

Jefferson County, NY

1. Applicant Identification

Jefferson County
175 Arsenal Street
Watertown, NY 13601

2. Website URL

<https://www.jeffersoncountyny.gov/>

3. Funding Requested

3.a. Assessment Grant Type

Community Wide Assessment Grant

3.b. Federal Funds Requested

Funding Amount Requested: \$500,000.00

4. Location

Jefferson County, New York

5. Target Area and Priority Site Information

The target area is the Black River corridor, delineated as a one-mile-wide band centered on the Black River, extending one-half mile inland from each shoreline as the river flows through the County. Seven sites along the corridor are prioritized:

- Main Street West Neighborhood Riverfront (591 Rear Main St W, VL Poplar St, 471 Poplar St, 476 Poplar St, 751-753 Main St W, 451 Martin St, 455 Martin St, 465 Martin St, 843 Anne St), Watertown, NY
- 570 Main Street West, Watertown, NY
- Factory Square (VL-3 Factory Sq, VL Rear Fairbanks St, VL-7 Fairbanks St, 571 Fairbanks St, 569 Fairbanks St, 567 Fairbanks St, 559 Factory St, 129 Factory Sq, 629 Factory St, 649 Factory St), Watertown, NY
- Sewall's Island and surrounding shorelines (north shore: 490-511 Pearl Street, 276-370 Moulton St, 502-582 Water St; south shore: 677 Huntington St, VL-1 Huntington St, 731 Rear Huntington St, 731 Rear Huntington St), Watertown, NY
- Pearl Street Landfill (840 Pearl St, 750 Pearl St, VL15 Pearl St, VL-15 Pearl St, VL Main St E, 659 Main St E, 1109 Rear Water St, Rear Pearl St), Watertown, NY
- Brownville Specialty Paper/Florelle Tissue Corp, 19549 NYS Rte 12F and Island, Hounsfield, NY
- PetaWatt Properties, LLC (695 W End Ave, Park Pl), Carthage, NY

6. Contacts

6.a. Project Director

Hartley Bonisteel Schweitzer, AICP
Director of Planning & Community Development
175 Arsenal Street
Watertown, NY 13601
P: (315) 783-9353
hbschweitzer@jeffersoncountyny.gov

6.b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Elected Official

William W. Johnson
Chairman, Board of Legislators
195 Arsenal St
Watertown, NY 13601
315-785-3075

7. Population

City of Watertown: 24,685
Town of Hounsfield: 3,281
Village of Carthage: 3,236

8. Other Factors

Information on the Other Factors	Page #
Community population is 15,000 or less.	N/A
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian Tribe or United States Territory.	N/A
The priority 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).	1-3
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	4
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	4
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	4
The proposed project will improve local resilience to the impacts of extreme weather events and natural disasters.	4
At least 30% of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities, as described in Section 3.A.(2), for priority site(s) within the target area(s).	8-9

The target area(s) is impacted by a coal-fired power plant that has recently closed (2015 or later) or is closing.
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N/A

IV.D.9. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority

Please find attached a letter dated December 22, 2025 from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) acknowledging our intent to apply for FY26 grant funds and conduct assessment activities.

IV.D.10 Releasing Copies of Applications

Not Applicable – The application does not have confidential, privileged, or sensitive information.



**Department of
Environmental
Conservation**

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

AMANDA LEFTON
Commissioner

December 22, 2025

Hartley Bonisteel Schweitzer
Director of Planning
Jefferson County
175 Arsenal Street, 3rd Floor
Watertown, NY 13601

Dear Ms. Schweitzer:

This is to acknowledge that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) received a request from Jefferson County, dated December 15, 2025, for a state acknowledgement letter for a Federal Year 2026 United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Brownfields grant.

I understand that Jefferson County plans to submit a Brownfield Community-Wide Assessment grant application for hazardous substances and petroleum in the amount of \$500,000. Focus of the funding will be to conduct Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments at targeted sites throughout Jefferson County, with a focus on sites located in the City of Watertown. Known contamination includes VOCs, SVOCs, petroleum, and metals. Funding will also be allocated for reuse planning and community engagement. Please note that the USEPA criteria for an assessment grant specifies that, if selected, Jefferson County may only expend up to \$200,000 of the grant on a specific site.

