

Community Involvement Plan



Walker County, Georgia Brownfields Assessment Grant EPA Cooperative Agreement No. BF-02D30122

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Environmental ● Facilities ● Geotechnical ● Materials

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1 Community Involvement Plan Overview

This Community Involvement Plan (CIP) has been developed for Walker County, Georgia and outlines how Walker County intends to engage with the community within the Target Areas. The plan will identify how Walker County will continue to encourage communication between all parties throughout the duration of the project. This plan will be implemented through methods including:

- Identify community stakeholders, including but not limited to local residents, local businesses, local churches, property owners, County members and elected officials, local schools and other interested parties to encourage involvement. See Appendix A for a list of contacts.
- Assist in the development of informative flyers and other public materials to educate and inform the local community of the activities to be performed under the grant. See Appendix B for document repository and meeting locations.
- Discuss the needs, concerns, and aspirations of neighbors and stakeholders with active interests in the project through community informational sessions and by utilizing electronic outreach methods such as Walker County website and social media platforms.
- Establish a clear understanding throughout the community of the project outcome(s).
- Provide the community the opportunity to engage in this project and provide feedback to further develop and refine community engagement activities that create value for the community while encouraging that all voices within the community are heard.

2 Brownfield Project and Area Description

2.1 Project Description

The mission of the Walker County Brownfields Program is to develop a self-sustaining model program for the identification, assessment, remediation, and redevelopment of brownfield sites. Walker County seeks to raise awareness regarding economic incentives for the redevelopment of brownfield sites within the target areas (City of Chickamauga, City of LaFayette, and City of Rossville). The target areas will use EPA grant funding to augment redevelopment plans currently in place to assess environmental concerns, encourage brownfields site reuse, increase tax revenues through site redevelopment, and provide needed employment opportunities. Through this project, Walker County intends to bring citizens, environmental regulatory agencies, consultants, developers, landowners, and lenders together around a common goal of redevelopment. Walker County will use the FY 2022 Brownfields Assessment Grant Work Plan to work towards this mission over the life of the project. See Appendix C for a list of glossary terms and Appendix D for a list of acronyms for this project.

The objectives/tasks of the Cooperative Agreement period are to conduct inclusive community outreach activities, create a brownfields site inventory, conduct Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments on priority sites, and conduct reuse and remediation within the target areas, as identified in the proposal. This grant will further the efforts of Walker County towards redeveloping brownfields

and improving communities. Walker County intends to accomplish the following over the four-year time period of this award:

Program Objectives:

1. Educate the local community about the impact of Brownfields and the utilization of the properties in fostering redevelopment as part of a larger community reinvestment strategy.
2. Conduct site assessments based on environmental, health, social impact, and economic criterion.
3. Develop reuse plans for the affected sites to facilitate new employment opportunities, amenities, and infrastructure.

Program Activities:

1. Develop Walker County Brownfields Program Generic QAPP.
2. Create an Inventory of Brownfields Sites for planning and redevelopment purposes.
3. Create a Community Involvement Plan and conduct community engagement activities.
4. Perform site inventory and site prioritization activities for up to 20 Phase I ESAs.
5. Complete up to 10 Site-Specific QAPPs coupled with a Health and Safety Plan.
6. Perform up to 10 Phase II ESAs.
7. Perform Additional Soil and Groundwater Assessments (as needed).
8. Perform charrettes and visioning sessions to develop reuse plans and engage community members.
9. Maintain grant reporting requirements and coordination with GAEPD.
10. Develop up to 5 Analysis Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA) Reports with recommendations from the environmental assessments.

2.2 Project Area

Walker County has identified priority sites in the target areas including the LaFayette Cotton Mills in LaFayette, the former Crystal Springs Print Works in Chickamauga, and the former Peerless Woolen Mills in Rossville. The County will utilize EPA Assessment Grant funding to complete a more thorough inventory of Brownfields properties. The County will use the inventory to prioritize sites identified based on redevelopment goals and potential. The County will utilize this inventory to engage potential developers and incorporate site development potential into site prioritization and selection.

Walker County has started engaging property owners of potential Brownfields sites, providing them with information on the “Brownfields Process” and the benefits of brownfields redevelopment.

