

Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot

Fort Valley, GA

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5101)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. Since 1995, EPA has funded more than 200 Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilots, at up to \$200,000 each, to support creative two-year explorations and demonstrations of brownfields solutions. The Pilots are intended to provide EPA, States, Tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

BACKGROUND

EPA has selected the City of Fort Valley for a Brownfields Pilot. Fort Valley (population 8,198) is a small rural community located in the southwest portion of Peach County, Georgia. The local economy has been based historically on agricultural production as well as a few industries such as the Blue Bird Corporation, the largest school bus producer in the world. However, the city's economy has become more diversified, moving away from agricultural production. The better job opportunities and services associated with the growth of larger neighboring cities (Macon and Warner Robins) has caused Fort Valley's downtown business district to lose its local business base as well as its workforce. The city has lost 62.5 percent of its locally owned businesses since 1990. Further, the community has been severely impacted by environmental issues, including the presence of two federal Superfund sites and the presence of contamination in the groundwater. The stigma of environmental contamination at and beyond the Superfund sites has limited redevelopment efforts at the city's vacant properties.

The Fort Valley Redevelopment Zone, which the Pilot is targeting, is primarily a low- to middle-income, African-American community that has been challenged for decades by deteriorating economic conditions and environmental concerns. The minority population for the city is 59.2 percent. In October

PILOT SNAPSHOT



Fort Valley, Georgia

Date of Announcement:
March 1999

Amount: \$200,000

Profile: The Pilot targets the economically depressed downtown business district.

Contacts:

Office of the Mayor
(912) 825-8567

Regional Brownfields Team
U.S. EPA - Region 4
(404) 562-8661

Visit the EPA Region 4 Brownfields web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/region4/wastepps/brownfpgs/bf.htm>

For further information, including specific Pilot contacts, additional Pilot information, brownfields news and events, and publications and links, visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>

1998, Peach County had an unemployment rate that was more than double the state rate. Forty-nine percent of county residents did not complete high school. Twenty-five percent of the population is on public assistance.

OBJECTIVES

Fort Valley's objective is to develop a comprehensive program to inventory, assess, clean up, and reuse brownfields sites as part of the city's overall plan to revitalize its economy and mitigate the community's concerns over potential environmental contamination. The Pilot plans extensive community outreach efforts to collect the input and concerns of local stakeholders and to reach consensus on redevelopment plans.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Activities planned as part of this Pilot include:

- Establishing the Fort Valley Brownfields Redevelopment & Revitalization Initiative Advisory Group, comprising local stakeholders, to assess community needs and form a development plan;
- Identifying, establishing an inventory, and ranking brownfields sites to be targeted for redevelopment, and entering this information in a geographic information system (GIS) database;
- Selecting sites and performing Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments on targeted properties;
- Conducting a community discussion session and at least three workshops aimed at bringing together community groups and business leaders to assess community needs, including environmental justice concerns, and addressing targeted brownfields properties; and
- Preparing and implementing community outreach materials and a brownfields resource guide.

The cooperative agreement for this Pilot has not yet been negotiated; therefore, activities described in this fact sheet are subject to change.