DEC encourages initiatives to redevelop brownfields with the goal of mitigating any environmental and health impacts that they might pose.

Sincerely,

Karen Diligent
Director, Bureau of Program Management

ec: N. Azzam, USEPA Region 2
S. Mitchell, USEPA Region 2
J. Pelton, DEC Albany
D. Storandt, DEC Region 6
J. Smith-Gagnon, DEC Region 6
A. Anderson, Jefferson County

(1) PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION

Target Area and Brownfields

a. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area: Situated between the Adirondack Mountains to the east, Lake Ontario to the west, and the St. Lawrence River to the north, Jefferson County, New York is a land of rivers and lakes. Early settlers recognized the tremendous natural resources as they settled the area at the turn of the 19th Century. In particular, they sought to harness the waterpower potential of the Black River, a waterway that bisects the County and drops 480 ft in elevation as it flows out of the Adirondacks in the east end of the County and surges through rapids in the City of Watertown (City) on its way west to Black River Bay and into Lake Ontario. As the 19th century progressed, the Black River continued to power Jefferson County, with small early industries evolving into major factories, facilities, and complexes. Within Watertown, neighborhoods of workers grew around these industrial sites, while outside the City a trail of small mill towns developed along the Black River. By the early 20th century, Watertown boasted more millionaires per capita than any other city in the nation. Like many northeastern American cities, Jefferson County's industry declined in the post-WWII war era. As businesses shuttered or relocated, the surrounding communities struggled to recover from both employment loss and the physical legacies of the vacant industrial sites, including neighborhood blight and the risk of exposure to potential contaminants. As noted in Watertown's current Comprehensive Plan, these industrial sites and buildings need restoration and reuse to stimulate healthy private investment and create good jobs. Jefferson County seeks to utilize EPA's Community-Wide Assessment Grant to work towards this end goal. The geographic boundary for the proposed grant activities is the Jefferson County line. The target area is the Black River corridor, with priority sites grouped inside and outside the City. The corridor will be delineated as a one-mile-wide band centered on the Black River, extending one-half mile inland from each shoreline as the river flows through the County. This focus will ensure that assessment resources are deployed where legacy industrial uses, potential exposure pathways, and community revitalization opportunities are most concentrated. The corridor contains several of the County's most economically vulnerable and health-impacted populations in communities that have experienced decades of disinvestment. Several former mills have remained vacant for years; others have undergone partial demolition, leaving debris and structural hazards. Currently, these properties lie underdeveloped and underinvestigated, and are particularly vulnerable to trespassing and unauthorized use. The City is facing exigent fiscal and capacity challenges, and smaller mill villages especially lack the technical capacity to undertake environmental due diligence, making private investment difficult and allowing blight to persist. This Assessment Grant will help clarify contamination, reduce redevelopment risk, and create the foundation for coordinated revitalization along the corridor. County-wide, the current major economic drivers are Fort Drum (home of the US Army's 10th Mountain Division), agriculture, and tourism; however, two of those sectors (agriculture and tourism) are volatile and tenuous. It is critical for the community as a whole that the economic potential of brownfield sites be realized to solidify the economic security and future well-being of residents and visitors alike.

b. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s): Based on staff research, input from community partners, redevelopment potential, and community need, five priority sites were identified within the City portion of the target area, and two outside the City. All sites are priorities for assessment due to their visibility, potential for redevelopment and their proximity to the Black River – the river being both a community asset vulnerable to contamination and a potential new development feature.