2.3 Community Involvement Plan Objectives

Through this Community Involvement Plan, the community will be provided opportunities for participation and engagement in the project through an effective and efficient two-way communication system. Members of the community will gain knowledge of the Brownfields assessment and redevelopment process; as well as opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. This Plan will ensure that the communication process is ongoing and evolving, and information is available as the project moves forward. Walker County will maintain an open line of communication with the community so that they remain informed.

3 Community Involvement Activities

Walker County understands that community engagement is crucial for a successful Brownfields Program. Walker County plans to build on the community engagement efforts already in effect to generate increased community involvement and participation. Walker County plans to utilize the following 3 step approach to community engagement:

1. **Plan** – This **Community Involvement Plan** will lay the foundation for community engagement efforts and establish a schedule for community engagement activities. **Meetings** with the project team will provide project updates, allow discussion of community member suggestions and preparation of responses.
2. **Get Involved** – An initial community-wide **kick-off meeting** will notify the community of project commencement, present an anticipated project schedule, and solicit public comment and input. **Community meetings and presentations** will serve to keep the community updated on project progress and provide a platform for public comment and input. A Brownfields Program website will be developed as part of the grant to allow residents to access periodic updates on the Program’s status. **Charrettes and visioning sessions** will be utilized in the development of cleanup, reuse, and redevelopment plans. Walker County will collaborate with local community groups to provide **educational opportunities** and promote interest in redevelopment projects throughout the County’s target area.
3. **Spread the Word** – Walker County understands that utilizing one form of media alone will severely limit outreach efforts. Walker County will utilize various forms of media to communicate with the community throughout the life of their Brownfields Program and beyond, including:
 - a. Development of a **project brochure** which will be distributed by Walker County to community organizations, residents, and business owners;
 - b. Development and maintenance of a **project webpage** to provide project news, updates, educational materials, and other information;
 - c. Regular **press releases** to local newspapers to keep the community up to date on project milestones and upcoming project events;

- d. Utilization of **social media** to provide real-time project updates, project photos, news, and provide easily accessible opportunities for public comment and input; and,
- e. **Word-of-mouth**...By properly educating the community, this time-tested method of communicating will serve as the cornerstone of public outreach activities, allowing community members to take ownership of their Brownfields Program and express their pride in its accomplishments.

Communicating Progress - Walker County will provide regular updates and project news to the community and stakeholders by utilizing the 3-step approach described above. By utilizing a wide range of communication methods, the 3-step approach will effectively communicate the progress of grant activities to all community members. Frequent communication with the community will keep the community engaged and invested in their Brownfields Program and will ensure the program's success.

3.1 Point of Contact

Chairman Shannon Whitfield will serve as Walker County Project Director and will be responsible for the oversight and completion of administrative and financial requirements of the Brownfields Program. Mr. Whitfield's role is to provide direct access between Walker County and the community and to provide any necessary updates to this CIP during the course of the project. Mrs. Stephanie Watkins will serve as the Brownfields Project Manager and will be responsible for the day-to-day activities and the timely and successful expenditure of funds for the Brownfields Program. She will also serve as the Emergency Contact should any issues arise during the course of the project.

Information will be distributed to the community on Walker County's Brownfields webpage located on Walker County's website: <https://walkercountyga.gov/tag/brownfield/>.

Additional information will be circulated through mailed brochures and handouts presented at public meetings. Contact information for Project Director and Project Manager is as follows:

Chairman/CEO Shannon K. Whitfield
Project Director
Walker County, GA
101 S. Duke St./P.O. Box 445
LaFayette, GA 30728
commissioner@walkerga.us
Direct Dial (706) 670-1702

Mrs. Stephanie Watkins
Project Manager
Walker County, GA
101 S. Duke St./P.O. Box 445
LaFayette, GA 30728
development@walkerga.us
Direct Dial (706) 924-0099

Additional points of contact for community stakeholders, media, and federal, state, and local representatives are presented in Appendix A.

3.2 Distribution of Information

Information will be provided on a dedicated Walker County Brownfields webpage on the Walker County Government website, <https://walkercountyga.gov>. The site will include information regarding this project. Important dates and information will also be provided on the website including any pre-scheduled

meetings. Announcements of additional or unscheduled meetings will be distributed to the community at least 2 weeks (10 business days) before the meeting.

