



## Narrative Information Sheet

1. Applicant Identification:  
 Region 1 Planning Council  
 127 N Wyman St, Ste 100  
 Rockford, IL 61101
2. Federal Funds Requested:  
 Assessment Grant Type: Assessment Coalition  
 Federal Funds Requested: \$1,000,000
3. Location:  
 Communities within Winnebago and Boone Counties in Northern Illinois
4. Target Area and Priority Site Information: The Target Areas are located in three cities within the Rockford Region.
  - a. Target Areas (TAs) and Census Tracts (CTs):
    1. Auburn Street Corridor which includes census tracts along Auburn St. from N Main to Springfield Rd in Winnebago County
      1. Census Tracts 23.01, 36.01, 32, 33, 31 and 34
    2. Area generally bounded by the Rock River to the west, Harlem Road to the north, Applewood Ln to the East, back to N 2nd from Riverside Blvd in Winnebago County
      1. Census Tracts 4.03, 3, 2, 38.09, 5.04
    3. Area covering the Broadway corridor in Rockford, from Kishwaukee Street to Alpine Road in Winnebago County
      1. Census Tracts 12, 18, 14, 15, 17, 16
    4. Area in Downtown Belvidere bounded by Lincoln Street on the north, Buchanan Street on the south, State Street on the east, and Warren Boulevard on the west in Boone County
      1. Census Tracts 101, 102
  - b. Addresses of Priority Sites:
    1. 4400 Auburn St, Rockford, IL 61101
    2. 1819 E Riverside Blvd, Rockford, IL 61114
    3. 202 S Main St, Belvidere, IL 61008
    4. 1800 Broadway St, Rockford, IL 61104
5. Contacts:  
 Eric Setter, Land Bank Coordinator (Project Director)  
 Region 1 Planning Council  
 127 N Wyman Street, Suite 100 Rockford, Illinois 61101  
 P: (815) 319-4459 E: [esetter@r1planning.org](mailto:esetter@r1planning.org)  
  
 Michael Dunn Jr., Executive Director (Chief Executive)

Region 1 Planning Council  
127 N Wyman Street, Suite 100 Rockford, Illinois 61101  
P: (815) 209-4269 E: [mdunn@r1planning.org](mailto:mdunn@r1planning.org)

6. Population (Communities in which Target Areas/Priority Sites are located):

**Winnebago County:** 283,635  
**Rockford, Illinois:** 147,441  
**Boone County:** 53,293  
**Belvidere, Illinois:** 24,932

7. Other Factor Checklist

Other Factors	Page #
Community population is 10,000 or less.	N/A
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian tribe or United States territory.	N/A
The priority brownfield site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	N/A
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).	N/A
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	Pg. 1, 2, 3, 4
The redevelopment of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	Pg. 4, 5
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	Pg. 4, 5
The reuse strategy or project reuse of the priority site(s) considers climate adaptation and/or mitigation measures.	Pg. 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).	Pg. 10
The target area(s) is located within a community in which a coal-fired power plant has recently closed (2012 or later) or is closing.	N/A

8. Letter from State or Tribal Environmental Authority:

*For an applicant other than a state or tribal environmental authority, attach a current letter from the appropriate state or tribal environmental authority (or equivalent state or tribal regulatory oversight authority) acknowledging that the applicant plans to conduct assessment activities and is planning to apply for FY23 federal Brownfields Grant funds.*

Attached

9. Releasing Copies of Applications

N/A



# ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

1021 NORTH GRAND AVENUE EAST, P.O. BOX 19276, SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62794-9276 • (217) 782-3397

JB PRITZKER, GOVERNOR

JOHN J. KIM, DIRECTOR

217/524-2084

October 18, 2022

Region 1 Planning Council,  
Attn: Michael Dunn, Jr., Executive Director  
127 N Wyman Street, Suite 100  
Rockford, IL 61101

Dear Mr. Dunn,

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) has received your request for a letter of acknowledgement for an upcoming Coalition Assessment Grant application to U.S. EPA. Region 1 Planning Council is applying for a \$1,000,000 Coalition Assessment Grant.

The grant will be a Coalition Assessment Grant for Hazardous Substances and Petroleum.

Illinois EPA acknowledges Region 1 Planning Council's efforts to obtain federal Brownfields funds for this project. If you have any questions, I may be contacted at the above address or telephone number, or at [Jenessa.N.Conner@illinois.gov](mailto:Jenessa.N.Conner@illinois.gov).

Sincerely,

*Jenessa Conner*

Jenessa Conner, Project Manager  
Voluntary Site Remediation Unit  
Remedial Project Management Section  
Division of Remediation Management  
Bureau of Land

2125 S. First Street, Champaign, IL 61820 (217) 278-5800  
1101 Eastport Plaza Dr., Suite 100, Collinsville, IL 62234 (618) 346-5120  
9511 Harrison Street, Des Plaines, IL 60016 (847) 294-4000  
595 S. State Street, Elgin, IL 60123 (847) 608-3131

2309 W. Main Street, Suite 116, Marion, IL 62959 (618) 993-7200  
412 SW Washington Street, Suite D, Peoria, IL 61602 (309) 671-3022  
4302 N. Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103 (815) 987-7760

## **PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION**

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

**1.a.i. Coalition Members** The Rockford Region Coalition consists of Region 1 Planning Council (R1), Boone County, Winnebago County, and Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD). R1 is a federally-designated, multi-county regional planning organization that provides economic development, transportation, environmental, and land use planning to its service area. Winnebago and Boone County are both county governments with limited staffing and financial resources to apply for and manage brownfield funding. The final member is RMTD, a municipal corporation created under Illinois' Local Mass Transit District Act and is the federally-subsidized, fixed-route transit provider for the Rockford Urbanized Area. The inclusion of RMTD in the coalition supports the integration of transportation connectivity with the redevelopment of sites through infrastructure improvements, such as mobility hubs and pedestrian infrastructure.

