

# Kalamazoo County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority

*The EPA defines a brownfield as "real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the **presence or potential presence** of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant." The State of Michigan further defines brownfield sites as blighted, functionally obsolete or historic resources.*

Michigan is home to over 38,000 brownfield sites. In Kalamazoo County alone, we have over 1,000 known contaminated sites. The Kalamazoo County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (KCBRA) was established in 2002 to pursue and utilize available federal and state brownfields tools to help alleviate brownfield conditions and redevelop eligible sites. The KCBRA has supported numerous projects utilizing grants, loans and financial incentives resulting in jobs, investment and environmental benefits for the entire community.

In May of 2016, the EPA awarded the KCBRA its second assessment grant with \$400,000 in funding, one of only four grants awarded in Michigan. The current grant allows the KCBRA to conduct environmental site assessments on parcels throughout the County that have known or perceived contamination related to hazardous substances or petroleum. Sites can be small, such as a gas station, or large, similar to the Midlink Business Park.

Most development or re-development projects require environmental due diligence to be conducted prior to acquisition. These EPA grant funds can be used to meet those requirements, satisfying lenders, buyers and other development partners. Additionally, the grants can be used to develop Brownfield Plans that can help offset environmental and non-environmental costs associated with redeveloping or rehabilitating buildings and properties. Brownfield Plans have been the critical element in defining the KCBRA's success by not only helping alleviate brownfield costs on eligible sites, but also creating a future sustainable funding source for additional sites which is just now beginning to take shape.

## **Major Goals of Brownfield Redevelopment:**

- Increase investment, jobs and revenue
- Reuse existing infrastructure
- Encourage redevelopment of contaminated or blighted properties
- Recovery of tax base
- Improve value of surrounding property
- Preserve historic or cultural community icons
- Environmental cleanup, public health improvements

## Project Profile – Metal Mechanics, Schoolcraft

In 2016, Metal Mechanics, Inc., a manufacturer of hydraulic presses in Schoolcraft Township, was growing and needed to expand. Later in 2016, with the support of the KCBRA, Metal Mechanics, Inc.



constructed a 30,000-square-foot building on a known brownfield site in the Village of Schoolcraft. The parcel of land the building was built on was known to be contaminated. The site was identified as a “facility” (due to soil and groundwater contamination) because of its historic use as a lumber Wolmanizing operation. The KCBRA, Kalamazoo County and the Village of Schoolcraft approved a Brownfield Plan that allows for the reimbursement of \$65,000 in eligible activities

back to Metal Mechanics through tax increment financing (TIF) over the next 11 years. Some of the eligible activities include site demolition, management of contaminated soil and installation of a sub-slab depressurization system. This is a win for Metal Mechanics and the community; a brownfield has been re-used, the property is back on the tax rolls, jobs have been created and the known environmental issues related to the site are understood and safely controlled.

And the KCBRA can assist with smaller projects, too. . . .

## Project Profile - Pocket Park and Outdoor Café, City of Kalamazoo

In July 2017, the KCBRA authorized the use of EPA assessment funding for a Phase I Environmental Assessment of a vacant lot near Downtown Kalamazoo. Ricky and Yvonne Thrash are purchasing this



lot—which is next to their business, Ennovy’s Beauty Bar—from the City of Kalamazoo. The property will be redeveloped into an outdoor café and pocket park that will be open to the public. The improvements planned for the property will help to beautify the neighborhood and serve as a welcome gathering space for their customers and the local community.

If you would like to learn more about the Kalamazoo County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and available funding opportunities, please contact Rachael Grover, Resources Coordinator with the County Planning & Development Department, by phone at (269) 384.8305 or by email at [ragrov@kalcounty.com](mailto:ragrov@kalcounty.com). Also, please visit our [website](#) to view upcoming meeting dates, a list of board members, various BRA documents and marketing materials.

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