Presentations and agendas from public meetings will be archived on the Brownfields Program webpage and will be made available upon written request to Walker County's Brownfields Project Manager.

Project information will be released through appropriate media and public notices. Walker County regularly communicates with community members via its website and email distribution lists to establish and maintain interest in ongoing projects. In addition to web-based information, written correspondence and community meetings, the local media outlets are alternative sources of information for the community regarding the project. Contact information for the media is provided in Appendix A.

Inclusiveness is a goal; while English is the dominant language spoken in the target area, Walker County will take measures to accommodate persons with Limited English Proficiency either through oral or written translation services and/or by providing translated project updates, as needed.

3.3 Public Meetings and Town Hall Forums

Walker County has and continues to actively seek and encourage citizen input throughout the Brownfields process. It will continue these efforts throughout the grant implementation process, including preparing outreach/promotional materials to be distributed via email, community and stakeholder meetings, professional association meeting(s), newspapers, social media blasts, and postings on the webpage and other social multi-media resources. It is invaluable to keep the community informed about the Brownfields initiative. Local officials and Project Partners involved in the initial grant process will be included and kept informed of community meetings and project status. Meetings are always open and accessible to the public.

The use of public meetings is vital to the exchange of information between the County and community stakeholders. To provide ample opportunity for full participation of stakeholders, most meetings will be held during previously scheduled meetings for each community to encourage meeting attendance and distribution of information. Appendix B contains a list of potential facilities that are heavily utilized by the community and are accessible to people of all abilities.

It is important to note, due to any future health pandemics, Walker County is prepared to implement alternative meeting methods should in-person meetings be deemed inadvisable.

3.4 Digital Engagement

Keeping the public and community informed about the County's Brownfields Program is an essential economic development strategy. The County team members will work with Terracon and their consultants to develop and implement a digital engagement process to reach community members and stakeholders. Digital engagement is increasingly important during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Digital engagement provides an alternative to and will complement traditional in-person meetings. The digital engagement process will increase awareness, encourage participation in virtual meetings, and

provide an opportunity for comments and questions. Digital engagement also increases participation among residents who prefer to receive their information via social media communications. Digital engagement will provide timely information for the County's residents and will give the community a voice before, during, and after community meetings and events.

The County Brownfields Digital Engagement process will include several social media and digital platforms including the County's Brownfields webpage, social media (Facebook) virtual meetings such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, and email. One of the benefits of digital engagement is the metrics and reports available. The metrics and reports provide real time information and help guide the team to adjust the outreach program as needed.

3.5 Community Support

The County will continue its partnership with the community stakeholders, as well as state and federal agencies. The grant project values the support of local partnerships that are detailed in Appendix A under Contacts. Community Contacts are outlined as well as federal, state, local, environmental, municipal, state agencies and media. The County is open to and encouraging new partners to join the initiative.

3.6 Information Repository

Keeping the public and community informed about the County's Brownfields Program and its benefits to local stakeholders is an essential economic development strategy. Walker County will create and maintain a dedicated Brownfields webpage on its website to provide general information and meeting notices in support of the program. Walker County will make project related information available to local residents through this webpage. Information that needs Commission action will be advertised per regulations and be readily available for the public, elected officials, agencies, partners, and media for easy access and review.

A physical copy will also be made available at target area City Hall offices, libraries, and on the Brownfields webpage. In addition, it will be made available at the Walker County Economic Development office.

3.5.1 Table 1 - Community Involvement Activities

Date	Event	Representatives/Attendees
Fall 2022-Winter 2023	Community Outreach Brownfields Kick-Off	Community Members, Stakeholders, County Members, Brownfields Project Team
Spring 2023	Development Professionals Brownfields Workshop Training 1	Realtors' Associations, Development Professionals, City/County Personnel, City/County Officials, Stakeholders, Brownfields Project Team
Fall 2023	Development Professionals Brownfield Workshop Training 2	Realtors' Associations, Development Professionals, City/County Personnel, City/County Officials, Stakeholders, Brownfields Project Team
Spring 2024	Community Outreach	Community Members, Stakeholders, County Members, Brownfields Project Team
Fall 2024	Project Update	Community Members, Stakeholders, County Members, Brownfields Project Team
Fall 2025	Project Update	Community Members, Stakeholders, County Members, Brownfields Project Team

4 Project Location

4.1 Brownfields Project Area Description

The Walker County EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant focus area includes the entirety of Walker County GA. The project will identify and prioritize various potential sites within the designated area. A map showing the target areas is included in Appendix E. With the assistance of appropriate community members, Terracon will develop a brownfields site inventory.