**1.a.ii. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Areas** Located 90 minutes from the major cities of Chicago, Milwaukee, and Madison, the region is on the northern Illinois-Wisconsin border. Winnebago County (pop.285,350) has a post-industrialized economy and is home to Rockford, IL. The county currently supports a healthy education, healthcare, and aviation manufacturing economy. Boone County (pop.53,293) borders Winnebago to the east and follows similar economic makeup as Winnebago. Boone has an automotive manufacturing and supply industry, along with food manufacturing, and agriculture. Both have histories of industrial manufacturing, site misuse, and legacy pollution. The region's history of deindustrialization and blight led to high volumes of vacant land (stemming from demolition and lack of reuse to undeveloped land) and varying in type and level of contamination. The region contains over 5,000+ blighted and tax delinquent parcels. In the Winnebago County Trustee Program alone there are over 700 vacant lots, owned and/or managed by the R1 Land Bank. With historical agricultural and manufacturing industries, contamination is likely variable in nature and widespread. In 2012, a preliminary Brownfields Inventory was conducted by the City of Rockford for Boone and Winnebago County and found 1,430 potential brownfield parcels in between the counties. **Target Area 1: Auburn Street Corridor, West Rockford:** This target area (TA) is ~3.33 miles in length. The corridor is a minor arterial with two state route crossings (IL-70 and IL-2), one creek crossing (Kent Creek), and one railroad crossing. Two wetlands are located near the corridor; 3.68 acres of freshwater forested/shrub wetlands and 1.63 acres of freshwater forested/shrub wetland. This wetland overlaps a 500-year floodplain. The majority of the corridor is fully developed and is a mix of residential and commercial/retail land uses. Sidewalks along Auburn Street are in disrepair, have little or no separation from traffic, and most are inequitable to those with disabilities. Operated by RMTD, there are six daytime transit routes and two weeknight/Sunday public transit routes. The industrially zoned areas are partially occupied by light industrial tenants, while other industrially zoned properties remain vacant. If development happens alongside efforts for adaptive reuse, there is potential to catalyze growth in an already well-built out area. **Target Area 2 - Generally Rock River east to Pepper Drive/Forest Hills Dr, bounded by Harlem Road to north and Spring Creek to south (N 2nd TA):** The N 2nd TA is in Loves Park, unincorporated Winnebago County, and the City of Rockford. The corridor has a varied mix of commercial and residential land uses. A majority of the commercial development is located within 800' of the N. 2nd Street intersection and more sporadically between N. 2nd Street and East Drive. Residential lots comprise a majority of the land use between N. 2nd and Material Avenue. This area includes both a 100-year floodplain and 500-year floodplain. Between Material Ave. and Forest Hills, primarily larger commercial uses are present. The 2008 Brownfield Inventory identified 145 sites

that fall within the targeted area. The inventory shows many filling stations occupied the priority area throughout the 1900s, indicating that land revitalization could follow a single remediation plan. There is limited pedestrian infrastructure within this TA and businesses are often inaccessible without transportation access. **Target Area 3 - Downtown Belvidere:** The Downtown Belvidere TA is bounded by Lincoln Street on the north, Buchanan Street on the south, State Street on the east, and Warren Boulevard on the west. The TA includes downtown, along with residential and industrial corridors. Uses include commercial, public, mixed-use and residential. The downtown retail cluster comprises smaller retail spaces primarily located along State Street. This area includes roughly 20% of the retail inventory and is primarily local-serving. The old Belvidere train station is Main Street, the same rail track remains today, a source of expected pollution from historical uses including herbicides, petroleum byproducts, metals, and creosote. Rail access makes the TA a prime opportunity for mobility-focused redevelopment. A study done in 2005 recommended a Multi-modal Transit Center for Belvidere (mobility hub). This center would provide connection between local and regional transit routes, a location for new and high-quality housing, a center of business development, and a destination for regional recreation. **Target Area 4: Broadway Corridor, Rockford, Illinois** This TA covers .44 square miles and is located in a historical manufacturing district in southern Rockford, spanning Broadway Street from Kishwaukee Street to Alpine Road. There is a RMTD bus route, City Loop North/South, with 3 additional routes along Kishwaukee, Alpine, and Charles. Broadway from Kishwaukee east 18th Street has been a mix of retail and industrial use since the late 1800s with residential neighborhoods immediately north and south of the corridor. However, this retail area has steadily declined in the last 50 years with many empty storefronts and factory spaces. A rail line runs through the corridor and alongside industrial buildings. From 18th Street east to Alpine, the corridor is mainly a residential area that developed from the late 1800s into the mid-1900s.