City of Watertown - All sites were historically powered by water (waterwheels, flumes, etc.), coal-fueled steam, electricity, and manufactured gas. Potential and known contaminants on all sites include lead, asbestos, petroleum, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), metals, Volatile organic compounds (VOCs), Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs), and arsenic. All have utilities (City water & sewer, gas, electricity) unless otherwise noted. Priority sites include:

Main Street West Neighborhood Riverfront (591 Rear Main St W, VL Poplar St, 471 Poplar St, 476 Poplar St, 751-753 Main St W, 451 Martin St, 455 Martin St, 465 Martin St, 843 Anne St)

This 9-acre, multiparcel, mostly privately-owned site sits on the City's northwest side. The site is bound by the Black River to the south, a CSX railroad line to the west, Main Street West to the north, and Edmund Street to the east. The site is zoned Neighborhood Mixed Use and Waterfront Overlay District (WOD). The Main Street West neighborhood along the Black River waterfront has been a mix of industrial and residential development since the mid-19th century. Historical industrial uses include flour/grist mill, distillery, paper mill, brewery, beverage

bottling, warehousing, hay/straw storage, petroleum refinery, trolley car barn and power house , municipal/commercial truck manufacturing, ice cream factory, coal yard, ice house, and ski lift manufacturing. Currently, about half of the industrial parcels are unsecured vacant lots of scrub vegetation, gravel, and grass; the other half have secured, old commercial buildings that are actively used either for storage or auto repair. All of the parcels are riverfront or riverfront-adjacent. The site is a priority for assessment due to its potential for a variety of uses, current mixed use neighborhood nature, and prior lack of activity in this part of the community.

570 Main Street West

This 11.8-acre, privately-owned parcel sits across the street from the Black River and runs in between residential neighborhoods on the City's northwest side. The site is zoned Industrial but surrounded by Residential and Neighborhood Mixed Use zones. The site was a rail freight house for the first two thirds of the 20th century, then was a lumber distribution yard for 35 years. After briefly operating as a building materials center, the site was converted to its current use as storage. The site has multiple old commercial buildings that are secure and actively used, as well as large grass and scrub areas. Previous assessment efforts were made but failed. The site is a priority for assessment due to its proximity to residential neighborhoods.

Factory Square (VL-3 Factory Sq, VL Rear Fairbanks St, VL-7 Fairbanks St, 571 Fairbanks St, 569 Fairbanks St, 567 Fairbanks St, 559 Factory St, 129 Factory Sq, 629 Factory St, 649 Factory St)

This 5-acre, multiparcel, mostly privately-owned site sits on the City's east side. The site is bound by the Black River to the north and east. On the opposite side of Factory Street, intensely residential neighborhoods expand to the southeast. The site is zoned Urban Mixed Use and Parks, WOD, and Open Space, with one parcel also a Planned Development District. The industrial history of Factory Square is long and intense. The dominant industry was carriage manufacturing but other industries include tannery, wood product mills, textile mills, food production, mattress factory, paper production, auto service and filling station, and scrap metal storage. About half of the buildings were razed in the late 1970s and more recently the area of the razed buildings became Factory Square Park, a City-owned green space which includes a park path, lawn, and river overlook. The other half of the buildings are generally intact, though one was demolished in 2020 due to deterioration. Some of the remaining buildings are historic, and two define the area due to their size and prominent placement on Factory Street. Several redevelopment attempts have been made; however, securing sufficient interest and funding have been challenging. This site is a priority for assessment due to its proximity to public waterfront parkland and residential neighborhoods and an adopted reuse plan.

Sewall's Island and surroundings (north shore: 490-511 Pearl Street, 276-370 Moulton St, 502-582 Water St; south shore: 677 Huntington St, VL-1 Huntington St, 731 Rear Huntington St, 731 Rear Huntington St)

