% of budget) (EPA estimates a total cost of \$50,000-\$175,000/Plan)
    - \$420,000: consulting fees
    - \$30,000: supplies such as mapping, copying, publishing, mailing, etc.

Budget Categories		Project Tasks				
		Task 1: Cooperative Agreement Oversight	Task 2: Inventory and Community Outreach	Task 3: Environmental Site Assessments	Task 4: Cleanup Planning and Planning Activities	TOTAL
<b>Direct Costs</b>	Personnel	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 60,000
	Fringe Benefits					\$ -
	Travel		\$ 6,720			\$ 6,720
	Equipment					\$ -
	Supplies	\$ 695	\$ 695	\$ 695	\$ 695	\$ 2,780
	Contractual	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 883,000	\$ 517,500	\$ 1,430,500
	Construction					\$ -
<b>Total Direct Costs</b>		\$ 30,695	\$ 37,415	\$ 898,695	\$ 533,195	\$ 1,500,000
<b>Indirect Costs</b>						
<b>Total Budget (Direct + Indirect)</b>		\$ 30,695	\$ 37,415	\$ 898,695	\$ 533,195	\$ 1,500,000

**c. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results**

Per the requirements of the EPA Assessment Grant, TARCOG will submit quarterly reports to the EPA Project Officer. These reports will cover work progress and current status, as well as any difficulties that were encountered, a record of financial expenditures, data results, and anticipated further action. Quarterly reports will also document information regarding a plan to resolve progress if TARCOG ever finds itself off track financially or schedule-wise. TARCOG will also complete reporting in the ACRES database for each assessment site, noting specific accomplishments, contaminants found, materials impacted, if clean-up activities are required and the progress of said activities, and other resources that have been leveraged to complete the redevelopment of the site. The ACRES database will also be utilized to track job creation and acres of land assessed as part of this grant, as well as the total number of assessments completed and the type of assessment, the amount of funds expended by project, the total project cost, and anticipated jobs created; essentially acting as a tool for both the EPA and TARCOG to track and measure the grant’s progress in achieving the outputs and eventual outcomes. At the end of the four-year grant period, a final report similar to quarterly reports will be produced.

**4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE**

**a. Programmatic Capability**

**i., ii., and iii. Organizational Capacity, Structure, and Key Staff**

TARCOG’s Director of Economic Development and Planning, Lee Terry, will be the project manager for this grant. As a North Alabama native, Mr. Terry’s previous experience includes over 10 years in planning, which included economic development, transportation and GIS. He has assisted in preparation of, and implementation of public involvement plans through previous work with the department of transportation. In his current position, Mr.

Terry oversees the Economic Development and Planning Department, working with each of the communities TARCOG represents to assist in progressing their individual programs. He routinely manages \$2 million in grant funding for various projects and fund sources with TARCOG and its associated jurisdictions. With this experience, Mr. Terry will manage the grant's procurement process, grant reporting and schedule tracking. He will also serve as the financial manager for the grant and will be responsible for establishing and managing the financial accounts of the program and payment requests and transfers through the Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP) system. Mr. Terry will be assisted by TARCOG's Community Development Specialist, Marley Hicks. Mr. Hicks will take the lead in coordinating community involvement, outreach, and meeting coordination. The Community Development Department oversees projects such as GIS mapping, CDBG grant implementation, blight elimination and infrastructure improvement projects. He will also oversee the selected environmental consultant, site selection process, and application and implementation of future leveraged funding opportunities because of the grant. With previous experience implementing TARCOG's current Coalition Assessment Grant, Mr. Hicks is familiar with the requirements of EPA funding, as well as how to ensure community input is obtained. Both grant managers recognize the importance of this assessment grant and its potential to improve the quality of life for north Alabama residents.

#### **iv. Acquiring Additional Resources**

TARCOG has extensive experience managing grant funds and thus will begin the contractor procurement process immediately following work plan and cooperative agreement approval with the EPA. The desired consultant will be experienced in brownfield programs including the following services: assisting with Community Brownfield Inventories and Outreach, Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs), Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives (ABCAs), and working with state regulators regarding solid waste and brownfield assessment redevelopment planning and remediation. Additionally, the consultant will be expected to prepare the Generic Quality Assurance Project Plan (GQAPP) within the first 60 days of the grant so that proposed assessments and activities are not delayed. These services will be secured in accordance with the EPA's selection protocol and TARCOG's established purchasing policies. Standard procedure includes a Request for Qualifications be published for response by qualified firms. Firms will be allotted guidelines with a deadline for submissions, all submissions will be available as public record. Following receipt of proposals, each application will be reviewed by an internal committee composed of TARCOG staff and board executive committee members and the selected consultant will be recommended to the full TARCOG Board of Directors for approval via resolution. TARCOG will also collaborate with Athens State University's Center for Lifelong Learning for assistance in advertising employment opportunities and promoting the hiring of local community members so that they are engaged in training and jobs resulting from brownfields assessment, cleanup, or redevelopment related to the proposed projects within this application. Education opportunities through this program often utilizes hands on training, which the projects under this grant may support, furthering equitable learning and employment for future generations.