#### **1.a.iii. Description of the Priority Brownfield Sites**

**Priority Site 1, in Auburn Street TA - 4400 Auburn St.** in Rockford, IL is the priority site for RMTD. A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was performed on this property in 2022. The property consists of four adjoining parcels totaling 5.34-acres of land in a commercial and residential area. With a history of residential and filling station uses, the site has been primarily vacant since 1976 with a remaining building foundation, separated by a residential street from a residential neighborhood, causing a concern of vapor intrusion. Petroleum contamination has migrated from the northwest adjoining gas station. Historical automotive repair operations at 4427 and 5401 Auburn St. may have released hazardous materials into the groundwater, flowing toward the priority site. The north adjacent filling station at 4315 Auburn Street is identified on the IEPA State Site database as a remediation site. The only current use is an RMTD bus stop on the northern side of the property. The addition of a mobility hub on this site would increase east-west connectivity as the site spans the width of it, excepting the westernmost corner. The site is close to the Mel Anderson Bike Path. This location was chosen as a priority site due to known availability of site access, redevelopment potential, and the large potential impact of a redevelopment for both job creation and neighborhood wellness. **Priority Site 2, in N 2nd Target Area - 1819 E Riverside Blvd.** in Rockford, IL is a priority site for Winnebago County. The site is 4.31 acres and located in northern Rockford. No known preliminary assessments have been conducted on this site as of 2022. The site was chosen as a priority site due to delinquent property taxes and will be headed into the Winnebago County Tax Trustee Program. The Trustee Program, with the assistance of this award could prep the site for redevelopment. Aerial imagery shows a potential historic use of an apple orchard on this property from 1940s-1970s, indicating a strong



likelihood that this property is contaminated with pesticides. Lead arsenate (LA), was used commonly to prevent insect damage to crops throughout the United States and was used up to the 1980s, most commonly used in apple orchards, the predicted historic use. LA separates into lead and arsenic, the lead remains in the topsoil and arsenic can mobilize to contaminate other water sources. Additionally, the south adjacent filling station at 1824 East Riverside has been identified on the IEPA State Site database and is a potential contaminant source. There are two RMTD bus stops within a one-minute walking distance, but no sidewalks on site. The bus stop has no amenities, identified only by a sign indicating the stop. Improved pedestrian and cyclist mobility is a priority in this area for Winnebago County and mobility infrastructure at this location would allow safe and convenient access to and from public transit. The priority site is located on the south side of E Riverside, surrounded by a mix of medium and low-density housing. The north side of E Riverside provides access to many essential services such as a grocery store and pharmacies, without a marked pedestrian crossing. A mobility hub could present an opportunity to create another crossing at the intersection of E Riverside and Sage Dr., allowing safe access to the services north of the site and improving the quality of life of residents. **Priority Site 3, in Belvidere TA - 202 S Main** is Boone County's priority site and is located near a potential future passenger rail station between Rockford and Chicago. The area surrounding the priority site is primarily industrial but its current use is unknown. This site is at a critical intersection that could connect residents to multiple transit options. Two blocks north of this site is the Kishwaukee River, which has bridge crossings at State and Main Streets. Farther away from the station site are residential neighborhoods west of Union Avenue and Doty Park, which has a canoe launch site on the Kishwaukee River and a recreational path. Located less than a quarter mile across the river from the priority site is Parson Casket Hardware, an EPA-registered superfund site that poses threats to the surrounding groundwater wells and adjacent river. The site was chosen due to proximity to the superfund site, the downtown area, and future rail station. Assessment and redevelopment would support the revitalization of the area surrounding the future passenger rail site and would contribute to increasing nearby property value and beginning assessments to determine legacy pollution within the TA. **Priority Site 4, in Broadway Corridor Priority Area - 1800 Broadway** This location is a priority site for R1. This parcel is owned by the Winnebago County Trustee due to years of unpaid taxes. Site history includes Elco Tool and Screw Corporation (1926), Rockford Wood Carving Co. Inc. (1935), and Pierce Packaging Company (1952). The large property sits next to rail lines (Canadian Pacific Railway) and houses two RMTD bus stops. The remainder of the 139,836-square-foot building was demolished by the City of Rockford in 2022. The building was considered structurally unsafe, and along with tax delinquent status, the now-empty site is owned by the County Trustee Board. After demolition, there has not been any assessment of environmental quality or identification of contamination risks and with historical use, there are high chances of legacy pollution from the railways and manufacturing practices. The location is a priority site due to the location between multiple bus routes and sits along one of RMTD's main routes, while simultaneously being located in a high-commercial area.

### **1.b. Revitalization of the Target Areas**

**1.b.i. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans** The objective of this project is to identify and prioritize brownfields sites for Phase I and Phase II assessment to further revitalization efforts and transportation connectivity. The project will increase connectivity to local and regional transportation through the redevelopment of identified and assessed brownfields and tax delinquent properties. Revitalization will feature mobility infrastructure to increase public transit ridership and offer additional opportunities for clean transportation (biking, ride sharing,

etc.); with the intention of increasing access to employment, amenities, and public services. Coalition members have called for an additional need for increased connectivity and blight reduction, through various plans, agreements, and efforts. The 2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Northern Illinois (CEDS) identifies that goal for the region is to continue to assess, remediate, and redevelop brownfield sites. This includes creating an inventory that prioritizes properties with high potential for reuse and expected reuse, and community impacts. This reuse includes affordable housing, job centers, mobility hubs, and other uses that enable economic growth. This strategy was already successfully applied with several brownfield factory sites recently repurposed. Further, Winnebago County, Boone County, and R1, collaborated to form the Northern Illinois Land Bank, identifying community priorities and revitalization plans and states within the Region. The agencies agreed that there is a need for (i) the creation of safe, decent housing for residents, (ii) the return of abandoned properties to productive use including, the payment of tax revenues, (iii) opportunities for the revitalization of deteriorating residential, retail, industrial and commercial neighborhoods, and (iv) available properties for use as public parks, green spaces, water retention and other public purposes. While land banking has assisted in reducing brownfields, many properties acquired by the County Trustee remain stagnant due to limited funds and capacity, decreasing adjacent parcel value. The priority sites have unique reuse opportunities that will be further identified in site-specific reuse plans. The Belvidere TA is located in an ideal center to become a multi-modal transit center that would provide a connection between local and regional transit routes. The N 2nd site is located in a TA with a strong commercial area, with no pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, limiting connectivity to public transportation. The Auburn St Corridor TA is prime to redevelopment of properties to create jobs and better access to current amenities. Lastly, the Broadway priority site has a history of industrial uses of unknown contamination levels that, if remediated, would increase the health of the surrounding community. Redevelopment is essential to improving the quality of life and increasing job opportunities for the community. Through this award, assessment is the first step towards redevelopment. After addressing the priority sites, remaining sites will be re-prioritized based on location, accessibility, redevelopment potential, consistency with long range plans and known/suspected environmental issues. Remediation planning will then be initiated for sites with identified contamination, as funding permits.