This 35 acre, multiparcel site is comprised of an island in the Black River and its surrounding opposite shorelines. The site is bound on the north by several residential neighborhoods, on the west by Factory Square, on the south by mixed use neighborhoods, and on the east by a commercial neighborhood. The parcels are a mix of privately- and City-owned and are zoned as an assemblage of Neighborhood Mixed Use, WOD, and Parks & Open Space. The site contains vacant land as well as a variety of structures, including large industrial facilities, small commercial buildings, industrial ruins, old rail infrastructure, bridges, and hydropower facilities. Like its neighbor Factory Square, the industrial history of Sewall's Island and its surroundings is long and intense. Prior industrial uses include a major machine manufacturing plant, tanneries, wood and paper mills, machine works, carriage manufacturing, textile mills, a filling station, and building suppliers. In the 1990s, the machine manufacturing plant closed and the complex sat abandoned, with ownership eventually transferred to the City of Watertown. Plans were underway for a phased demolition when, in 2005, an arsonist set fire to one of the old foundries. Several of the buildings burned to the ground, raising environmental concern as old chemicals and machinery were still inside. The buildings that were destroyed were cleared away, while some buildings in the complex remain standing. This site is a priority for assessment due to its large scale, inclusion of designated public waterfront parkland, proximity to residential neighborhoods, and an adopted reuse plan.

Pearl Street Landfill (840 Pearl St, 750 Pearl St, VL15 Pearl St, VL-15 Pearl St, VL Main St E, 659 Main St E, 1109 Rear Water St, Rear Pearl St)

This 140 acre, multiparcel site is 302 ft north of Black River and comprised of a former City landfill and its surroundings. The site is bounded on the north by Pearl Street, on the south by a City-owned railroad bed, on the west by a residential neighborhood, and on the east by the City municipal boundary. Nestled in the middle of the northern half of the site is a residential area – the neighborhood's north boundary is Pearl Street, and it is bounded

on the east, west, and south by the site parcels. The site parcels are a mix of privately- and City-owned and are zoned as an assemblage of Industrial and Residential. The site contains vacant land; about half is cleared and half wooded, except for a small (2.5 acre) parking area for an adjacent large, longstanding machinery manufacturer. Utility services are not consistently available throughout the site. Given the former municipal landfill status, contamination potential is of particular concern, especially given onsite experiences of municipal staff. This site is a priority for assessment due to its large scale and proximity to residential neighborhoods.

Outside City of Watertown - Priority sites are:

Brownville Specialty Paper/Florelle Tissue Corp, 19549 NYS Rte 12F and Island, Hounsfield, NY

This 6.4 acre site is comprised of two privately-owned parcels: an intact, secured, multi-building former paper mill occupying 6.1 acres on the southern shore of the Black River; and a 0.3 acre island in the Black River, which was part of the former paper mill. The site is zoned Multi-Use. Potential contaminants include heavy metals, petroleum, and organic pollutants. Modern utilities service the site, including gas, electricity, and private water and sewer. The island is vacant and has no utility services. The site has been unoccupied for the past decade since the most recent venture failed in the early 2010s.

PetaWatt Properties, LLC (695 W End Ave, Park Pl), Carthage, NY

This 25.7 acre site is a former paper mill comprised of four privately-owned parcels holding several abandoned buildings in disrepair. The site is on the eastern shore of the Black River just north of downtown and is zoned Industrial. The site was a paper mill for over a century, undergoing several ownership changes. The site is currently privately owned by the cryptocurrency mining company PetaWatt Properties, LLC and property records indicate the presence of a cogeneration plant and a wastewater facility on the site. Potential contaminants include heavy metals, petroleum, and organic pollutants. Modern utilities now service the site, including gas, electricity, and public water and sewer. The site is a priority for assessment due to proximity to residential areas and the risks posed to the community. A large fire occurred onsite in 2021, and in 2024, police reported difficulty keeping salvagers, partiers, and the unhoused out of the site. Later in 2024, a man was nearly killed after trespassing and being electrocuted and severely burned after interfering with facilities onsite.

c. Identifying Additional Sites If funds remain after addressing priority sites, Jefferson County (County) will identify additional brownfields within the corridor using a structured and transparent process. The County will conduct a desktop review of Sanborn maps, historic aeriels, tax parcel records, and state remediation and spill databases to identify properties with long-term industrial or commercial uses, known releases, or indicators of hazardous building materials. Consultations with municipal officials—town supervisors, village mayors, planners, and code enforcement staff—will identify vacant, tax-delinquent, or community-flagged parcels. Listening sessions in corridor communities will surface sites of long-standing local concern.