#### **b. Past Performance and Accomplishments**

##### **i. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant**

##### **(1) Purpose and Accomplishments**

**FY2021 Coalition Assessment Grant:** TARCOG was previously awarded an EPA Coalition Assessment Grant (under which, the Council served as the lead entity). Selected in FY2021, TARCOG's grant will closeout in 2024, on time and within budget. To date, accomplishments include the completion of 1 Generic QAPP, 20 Phase I ESAs, 12 Site Specific QAPPs, 12 Phase II ESAs, 7 ABCAs, and 1 Revitalization Plan. The Revitalization Plan charrette took place the week of July 31st, 2023. Planning focused on redeveloping the Willow Street corridor, which would involve burying electric utility lines, reallocating space from the center turning lane to create sidewalks on both sides of the corridor and installing pedestrian crosswalks. Potential funding from a federal R.A.I.S.E Act Grant will also be pursued for the project. As a result of the assessment outputs described above, additional outcomes have already been seen. These grant-catalyzed outcomes include the property transfer and renovation of the Eustace Building (ACRES ID: 251212). All outputs have been recorded and are up to date in ACRES.

##### **(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements**

As shown through TARCOG's record of no audit findings, benchmark compliance goals on each grant have been met. Required reporting as well as terms and conditions were met and conducted on time, serving as an integral part of maintaining the grants' timely implementation. Required reporting included the completion of the Work Plan, Generic Quality Assurance Project Plan, ACRES updates following assessment activities, Minority-Owned Business Enterprises/Women-Owned Business Enterprises forms submitted annually, regularly held meetings with EPA personnel to discuss project progress, quarterly reports, and a final closeout report. Because of previous successful grant management, TARCOG is better positioned to continue to pursue leveraging opportunities that support the community. Overall, grant work plans, schedules, and terms and conditions have been completed in accordance with awarding party requirements.

## **Threshold Criteria – North Alabama Brownfield Coalition**

### **1. Applicant Eligibility:**

#### **Lead Entity Eligibility:**

The Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments (TARCOG) operates as a regional council established under state legislature (Act No.1126 and Act No.85-757). Please see the attached applicant eligibility documentation.

#### **Coalition Member Eligibility:**

The City of Fort Payne, Alabama is a General Purpose Unit of Local Government as defined under 2 CFR 200.64.

Launch 2035 is a non-profit with status as tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service. Proof of non-profit status of Launch 2035 is attached.

### **2. Target Areas:**

- a. Easy Street Target Area (Census Tracts: 01083020600, 01083020700, 01083020900, and 01083021000; Athens, Limestone County)
- b. Walker Street Target Area (Census Tract: 01089010902; Gurley, Madison County)
- c. Gault Avenue Target Area (Census Tracts: 01049961100 and 01049961000 ; Fort Payne, DeKalb County)

### **3. Disclosure of Open Brownfields MARC Grant for Non-Lead Coalition Members:**

Neither non-lead coalition members have an open, nor recent Brownfields MARC Grant.

### **4. Letters of Commitment:**

Letters of commitment from the City of Fort Payne and Launch 2035 are attached.

### **5. Community Involvement:**

Following this grant's award, a project kick-off meeting will be held. This meeting will provide an opportunity to establish a Brownfield Advisory Committee (BAC) consisting of representatives from local stakeholders. The Committee will review projects and make decisions to prioritize site assessments based upon the hierarchy outlined in Section 1.a.iii. The kick-off meeting will also outline the goals of the grant, how local residents and business owners can provide public input and how the funds can be utilized, ensuring an educated public and allowing for additional community involvement. Ongoing communication throughout the life of the grant will be conducted in a variety of ways, including regularly held public meetings and charettes that are organized in partnership with community organizations such as those listed in 2.b.i.. As a large population of Hispanic people live within the Region, communication and information will be provided in both English and Spanish. Meetings will be held in person at the city hall closest to the applicable site so as to ensure close proximity to the Target Area's residents. Meetings will be held at hours agreeable to most schedules to ensure a high level of attendance and involvement. Additionally, those that cannot be present during the live meeting, can access the recorded meeting online, at TARCOG's website and/or can utilize a call in number for the meeting. Meetings will provide a platform for public comment to identify additional brownfield sites, reprioritize known brownfield sites based on established criteria, and voice potential concerns. Commentary will be collected through comment cards and via email to the project manager so that affected parties' input can be captured and documented for use in decision making when selecting and prioritizing sites. These meetings will also be utilized to present potential redevelopment opportunities to



interested developers by showcasing available brownfield sites and providing developers technical assistance in obtaining additional financial incentives for planned redevelopment. Input will be considered during public meetings in an open manner that embraces the diversity of the community and focuses on a constructive, forward-looking vision for the Region. Additional communication regarding grant updates and opportunities will be conducted in a variety of ways including press releases with the local newspaper which will include Times-Journal, Southern Torch, Lookout Mountain, Alabama (online and in print). Brownfield related announcements will also be featured on TARCOG's, coalition partners', and project partners' websites, local news stations, and flier distribution via local businesses and community organizations. The following Facebook pages will be used as well: "Athens Main Street", "What's Happening in Athens", "What's Happening in Huntsville, Madison, Athens?", "The City of Fort Payne", "Fort Payne Times-Journal", "Fort Payne-Main Street Association Alabama", "What's Happening in Fort Payne?", "Gurley Lions Club", and "Charles Stone Park (Gurley City Park)" reaching over 102,600 followers.

**6. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds:**

TARCOG has an existing EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant, which has been drawn down past 70%. All funds will be expended within the Grant window. Documentation of such is attached to this document.

**7. Contractors and Named Subrecipients:**

Not applicable; TARCOG has not selected a contractor.