**1.b.ii. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy** The project goals of performing Phase I and II assessments along with additional revitalization visioning supports economic development within TAs by increasing beautification efforts, reinvesting in historically underserved communities, and will aim to implement development that benefits residents through increased property values, increased access to public services, and an increased sense of place. Community engagement, coalition and community partner input, and current site conditions, will inform final development. The above TAs and identified sites are situated near green space including bike paths, riverfront access, parks, and additional greenspace, but are limited in pedestrian and transit infrastructure. Increasing connectivity and mobility infrastructure will increase residential access to greenspace. This is a primary goal for the counties, seen by County approval of a feasibility study for a multi-use path within the N 2nd TA, two miles east of the priority site, acknowledging the need for improved safety and accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists. The chosen TAs have multiple sites that can be envisioned to improve the accessibility and efficiency of public transit. Many sites sit directly on RMTD routes, but these bus stops have little to no infrastructure or amenities. Mobility hubs are stations or gathering spaces that increase connectivity to alternative forms of transportation, such as bike shares, ride shares, public transportation, and private transportation.



These hubs integrate amenities like e-bike and e-scooter parking, public information boards, ride sharing/carpool parking, charging stations for cars or other devices, Wi-Fi, etc. With proper planning and environmental assessment, these mobility hubs can better connect residents to accessible transit options, therefore increasing access to employment opportunities and public services. Mobility hubs often include climate adaptation and mitigation measures such as the integration of renewable energy (solar or wind) or green roofs. Further, mobility hubs can decrease automotive carbon emissions by providing alternative sources of transportation that are either electric or bicycle and pedestrian based. Project efforts will also be coupled with other local development efforts with community partners. An example is the Emerson Estates Subdivision, located within the Auburn St. Corridor TA. R1, Habitat for Humanity, and ComEd have partnered with Winnebago County's Rockford Public School (RPS) District to develop affordable employee housing directly adjacent to three RPS campuses—a high school, middle school, and elementary school. This neighborhood will utilize energy efficient infrastructure, increase neighborhood walkability, and will receive electric vehicle chargers in each new build. Brownfield funds will further develop the TA's resilience efforts by increasing connectivity between Auburn Corridor residents and alternative transportation. R1 will work with the coalition members and community partners to facilitate the development, deployment, and integration of all possible energy efficient opportunities. Development will not negatively affect or displace any residents or businesses.

**1.c Strategy for Leveraging Resources & 1.c.i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse** R1 and its coalition partners regularly apply for, receive and manage grants from federal and state agencies, as well as foundations. Based on project needs, R1 submit applications independently or in collaboration with the appropriate partners. Other potential funding sources include private utility companies, strategic partnerships with key employers in the region, and/or other state and federal sources. The benefit of having the County Trustee Board involved in the project is that the sites can be made available at no cost to potential site developers. This incentivizes speeding up the process to bring properties from vacant and dilapidated to remediated and redeveloped. Potential funding that may be pursued to support demolition and redevelopment activities include Community Development Block Grants from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity that support Economic Development. Some eligible activities include land or building acquisition and reconstruction/rehabilitation of commercial or industrial buildings. Additional funding from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) for the clean-up of municipally-owned sites will be sought out through Revolving Loan Funds.

**1.c.ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure** Lots located within the TAs vary in level of infrastructure and known or unknown contamination. Since three of the priority sites are vacant, surrounding infrastructure will play a crucial role in influencing the redevelopment of these parcels. Current infrastructure includes existing RMTD bus routes and rail infrastructure. All TAs are located within RMTD's transit routes and two of the TAs incorporate historic rail. The coalition will utilize the existing infrastructure to increase transportation connectivity through mobility hubs and integration with future passenger and commercial rail projects. Project funds will not contribute to new construction but will be utilized to support community engagement and initial planning efforts for these transportation development projects. The priority sites won't need additional investment of roads, utility hookups, etc., because they are in areas that have had development in the past. By using grant funding, the sites can be re-activated and not rely on greenfield developments that cost municipalities resources to connect to the current infrastructure. In addition to local municipal infrastructure, one priority site has rail access on site, which has not been utilized in decades.

**COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / 2.a. Community Need**

**2.a.i. The Community's Need for Funding** Boone County and Winnebago County have significant percentages of sensitive populations especially clustered in and around each county's largest city. Belvidere's poverty rate is 13.5%, more than double Boone County's 6.8% poverty. Winnebago County has a poverty rate of 14.6%. In the City of Rockford, poverty climbs to 21.8%. Poverty in Loves Park is 14.7%, on par with the county. According to StatsAmerica, both counties experienced population loss since 2010. Boone County's population has decreased by 1.9% and Winnebago lost 4.10%. Municipal agencies lack financial and technical resources to effectively advance brownfields redevelopment. Both counties face the challenges of high delinquent taxes on County Trustee owned properties. With no funding for site assessment, planning, or remediation, properties often remain in the County Trustee program. Property taxes are not collected in the program. The region has high rates of tax delinquency and tax buyers don't purchase back taxes, leading to properties being placed into the Trustee program, the program typically houses brownfield sites. The trustee properties are able to take advantage of city services but can attract crime, such as dumping, arson, and vandalism. Both Winnebago and Boone Counties face challenges with delinquent taxes and properties ultimately being owned by the County Trustee. In fact, over \$6,000,000 in delinquent taxes and 2,500 parcels were at the most recent Winnebago County tax sale. In Winnebago County, R1 is the appointed Agent for the Tax Trustee. Redevelopment of brownfields sites and surrounding neighborhoods is sorely needed to minimize financial stress on the Counties and communities, and keep and attract residents/businesses. The counties have TA where connectivity is a weakness, due to limited pedestrian infrastructure and location of routes on brownfields and vacant properties. RMTD has provided high-quality services to those using public transit but for those that have limited access, these services can be difficult to walk to, especially in the winter months. Transit-focused redevelopment can increase resident access to take public transit.

**2.a.ii. Threats to Sensitive Populations / (1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations** The population makeup varies between the four TAs; many have large low-income populations with limited personal transportation, food access, and educational experiences. 3 of the 4 TAs are located in food deserts. The Auburn St. Corridor has populations in the high ranges for low-income households, populations with low-life expectancy, high school degree non-attainment, high levels of unemployment, and limited English proficiency. This TA has the lowest transportation access, with CT 32 has an estimated approximately 20.8.6% ( $\pm 9.8\%$ ). One of the corridor's tracts (CT 32) is a federally designated Opportunity Zone. The downtown Belvidere TA is within the higher percentiles for low-income communities, low higher education enrollment, limited high school education attainment, and has a higher population of children under five years old. The Broadway Corridor is identified as another sensitive population, consisting of high levels of poverty (94th national percentile), and the priority site's CT (CT18) has an estimated 506 households ( $\pm 289$ ) that have no vehicle access, or approximately 23.7% ( $\pm 13.1\%$ ) of households. N 2nd's main sensitive population is the elderly population; the TA has a large population of residents over age 64, the 94th percentile for Illinois and the 92nd percentile nationally. This population requires higher levels of connectivity/mobility due to decreased ability to operate personal vehicles and higher susceptibility to medical conditions. The projected transportation-focused reuse strategies support transit efforts to improve connectivity to health services, grocery stores, and employment. The project will further quantify the number of sensitive populations and identify the needs of the populations through community engagement efforts. **(2) Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions** The Auburn St. Corridor TA is in the higher national percentiles of asthma (98th), diabetes (96th), and low life expectancy (92nd-97th). The prevalence

of blighted lots in this corridor can support some of the underlying health conditions. A high rate of diabetes can be linked with the fact that the TA is a food desert, indicating that a high portion of residents do not have access to healthy food, a driving cause of Type II diabetes. High rates of asthma have been correlated with high numbers of brownfields and the high prevalence of vacant lots.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of TA's experience high levels of air pollution. The N 2nd has a higher prevalence of cancer at around 9.5% according to CDC

EJSCREEN REPORT	EJ Index: Particulate Matter 2.5	EJ Index: Ozone
Auburn TA	81	81
Belvidere TA	81	81
Broadway TA	86	87

reporting. Additional health data for specific TAs are not available at this time. Community engagement will identify additional threats to health conditions. Additional site remediation and visioning that is focused on transportation connectivity could improve access to healthy and affordable food by increasing access to grocery stores. Further, funds would allow for Phase I and Phase II assessments on identified brownfields would help identify if there are any contaminants causing asthma or other leading drivers of low-life expectancy. **(3) Promoting Environmental Justice** The Auburn St. Corridor, Broadway St. Corridor, and Belvidere TAs have high occurrences of environmental justice issues. Most notably, Auburn St. Corridor is in the national highest percentiles of exposure to high levels of ozone (89th) and particulate matter 2.5 (90th), lead paint exposure (93rd), and close proximity to superfund sites (93rd), RMP facilities (89th), and underground storage tanks (89th). Belvidere similarly is within the higher national percentiles in lead paint exposure (86th); and within proximity to superfund sites (89th), underground storage tanks (84th), RMP facilities (86th), and wastewater discharge (91st). South Rockford has the highest environmental justice concerns, with Proximity to hazardous waste facilities (91th), Proximity to National Priorities List (NPL) sites (98th), and Proximity to Risk Management Plan (RMP) facilities (99th). All sites are above the 50th national percentile in Air Toxics Cancer Risk (risk per MM) and Air Toxics Respiratory Hazard Index. The Riverside Blvd. TA does not have any current EJ concerns listed, however, the concerns listed above indicate that there is potential contamination. Grant funding will support the identification of point-source pollution as a result of the high number of superfund sites, RMP facilities, underground storage tanks, and additional sources of pollution that threaten these communities. Funding will support the planning for remediation site cleanup, limiting future contamination and supporting environmental justice.