A prioritization rubric will weigh environmental concern, redevelopment potential, proximity to sensitive populations, alignment with local revitalization plans, property-owner willingness, and opportunities to leverage concurrent public or private investment. The County has no shortage of available additional sites should one of the priority sites become non-viable for use of the grant funding; however, sites within the Black River corridor will be the prime target. This approach ensures that assessments remain focused, equitable, and strategically aligned with corridor-wide revitalization goals.

d. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans: The County’s reuse strategy builds on local and regional plans that emphasize reinvestment in historic industrial districts, expansion of workforce and mixed-income housing, downtown revitalization, and improved connections to the Black River. The 2019 City of Watertown Comprehensive Plan (Plan) encourages adaptive reuse of older industrial structures, infill housing, and enhanced multimodal access linking neighborhoods to the waterfront. The Plan specifically identifies brownfields as strategic sites of choice for redevelopment and specifically calls for pursuing funding opportunities to achieve this goal. The Plan also identifies the Black River as a consistent theme during public engagement events: “Most people felt it was a beautiful, but underutilized asset in the community. Many stated that the river has a reputation as being ‘unsafe’ or polluted.” Complementing the Comprehensive Plan, in the fall of 2019, the City set out to prepare a Revitalization and Redevelopment Design Plan for “Sewall’s Island and Factory Square” (SIFS plan), an area encompassing two priority sites. The planning process included numerous community and stakeholder engagement activities, a physical analysis of the study area, a market analysis to understand the development potential in the area, the creation of redevelopment concepts, and the development of a final plan including a phasing strategy and specific actions necessary to see through the plan’s implementation. Conducting

Phase 1 & 2 brownfield assessments are primary actions listed in the plan. In early 2023, the City adopted a new zoning ordinance and map that added a Waterfront Overlay District (WOD) so as to, “build on the setting of the river as a reinforcing asset to redevelopment.” As already noted, three of the priority sites lie within the WOD. The Jefferson County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) lists as an “imperative” continuing to develop the County’s urban areas into destinations with a range of business and housing options that generate economic activity and support a sense of place. The CEDS also notes that retaining and growing the existing wood and paper manufacturing industry in the County will require access to large amounts of water, power, and trucking, features innate to the priority sites. The New York State North Country Regional Economic Development Council (NCREDC) Strategic Plan prioritizes redevelopment within existing infrastructure corridors, revitalization of small-city centers, and creation of resilient, livable communities. Strategy five of the Strategic Plan specifies combating blight, increasing housing stock, and engaging residents in economic stimulation, all through identifying and investing in existing vacant or underutilized commercial sites .

Using the aforementioned plans as guides, the reuse strategy for sites in the City is to develop mixed-use neighborhoods that create connection to the Black River as a defining feature. Based on assessment results: existing structures will be demolished/removed or rehabilitated/repurposed, as appropriate; cleanup will be completed where needed; and new structures will be developed incorporating greenspace, energy efficiency, weather-resilience, renewable energy, and recreation. Outside the City, the revitalization strategy will focus on rehabilitating and repurposing the industrial sites for modern industrial operations or for mixed use neighborhood development. As within the City, assessment results will influence the strategy, as appropriate.

Various efforts have been made over several decades to revitalize the riverfront area throughout the County; however, these have been uncoordinated and have had limited success. Within this framework, the County will take a comprehensive approach to the assessment and will ensure a coherent assessment and reuse plan. This coordinated approach to brownfields will support the EPA’s “Great American Comeback Initiative” Pillars 1 & 3.

e. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy: Revitalizing the Jefferson County Black River industrial corridor will generate broad economic, environmental, and social benefits. Assessment and cleanup planning will reduce redevelopment barriers, enabling private investment in large, centrally located industrial parcels. All priority sites lie within 100-year floodplains and several municipalities in the County have experienced unprecedented stormwater flooding events within the past decade, and contamination is known or highly likely at all priority sites. A reuse strategy focused on reducing exposure to contamination, improving stormwater management, and increasing resilience to the impacts of extreme weather events like flooding and riverbank erosion will yield meaningful benefits under the Community-wide Assessment (CWA).