4.2 Site Selection

The County will utilize EPA Assessment Grant funding to complete a more thorough inventory of Brownfield properties in the target areas. The Grantee will use the inventory to prioritize sites identified based on redevelopment goals and potential. The Grantee will utilize this inventory to engage potential developers and incorporate site development potential into site prioritization and selection.

The County has started engaging property owners of potential Brownfield sites, providing them with information on the “Brownfield Process” and the benefits of brownfields redevelopment. The LaFayette Cotton Mills (LaFayette), Former Crystal Springs Print Works (Chickamauga), and the Former Peerless Woolen Mills (Rossville) were identified as high priority sites by the community partners.

4.3 Site Documentation

Documents related to this project are available for public review at the locations listed above under Section 3.6 Information Repository and at the designated webpage located at: <https://walkercountyga.gov>. The following items are currently available or will be made available upon completion:

- Community Involvement Plan (CIP).
- Generic Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP).
- Informational handout available during public meetings.
- Any additional required documentation if applicable.

Appendix A – Contact Information

A.1 Environmental Consultant Contacts

Dallas Whitmill, P.E.
Assessment Manager
Principal Engineer/Environmental Manager
Terracon Consultants, Inc.
Dallas.Whitmill@terracon.com
423.499.6111

Belinda Richard
National Brownfields Program Manager
Terracon Consultants, Inc.
Belinda.Richard@terracon.com
813.321.0345

Amanda M. Herrit, M.S.
Contract Manager
Senior Environmental Scientist
Terracon Consultants, Inc.
Amanda.Herrit@terracon.com
423.315.1449

Robin A. Murrell
Engineering Assistant
Terracon Consultants, Inc.
Robin.Murrell@terracon.com
423.499.6111

A.2 Federal Elected Officials

US Senator Jon Ossoff
455 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
202.224.3521

US Senator Raphael G. Warnock
388 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
202.224.3643

A.3 State Elected Officials

District 53
Senator Colton Moore
PO Box 1516
Trenton, GA 30752
423.508.2195
colton@coltonmoore.com

District 1
Representative Mike Cameron
1100 S. Crest Rd.
Rossville, GA 30741
404.656.0188
mike.cameron@house.ga.gov

District 2
Representative Steve Tarvin
PO Box 750
Chickamauga, GA 30707
423.605.7328
steve.tarvin@house.ga.gov

A.4 County Elected Officials

Office	Office Holder	Contact Info.
Chairman/CEO	Shannon Whitfield	706-670-1702 commissioner@walkerga.us
District 1 Commissioner	Robert Blakemore	423-208-5080 district1@walkerga.us
District 2 Commissioner	Mark Askew	423-208-5156 district2@walkerga.us
District 3 Commissioner	Brian Hart	706-996-5070 district3@walkerga.us
District 4 Commissioner	Robert Stultz	423-208-5192 district4@walkerga.us

A.5 City Elected Officials

City of Chickamauga City Hall: 706.375.3177	City of LaFayette City Hall: 706.639.1500
Mayor Randal Dalton	Mayor Andy Arnold
Mayor Pro Tem Evitte Parrish	Ward 1 Council Member Beacher Garmany
Councilmember David Jones	Ward 2 Council Member Anthony Underwood
Councilmember Lee Miller	Ward 3 Council Member Judy Meeks
Councilmember Daymon Garrett	Ward 4 Council Member Chris Davis
Councilmember Rhonda Jacks	At Large Council Member At Large Wayne Swanson

City of Rossville City Hall: 706.866.1325
Mayor Teddy Harris
Mayor Pro Tem Jonathan Lassetter
Councilmember Hal Gray
Councilmember Michael Hicks
Councilmember Todd Franklin

A.6 EPA

Region 4 Officials

EPA Project Officer
Olga Oliver Perry
404.562.8534
Perry.olga@epa.gov

A.7 State Environmental Agency Officials

GAEPD Brownfields Program
Shannon Ridley
Brownfields Program Manager
470.604.9456
Shannon.Ridley@dnr.ga.gov