## 2.b. Community Engagement

### 2.b.i. Project Involvement, 2.b.ii. Project Roles

Organization and POC	Specific involvement in the project
Rockford Area Habitat for Humanity- Keri Asevedo, 815-636-4573, KeriAsevedo@RockfordHabitat.org	Providing community relations with current and potential low-income homeowners. Understands needs of both residents and employers.
RLDC- John Phelps, (815) 987-8675, john@rldc.us	Potential lender to supply additional funds for redevelopment. SBA Lender.
ComEd-Renee Skeete, Ph.D. (779)-231-2097 renee.skeete@comed.com	Local electrical utility. Would have the knowledge of current electrical infrastructure on the eligible sites and potential methods for remediation and expansion.
Rockford Park District-Tim Bragg, (815)-987-8865 timbragg@rockfordparkdistrict.org	Rockford Park District, as a large property owner in Winnebago County, will help

	identify brownfield sites that could further improve the Park District's properties.
Winnebago County Tax Trustee Program- Joel Freudenberg, 815-319-4194, jfreudenberg@r1planning.org	The Trustee Program will assist with the integration of County Trustee properties in the brownfield inventory and assessments. Project involvement will allow immediate site access and control over redevelopment.
I Bike Rockford-Ashley Sarver ibikerockford@gmail.com	Local cycling advocacy group focused on bike/pedestrian issues, will help identify opportunities to improve infrastructure.

**2.b.iii. Incorporating Community Input** R1 will be coordinator of community engagement for this project and collaborate with the above-mentioned organizations to reach a wide population. A primary method of community engagement will be through R1's Community Advisory Forum (CAF), a group designed to reach all facets of R1's service area through a collective of organization representatives, local leaders, and citizens. Through powers of the CAF and through the assistance from participating groups, R1 plans on reaching all hard-to-reach and underserved communities within the identified TAs. For additional engagement, R1 will utilize strategies from the MPO's public participation plan such as: providing resources in English and Spanish; maintaining a regularly updated mailing list to notify the public of activities for comment; and maintaining a project website with all relevant information including meeting schedules and agendas. For seeking community input, R1 will utilize techniques such as: websites and social media posts; public forums, open houses; email; and paper and/or electronic surveys and work with neighborhood organizations to reach individuals with disabilities, low income, elderly, minorities, and Limited English Proficiency. Input received will be reflected in project reports and will be shared with the CAF and Coalition to integrate into the project. Events will be held in areas near or within the TA, use accessible meeting spaces, and will be at convenient, accessible places and times. R1 publishes public notices about the planning process and events to inform the public about participation opportunities. In-person events will be made virtual if COVID-19 prevents gathering. The Coalition will utilize GIS data to identify vulnerable communities for community engagement.

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

#### **3.a. Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs, 3.a.i. Project Implementation**

##### **Task/Activity 1: Program Management**

**i. Project Implementation:** R1 will work with the US EPA to complete a work plan and cooperative agreement. R1 accounting staff will create proper budget tracking systems for staff hours and will follow the Board approved procurement process to select a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP). R1 and QEP will coordinate a list of reports due throughout the award and determine communication strategy to ensure compliance. Throughout the grant, R1 and QEP will submit required reports, including quarterly reports. ACRES database and ASAP system credentials will be set up and prepared for reporting throughout the grant award. Annual MBE/WBE reports compiled and submitted. Three key staff members will attend the National Brownfield Conference in 2023 and 2024/2025 (TBD). The project team will identify additional regional, collaborative brownfield opportunities with other R1 programs (Metropolitan Planning Organization, Economic Development District, etc.). QEP will prepare and submit a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for US EPA review and approval. **ii. Anticipated Project Schedule:** Immediate, through the final report submission. ACRES/ASAP system setup as early as possible with ongoing updating. **iii. Task/Activity Lead:** R1, with assistance from QEP and Coalition Members. **iv.**



Outputs: QEP procured, reports submitted, ACRES updated, ongoing tracking of activity, regular financial tracking, 1 QAPP, 1 Work Plan

### **Task/Activity 2: Site Identification, Prioritization & Engagement**

i. Project Implementation: Led by R1, the Coalition and QEP will host meetings with the Community Advisory Forum (CAF), local municipal staff, and community partners to introduce project goals. The kickoff meetings will occur within 60 days of award. The Coalition will collaborate with the CAF and additional community partners to create a comprehensive site selection criterion that factors in historically underserved communities and tipping point neighborhoods, economic development and transportation needs, safety considerations, and benefits. Project updates will be spread as described in 2.b.iii. Coordination with the R1 Board (mayors, county chairmen, school districts, utilities, etc.) will occur simultaneously. Project staff will coordinate frequently with the CAF to share additional opportunities that occur within the project. Project staff will also host events as described in 2.b.iii. As sites are identified, R1, QEP and CAF will work to prioritize funding based on site access/readiness and need. R1 and QEP will talk to property owners of identified sites to determine eligibility and site readiness. ii. Identifying Additional Sites: The technical team (QEP, R1, municipal staff) will meet to discuss eligible uses of funding and determine how the CAF and R1 will work to identify sites that may not be obvious. Identifying and ranking additional sites will give considerations to underrepresented areas of the two counties. Sites will be ranked on site access, redevelopment potential (jobs creation, tax base growth, visual improvement), potential negative impact on residents, benefit of redevelopment (remediation of pollutants, access to nearby jobs, improved access to transit for additional job opportunities), and if the site is in or near a TA. iii. Anticipated Project Schedule: Within 60 days of award. Site identification will be ongoing, with an early focus on priority areas and underserved communities. iv. Task/Activity Lead: R1, with assistance from Coalition Members to oversee, input from Trustee Board, CAF, and QEP, and assistance with community engagement from community partners and TA residents. v. Outputs: CAF meetings, community outreach, updated brownfield inventory and prioritization.