Jefferson County is currently undertaking a self-funded Housing Needs Assessment to develop a practical, evidence-based playbook of policies, incentives, and tools to expand and preserve housing options, strengthen affordability, and support sustainable growth over the next three to five years, while establishing a durable course for the decade ahead. In addition to identifying actionable policy and investment strategies, the housing assessment will develop a data foundation that helps developers, lenders, and community partners better understand local housing demand, site readiness, and market opportunities. A Brownfields CWA would dovetail with this housing assessment to facilitate adaptive reuse and infill housing, helping meet rising local demand for attainable units while strengthening neighborhood vitality.

As an urban area, the City has public parks that provide access to the Black River; however, they are underutilized largely because they are disconnected from one another and from residential and commercial areas. The City’s priority sites will provide opportunities to address these connection challenges by strategically expanding greenways and community connections to the Black River. In the County’s rural areas, site reuse in mill villages will emphasize commercial and/or industrial development that incorporates green design, flood-resilient features, and increased stormwater capacity to reduce the potential for downstream flooding.

Several renewable power facilities and substations are actively operating on Black River, making renewable energy facilitation both familiar and feasible. Redevelopment incorporating energy-efficient rehabilitation will align with the recently released 2025 New York State Energy Plan that reiterates state incentives and policies supporting such projects. Collectively, these outcomes will help transform long-blighted properties into community assets that support economic renewal and long-term resilience.

f. Resources Needed for Site Reuse: Jefferson County and its municipal partners can leverage a diverse suite of state and federal programs, including New York State’s Brownfields Opportunity Area (BOA) and waterfront

initiatives, NYSDEC resilience and water-quality programs, NYS EFC infrastructure funding, Empire State Development's mill-building and downtown revitalization tools, and financing from DANC and the Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency. Clarifying environmental conditions through this Assessment Grant will strengthen applications for these resources to support the completion of site assessment and subsequent reuse strategies at the priority sites, increasing the likelihood of coordinated redevelopment and infrastructure investment throughout the corridor.

g. Use of Existing Infrastructure: All priority sites lie within established infrastructure corridors served by public water, sewer, stormwater systems, transportation networks, and electric and broadband service. Redevelopment can therefore center on cleanup and reuse rather than costly new utility extensions. Where upgrades are required—such as modern electrical service, stormwater improvements, or stabilization of aging riverfront infrastructure—the County and its partners will pursue state and federal capital resources. Aligning brownfield assessment with existing infrastructure capacity will accelerate reinvestment and support the long-term viability of redevelopment.

(2) COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

a. The Community's Need for Funding: From its earliest development, Watertown's growth has been shaped by the Black River, which served as the community's economic and transportation backbone and supported its designation as the Jefferson County seat in 1805. Over time, the same corridor that enabled industrial growth has accumulated persistent economic, environmental, and public health challenges. These conditions are now concentrated within the Jefferson County Black River corridor, where legacy industrial uses continue to suppress reinvestment and redevelopment. Municipalities and property owners along the Black River lack the capacity to independently address environmental conditions that constrain reuse. Many former mills, factories, warehouses, and rail-adjacent properties require Phase I & Phase II environmental site assessments that exceed local fiscal capacity. Ownership is frequently fragmented among absentee or small-scale owners who lack the capital to undertake environmental due diligence or remediation planning, resulting in long-term vacancy, underutilization, and environmental uncertainty that deters private investment. Small population size, constrained municipal budgets, and a limited local tax base restrict the ability of corridor communities like those in the target area to pursue alternative funding sources for environmental assessment or cleanup. Without federal assistance, Jefferson County and the City of Watertown are unable to overcome the environmental uncertainty blocking redevelopment along the Black River. This Brownfields Assessment Grant is essential for identifying contamination, reducing risk for lenders and developers, and advancing productive reuse when market forces alone cannot support environmental investigation.

b. Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations: The Black River corridor contains Jefferson County's highest concentration of sensitive populations, including low-income renters, seniors, children, and individuals with disabilities. **These sensitive populations experience severe, persistent, and cumulative health and welfare burdens within the Black River corridor as a result of aging housing stock, deteriorated infrastructure, and close proximity to legacy industrial sites.** CDC 2023 PLACES data show that while countywide health outcomes already exceed national risk benchmarks, conditions intensify along the Black River, particularly within the City of Watertown, which contains the majority of corridor neighborhoods and industrial parcels. Housing conditions are a primary driver of these health and welfare impacts. According to the 2024 American Community Survey, approximately 66% of housing units in Watertown were built before 1978, compared to 56% countywide, increasing the likelihood of lead-based paint, asbestos-containing materials, moisture intrusion, and mold. These housing conditions are most prevalent in census tracts directly abutting the Black River, where older residential blocks are interspersed with former mills, warehouses, and rail-served industrial parcels. **Children, seniors, and individuals with respiratory, cognitive, or mobility impairments face heightened and ongoing exposure risks under these conditions.** Health indicators underscore the severity of these impacts. Countywide, frequent mental distress affects 17.6% of adults and short sleep duration affects 43.2%, both exceeding national averages. In Watertown, frequent mental distress rises to 18.9% and short sleep to 43.4%, reflecting elevated stress burdens associated with environmental conditions, housing instability, and degraded neighborhood environments within the corridor. Disability prevalence further compounds these risks. In Watertown, 31.7% of adults report at least one disability, with cognitive and mobility disabilities compared to 26% nationally. **For sensitive populations with disabilities or limited mobility, environmental hazards common in former industrial neighborhoods create persistent and unavoidable threats to health and safety.** By funding Phase I & Phase II environmental

site assessments, this grant will identify exposure pathways, inform cleanup and reuse planning, and directly reduce severe and ongoing human health risks for sensitive populations living near legacy industrial properties.

c. Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions: Jefferson County exhibits higher-than-national prevalence rates for multiple chronic diseases, with the most acute concentrations occurring within the Black River corridor. Countywide asthma prevalence is 11.2%, compared to 9.8% nationally, and obesity affects 37.8% of adults, compared to 32.9% nationally. These conditions intensify in the City of Watertown, where asthma reaches 12.0%, COPD reaches 8.3% versus 5.3% nationally, obesity increases to 40.6%, and stroke prevalence rises to 3.3% compared to 2.9% nationally. Because Watertown constitutes the largest population center of the Black River corridor, these elevated disease rates reflect core health conditions within the target area. CDC PLACES mapping demonstrates that these adverse health outcomes are not evenly distributed across the County. Elevated rates of asthma, COPD, coronary heart disease, stroke, and loneliness form a continuous band along the Black River, with the highest concentrations adjacent to former mills, rail corridors, fuel storage areas, and manufacturing parcels known or suspected to be brownfields. This corridor-aligned pattern confirms that the greater-than-normal disease incidence is geographically concentrated within the Black River corridor identified in Section 1a.

Disease (crude prevalence)	Jefferson County	City of Watertown	Village of Carthage	Village of Brownville
Asthma	11.2%	12.0%	12.0%	11.5%
Coronary Heart Disease	6.0%	6.7%	6.4%	7.1%
COPD	6.9%	8.3%	7.9%	7.6%
Stroke	3.1%	3.3%	3.4%	3.6%
Cancer	8.0%	8.1%	8.0%	10.0%
Loneliness	32.2%	32.6%	33.8%	29.9%

Recent CDC PLACES cancer mapping further reinforces this pattern, showing higher modeled cancer prevalence in river-adjacent census geographies compared to other areas of the County. While PLACES data do not establish causation, the geographic overlap between elevated disease prevalence, legacy industrial land use, and flood-prone riverfront environments indicates potential long-term exposure risks warranting further investigation. By funding Phase I & Phase II assessments, this grant will clarify contamination and exposure pathways and support reuse strategies that reduce environmental contributors to chronic disease and long-term health risk.