A.8 Media

Local Newspapers

Walker County Messenger
Chattanooga Times Free Press

Internet Newspapers

Northwestgeorgianews.com
Chattanooga.com
AllonGeorgia.com

Radio

WQCH Radio (LaFayette)
WGOW Talk Radio 102.3FM (Chattanooga)
News Radio KWN 1420 AM/101.3 FM (Trenton)

Local Television Stations

UCTV-265 (Fort Oglethorpe)
Walker County is in the Chattanooga, TN TV viewing area.
WRCB NBC Affiliate Chattanooga, TN (plus 2 subchannels) – 423-267-5412
WTVC ABC Affiliate Chattanooga, TN (plus 2 subchannels) - 423-756-5500
WDEF CBS Affiliate Chattanooga, TN (plus 3 subchannels) – 423-785-1227

Appendix B – Information Repository and Meeting Locations

B.1 Information Repository

Keeping the public and community informed about the County’s Brownfields Program and its benefits to local stakeholders is an essential economic development strategy. Walker County will maintain a dedicated Brownfields webpage on their website to provide general information and meeting notices in support of the program. The County will make project related information available to local residents through the Brownfields webpage. Information that needs Commission action will be advertised per Walker County regulations and be readily available for the public, elected officials, agencies, partners, and media for easy access and review.

A physical copy will also be made available at Walker County Economic Development Office with the assistance of:

Mrs. Stephanie Watkins
Economic Development Director
Walker County, Georgia
101 S. Duke St./ P.O. Box 445
LaFayette, GA 30728
706-638-1437

B.2 Meeting Locations

Public meetings will be held at:

Walker County Civic Center
10052 N Hwy 27
Rock Spring, GA 30739

LaFayette-Walker County Public Library
305 S. Duke Street
LaFayette, GA 30728

Rossville City Hall
400 McFarland Avenue
Rossville, GA 30741

Appendix C – Glossary of Terms

Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternative (ABCA): Remedial plan document that includes analysis of cleanup alternatives: identifies the objectives of the cleanup and provides an analysis of cleanup alternatives based on effectiveness, ability to be implemented and cost; documents if the situation meets the need for a cleanup; provides information pertaining to the site background and health and safety; identifies the proposed action, and explains the rationale for its selection.

Brownfields: Abandoned, idled, or underused industrial, commercial, or residential facilities/sites where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.

Community: An interacting population of various types of individuals in a common location; a neighborhood or specific area where people live.

Community Involvement: The term used by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to identify its process for engaging in dialogue and collaboration with communities. EPA community involvement is founded on the belief that people have a right to know what the Agency is doing in their community and to have a voice in it. The purpose is to give stakeholders the opportunity to become involved in Brownfields activities and help shape the decisions that are made.

Community Involvement Plan: A management and planning tool outlining the specific community involvement activities to be undertaken during the course of a site investigation and cleanup. It is designed to (1) share communication between the affected community and the EPA, and (2) ensure public input in the decision-making process related to the affected communities.

Grant: An award of financial assistance, including cooperative agreements, in the form of money, or property in lieu of money, by the Federal Government to an eligible grantee.

Information Repository: A dedicated Brownfields Website that is convenient for local residents, community members, stakeholders and developers.

Objective: Something that one's efforts or actions are intended to attain or accomplish; purpose; goal; target.

Public: The community or people in general or a part or section of the community grouped because of a common interest or activity.

Public Meeting: Formal public sessions that are characterized by a presentation to the public followed by a question and answer session.

Site: Location selected for brownfields or environmental activity; a place for potential redevelopment.

Spokesperson: An advocate who represents the policy or purpose of a particular organization/entity.

Stakeholder: Any organization, government entity or individual affected by the project or with a particular interest in the project.

Preservation: To maintain in safety from injury, peril or harm; protect.

Enhancements: To make greater, as in value, beauty, or effectiveness; augment.

Appendix D – Acronyms

ABCA	Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives
CIP	Community Involvement Plan
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
GAEPD	Georgia Environmental Protection Division
ESA	Environmental Site Assessment
QAPP	Quality Assurance Project Plan

Appendix E – Figure 1 Area Map

