

June 13, 2011

For Immediate Release

Contacts:

Tom Farris – 765.254.0116

tfarris@energize-eci.org

Roy Budd – 765.254.1420

rbudd@energize-eci.org

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Awards \$609,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant to Energize-ECI Regional Planning District, Inc.

Muncie, IN – E. Roy Budd, Executive Director of the Energize-ECI Regional Planning District, Inc., announced that the District Brownfields Coalition has received a \$609,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The grant funds allow the District organization to assess properties in the counties of Blackford, Delaware, Grant and Jay that are potentially contaminated by hazardous and petroleum substances. The EPA issued 214 grants through the Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup Grants programs totaling \$76 million – which went to entities in 40 states and three tribes across the country.

“Revitalizing our communities is vital to our health and the health of our local communities,” EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson said. “The grants we’re awarding to communities across America will support projects that will help create thousands of jobs and make our communities cleaner, healthier and more prosperous places to raise a family and start a business. They’re part of our overall effort to clean up communities and put our nation on the path to a sustainable future.”

“This is another prime example of regionalism at work in Blackford, Delaware, Grant and Jay counties. A comprehensive list of potential brownfields sites will be developed for the four counties,” according to Mr. Budd, “The assessments of priority sites and potential cleanups of these sites will address public health and safety issues, plus help improve property values in the affected areas. Redevelopment and reuse of the sites will also have a positive economic development impact on the communities and the region. Programs funded by the grant may be developed and completed over a three-

year period, under the auspices of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. We were one of 9 organizations in Indiana to receive a Brownfields Assessment Grant from the EPA. This is a great accomplishment for the region, our organization and will benefit the residents of the District.” Budd added, “With the help of staff at C.S. Kern and Tom Farris we’ve launched a new website for the Energize-ECI Brownfields Coalition - www.eci-brownfields.org – to bring a regional focus on the assessment, remediation, redevelopment and reuse of brownfields sites.”

What are Brownfields?

“Brownfields are 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.” (Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act,” PL 107-118 11 January 2002.) In layman’s terms, a brownfield is a property that is difficult to develop because it is contaminated or believed to be contaminated by certain hazardous substance such as: petroleum products, asbestos, lead paint, mold, chemicals, controlled substances, hazardous materials, other environmental contaminants – or mine-scarred land.

Examples of brownfields may include abandoned, idled or under-utilized property such as:

Manufacturing Facilities	Light and Heavy Industrial Operations
Automotive Service Stations	Junkyards/Salvage Operations
Dry Cleaners	Chemical Operations
Machine shops	Landfills
Electroplaters	Illegal Drug Labs
Institutional Buildings	Apartment Buildings
Furniture/Wood Processing Operations	

Brownfields are not just found in big cities. The East Central Indiana region has a rich history in small town and rural manufacturing. Many of these communities have lost their industries and have suffered economically during the past several decades. As a result, many brownfields of various types and conditions are available for redevelopment opportunities. The Coalition’s brownfields program is an important tool to assist the economic development efforts in the region – and fits with other economic development assistance and resources to address liability protection, reuse incentives, revitalization efforts and are an important part of a comprehensive economic development program.

Communities should encourage redevelopment of brownfields opportunities as part of their overall economic development strategies and long term sustainability efforts in order to reuse existing infrastructure, encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings, remove blight, promote neighborhood revitalization, as well as enhance overall community health and welfare. This strategy will also increase tax bases and revenues, create jobs and improve the appearance of the entire community. People who would like to submit a potential brownfields site to included in the regional list can email basic information about the site and it’s location to contact@eci-brownfields.org.

About the ECI Brownfields Coalition

The ECI Brownfields Coalition was formed in 2009 by the members of the Energize-ECI Regional Planning District – Blackford, Delaware, Grant and Jay counties in East Central Indiana. The original reason for the formation of the ECI Brownfields Coalition was to

build a support group for a Brownfields Assessment Grant application from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The ECI Brownfields Coalition submitted a \$609,000 EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant proposal in the fall of 2010. Grant recipients will be announced in the 2nd quarter of 2011. In researching the regional information required for grant preparation, it became obvious to the Energize-ECI Regional Planning District management team that the assessment, remediation and reuse of ECI brownfields was a high priority – and should be developed even if a grant award is not received in the near future. So, we have planned a number of initiatives to identify brownfields in the region and return them to appropriate re-uses and back to the property tax bases of our communities. These initiatives include creating a master inventory of sites, identifying priority sites, applying for grants to assess and remediate the sites, foster engagement of the public, provide assistance to the local government entities, collaborate with other organizations interested in transforming brownfields, launching a website to communicate information, advocate to eliminate brownfields as commercial and industrial blight, conduct educational seminars and workshops; and develop the economic aspects of the sites – new jobs and capital investment.

Many brownfields are in prime locations, but because of the fear of environmental contamination, the issue of liability and the cost of cleanup, businesses frequently turn away from these sites in favor of developing prime rural lands on the outskirts of the region's communities. As a result, a throw-away attitude has prevailed towards brownfields properties as no longer usable. However, by redeveloping brownfields sites, abandoned properties can be recycled and existing infrastructure utilized, easing some of the development pressure on open spaces and rural property.

Scope of Work / ECI Brownfields Coalition

1. **Community Outreach** - Educate the community about brownfields in general and the opportunities and challenges of transforming sites. Invite local and regional collaborations of like-minded organizations to advance goals of the Coalition.
2. **Inventory and Prioritization** – Collect and research information on existing brownfields throughout the Coalition area and prioritize them based on project readiness, economic impact, condition of property/site, funding and other factors.
3. **Site Assessments** – Perform Phase I and Phase II environment site assessments on the highest priority brownfields to determine the existence, extent and type of any contamination.
4. **Cleanup Planning** – Create Remedial Action Plans and/or Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessments, as necessary, to guide the cleanup and/or redevelopment process.
5. **Source and Secure Funding** – Research and locate state and federal grant and funding opportunities to help finance assessments, remediation and transformation of brownfields sites.
6. **Collaboration Development** – Foster partnerships and collaborative efforts to achieve the transformative steps with government entities, businesses, organizations with a brownfields interest, and other private/public collaborations.

About the Energize-ECI Regional Planning District

The Energize-ECI Regional Planning District is a multi-county economic development and planning district - government instrumentality - serving Blackford, Delaware, Grant and Jay counties. The District was formed in 2009 under Indiana state statute IC 36-7-7 and operates under the auspices of the Economic Development Administration of the

U.S. Department of Commerce. Included in the District's scope of work is the management of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS Plan) for the region; secure grants and funding which help meet the priority needs of communities and counties comprising the District; and to assist the region in advancing economic development opportunities and improving the quality of life. Since its founding, the District has brought over \$2.7 million in grants to the region. The District is housed at the Ivy Tech Community College Fisher Building in Muncie, IN. Details about the Energize-ECI regional Planning District, Energize-ECI, Inc. and information about East Central Indiana may be viewed at www.energize-ecirpd.org. The District organization may be contacted at P.O. Box 1912, Muncie, IN 47308-1912); by phone at (765) 254.0116; fax (765) 254.1450 and by email contact@energize-ecirpd.org.

-30-

Prepared by Tom Farris
P.O. Box 1912 / Muncie, IN 47308-1912
Phone: 765.254.0116
Fax: 765.254.1450
Email: tfarris@energize-eci.org