### **Task/Activity 3: Phase I ESAs**

i. Project Implementation: QEP will work with the US EPA to determine site eligibility for Phase I ESAs. Priority sites and non-priority sites identified through outreach that qualify for Phase I assessments will receive Phase I ESA. This work will be done in accordance with All Appropriate Inquiry and other standards required by EPA. R1 anticipates 40 sites receiving Phase I ESAs. QEP will conduct assessments and write reports. ii. Anticipated Project Schedule: QAPP will be prepared after QEP is procured. Phase I ESAs start within two quarters of grant commencing and continuing throughout the term of the grant. R1 and QEP to talk regularly about sites and projects. ACRES continually updated. iii. Task/Activity Lead: QEP, with assistance from R1 and Coalition Members, will lead this task, due to the technical nature of the activities and to ensure compliance with All Appropriate Inquiries. iv. Outputs: 40 Phase I ESAs.

### **Task/Activity: Phase II ESAs**

i. Project Implementation: QEP will work with the US EPA to determine site eligibility for Phase II ESAs. Many of these sites will have had a previously conducted Phase I ESA through the grant activity, so site access should be simpler than in Phase I ESA work. Phase IIs ESA work will be in accordance with the QAPP and associated Sampling & Analysis Plans will be compared to appropriate IEPA default values for cleanup. Throughout and after Phase II ESAs, R1 will work with the underlying municipality and property owner to discuss redevelopment plans. Funding and any potential incentives will be discussed, in an attempt to ensure that the site has an opportunity

for redevelopment, if the property owner is willing. **ii. Anticipated Project Schedule:** Ongoing, but likely to start in 3rd quarter after Phase I ESA and SAP/HASPs are completed. **iii. Task/Activity Lead:** QEP is lead, with direction from R1, Coalition Members, and community partners. **iv. Outputs:** 16 Phase II ESAs

**Task/Activity: Cleanup and Reuse Planning**

**i. Project Implementation:** Where redevelopment is deemed possible by the results of the assessments completed and the property owner (current or future) is engaged in the successful redevelopment, a remedial action plan will be prepared by the QEP. The QEP will focus on the technical remediation necessary and ensure that plans meet IEPA's appropriate default values for cleanup. For sites that need some additional reuse planning, a site-specific reuse plan will be developed by R1. In addition to both of these plans, R1 will work with the property owner to prepare the property for redevelopment. **ii. Anticipated Project Schedule:** Ongoing, but likely after Phase II ESA completed. **iii. Task/Activity Lead:** R1 and Coalition Members lead on Site Reuse Planning. **iv. Outputs:** 8 Remedial Action Plans, 5 site-specific reuse plans.

**3.b. Cost Estimates** Approximately 82% of the budget will be utilized on site-specific work. All R1 staff hours are budgeted at \$50/hour personnel and \$25/hour fringe. This represents an expected average of R1 staff compensation of personnel working on the project. Budgets will be monitored throughout the project. Budgets for QEP activity are estimates, but will be evaluated as a part of the QEP procurement process.

**Task 1: Program Management:**

- 800 hours (16/17 hours per month over 4 years) for procurement, tracking outputs, financial monitoring and reporting totaling \$40,000 personnel and \$20,000 fringe.
- \$10,500 for National Brownfield Conference attendance for three staff members to attend two conferences. \$1,750 budgeted for each staff member for each conference.
- \$25,000 for QEP (250 hours at \$100/hr) for reporting assistance, QAPP creation/review.

**Task 2: Site Identification, Prioritization, Engagement:**

- 925 hours (20 hours a month over 4 years) for engagement, community meetings, site selection, interviewing owners totaling \$46,250 personnel and \$23,125 fringe.
- \$375 for mileage going to sites and community meetings.
- \$6,000 for several community meeting events, equipment and supplies.
- \$10,000 (100 hours at \$100/hour) for QEP assistance with meetings and outreach.

**Task 3: Phase I ESAs:** 40 Phase I ESAs at \$4,000 each.

**Task 4: Phase II ESAs:** 16 Phase II ESAs at \$30,000 each.

**Task 5: Cleanup & Reuse Planning:** 8 Remedial Work Plans at \$10,000 each. 5 Site-specific reuse plans done by R1. 210 Hours each, totaling \$52,500 in personnel and \$26,250 in fringe.

Budget Table							
Budget Categories		1.Program Management	2.Site Identification, Prioritization, Engagement	3.Phase I ESAs	4.Phase 2 ESAs	5.Cleanup & Reuse Planning	Total
Direct Costs	Personnel	\$40,000	\$46,250			\$52,500	\$138,750
	Fringe	\$20,000	\$23,125			\$26,250	\$69,375
	Travel	\$10,500	\$375				\$10,875
	Equipment and Supplies		\$6,000				\$6,000



	Contractual	\$25,000	\$10,000	\$180,000	\$480,000	\$80,000	\$775,000
Total Costs (direct)		\$95,500	\$85,750	\$180,000	\$480,000	\$158,750	\$1,000,000

**3.c. Measuring Environmental Results** R1 will monitor environmental results by setting clear standards and goals in the EPA-approved work plan. Project staff and QEP will discuss metrics compared to the established plan regularly to ensure positive traction meets results. Early in the project, metrics to be monitored will be the number of community engagement sessions and number of attendees. For site-specific work, the metric will be reports submitted accurately and on-time, regular updates to ACRES, number of sites added to the brownfield inventory, number of property owners contacted, and results from those contacts. During the grant period, the simplest result is the number of Phase I, Phase II, Remedial Action Plans and Site-Specific Site Reuse Plans are created. R1 will also measure the number of sites remediated, improvements to public transit infrastructure, properties that go from public ownership to tax-paying, creation of activated greenspaces, increase in employment, leveraged funding, and quality affordable housing units. Any deviation from these metrics will be discussed with the EPA project manager.

### **PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE**

**4.a. Programmatic Capability & 4.a.i. Organizational Capacity** R1 is a regional government agency providing cross-jurisdictional, collaborative planning across Northern Illinois. R1 brings planning knowledge, extensive community connections, and experience engaging with and gathering feedback from local stakeholders. Services also extend to various economic development assistance, fund development, and research and analytics. R1 works with government, economic development, and nonprofit partners to plan projects and programs to prepare for implementation, as well as to increase their competitiveness for funding opportunities and speak with a single voice on regional policy and priorities. R1, acting as the region's MPO, EDD, and Mental Health Board, has an extensive history of managing federal grants including grants from USDOT, EPA, EDA, CDC, NDPH, and more. R1's Financial Policy states, "R1 will maintain a system of internal control to safeguard its assets against loss, check the accuracy and reliability of its accounting data, promote operational efficiency, and encourage adherence to prescribed policies." **4.a.ii. Organizational Structure** R1 will collaborate with coalition partners, Winnebago County, Boone County, and RMTD, to form the decision-making body for the period of funding. Community partners will influence decision making but are not responsible for final decisions. R1 will act as the administrative and financial agent through managing grant funds, performing/submitting financial reports, and organizing coalition and community meetings and outreach. Coalition members will be strategically involved with making site selection decisions, and perform community engagement/outreach. Coalition members and community partners will provide input and feedback on site selection and revitalization, land acquisition and assembly, and support community engagement efforts. **4.a.iii. Description of Key Staff** *Eric Setter* is the current coordinator for R1 Land Bank and is the project coordinator. Previously, Setter managed a Brownfield Multi-Purpose Assessment Grant for the City of Peoria, IL prior to joining R1. Current responsibilities include blight reduction projects, including acquiring abandoned properties for reuse. *Michael Dunn Jr.* is the current Executive Director of R1 and will provide executive oversight. Dunn has been the Presiding Officer of Northern Illinois Land Bank since 2019, and has been on the Rockford Area Economic Development Corp board since 2008. *Gabrielle Gamily* is the Sustainable Development Associate at R1, focusing on energy transitions, community outreach, and climate/environmental planning. Gamily will be coordinating community engagement and environmental justice considerations for the project. *Kayla Gipson* is R1's senior accountant and leads agency and grant financial reporting including billing, financials, budget

creation, and reporting. Setter and Gamily will be responsible for management of the grant and coordinating with QEP. R1 expects to hire an outreach coordinator to assist with community engagement.

**4.a.iv. Acquiring Additional Resources** R1 procurement is intended to ensure timely, efficient, and consistent with good business practice and applicable law. As a government entity, R1 practices the following: “As a subcontract, vendor, or supplier subject to State of Illinois procurement nondiscrimination and affirmative compliance requirements, all qualified candidates and employees must be treated without regard to basis of race, color, religion, gender, or national origin or other reason prohibited by law. Non-compliance may result in suspension, termination, or cancellation of a contract, rendering the supplier ineligible for future contracts.” R1 has a successful history of completing procurement for services including financial audits, feasibility studies, construction and development and media production. When procuring contractors, 2 CFR 100.317-326 will be followed.

**4.b. Past Performance and Accomplishments** R1 regularly receives federal and non-federal grants. Relevant to the proposal are a 2022 Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) Solid Waste Planning Grant (SWPG) and two awards from the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) Land Bank Capacity Program (LBCP), the projects impact resiliency and environmental justice in the R1 service area. All include public engagement and local government partnership. The \$10,000 award from IEPA’s 2022 SWPG program enables R1 to assist Winnebago County and Boone County to create the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC). The funds allow R1 to assist both counties to prioritize and map implementation through a series of workshops attended by SWAC and other stakeholders in a seven-month period. R1 also will attend events in each county to inform the public and gather feedback. In March 2023, a final report summarizing workshop findings will be publicly available. Findings inform the next five-year solid waste plan update. In 2019 and 2021, R1 was awarded \$225,000 and \$250,000 respectively from the IHDA’s LBCP grant. Through this program, R1 created the Northern Illinois Land Bank Authority (NILBA). The land bank addresses vacant and blighted properties through focusing on tax delinquent parcels, the land bank is able to acquire properties with a clear title for reuse. The priority for LBCP was to create regional land banks to address vacant and distressed properties. By using the administrative infrastructure in place at R1, the NILBA was the first land bank created under the LBCP and continues to be a model for other areas of the state. R1 was able to use funding from each cycle for both staffing and programming land bank activities. Since creation, the land bank has acquired over 20 properties. Current focus is finding innovative ways to spur new construction of residential housing units in neighborhoods that have not seen new construction in decades. By tying new construction to accessible transportation and near large employers, success is evident. The 2022 IEPA Solid Waste Planning Grant requires quarterly reporting. Reports include a project summary and work efforts. R1’s first quarterly report, delivered on time, included updates on staff changes, a revised implementation schedule and plans for the next reporting period including three SWAC meetings and two public engagement events. R1 reports to IHDA quarterly. Activity includes staffing status reports and financial reimbursement requests. All reports have been filed on time and are following IHDA regulations. R1 has proven to be ahead of IHDA's grant expectations. R1 regularly submits, receives and manages federal and non-federal grants from agencies such as the US DOJ, Illinois DOT, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the Illinois Department of Human Services. Example projects funded in the last three focus on recidivism, transportation infrastructure, workforce development and the 2020 census. Respectively, these projects fall under R1’s Community Impact, MPO, and EDD divisions. R1 regularly partners with nonprofit and governmental bodies to write and manage their grants as well as provide support for other grant-related needs.