d. Economically Impoverished and Disproportionately Impacted Populations: Communities along the Black River corridor are among the most economically constrained in Jefferson County and disproportionately bear the negative environmental consequences of historic industrial development. The target area spans the County’s two Census Bureau–designated “persistent poverty” census tracts, and multiple priority sites are located within them. Countywide, 14.4% of residents receive food assistance, increasing to 19.8% in Watertown. Food insecurity, housing insecurity, risk of utility shutoff, and lack of reliable transportation are all higher in Watertown than the countywide averages. Because the City encompasses most riverfront neighborhoods within the corridor, these city-level indicators describe conditions experienced by the majority of households in the target area. Housing tenure and cost burden further constrain household capacity to avoid or address environmental risk. Approximately 55% of occupied housing units in Watertown are renter-occupied, compared to 33 % countywide, with the highest renter concentrations in census tracts immediately adjacent to the Black River and overlapping with legacy industrial sites. Nearly 45% of renter households spend more than 30% of their income on housing, limiting their ability to relocate or address environmental health concerns. Many pre-1978, renter-occupied buildings are located immediately adjacent to former mills, warehouses, and rail corridors that have never undergone environmental assessment. Without federal funding, neither tenants nor local governments can reliably identify exposure pathways related to soil contamination, vapor intrusion, or flood-mobilized pollutants. This Assessment Grant will reduce disproportionate impacts by clarifying environmental conditions and supporting equitable reuse of long-neglected sites.

e.f. Project Involvement and Project Roles: Jefferson County will engage a broad coalition of local organizations, municipal partners, businesses, and residents to ensure meaningful involvement throughout site identification, environmental assessment, and reuse planning within the Black River corridor. Community-based organizations, health and housing service providers, disability advocates, neighborhood and faith-based groups, local businesses, and municipal departments will assist with outreach, site access coordination, identification of community concerns, and integration of assessment findings into planning and revitalization efforts. Meaningful involvement will occur at defined decision points, including site prioritization, selection of sites for Phase I & Phase II assessments, and review of assessment findings and reuse concepts. Jefferson County will consider and

incorporate partner and community input into site selection, assessment scope refinement, and reuse planning and will adjust priorities where health, safety, or equity concerns are identified.

Organization / Entity	Mission / Focus	Point of Contact	Specific Involvement in Site Selection, Cleanup, and Reuse
Black River Brownfields Advisory Group	Resident- and stakeholder-led forum guiding corridor revitalization	Chair (TBD)	Participate in site selection and prioritization; review assessment findings; advise on cleanup approaches and reuse concepts; support community outreach
Watertown Urban Mission	Social services for low-income and at-risk households	Executive Director	Convene resident focus groups; identify health and safety concerns influencing site selection and cleanup priorities; assist with information distribution
North Country Family Health Center	Community health care and prevention	Community Health Director	Provide input on health indicators and exposure concerns; participate in risk communication related to assessment and cleanup
Transitional Living Services of NNY	Housing stability and supportive services	Program Manager	Engage residents in housing; identify housing-related environmental concerns; inform reuse planning tied to residential compatibility
Disabled Persons Action Organization	Advocacy and services for individuals with disabilities	Executive Director	Advise on accessibility needs; identify mobility and infrastructure barriers; contribute to inclusive reuse planning
Watertown City School District / Parent Groups	Support for children and families	Community Liaison	Engage families; identify child-specific safety concerns; inform site selection
Local Small Businesses along the Black River corridor	Commercial and light industrial activity	Individual Owners	Provide insight on operational constraints, contamination concerns, and redevelopment compatibility
City of Watertown Planning, Codes, and Engineering	Land use, permitting, and infrastructure	Department Heads	Coordinate site access; align assessment, cleanup, and capital planning
Development Authority of the North Country and Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency	Infrastructure, economic development, site readiness	Agency Directors	Support redevelopment feasibility analysis; coordinate infrastructure considerations; align cleanup with market-ready reuse
Neighborhood Associations and Faith-Based Groups	Resident-based advocacy and support	Designated Leaders	Assist with outreach, meeting logistics, translation, and identification of community priorities affecting site selection and reuse

Additional partners will be engaged as new communities and rural sites are identified through the countywide screening process.

g. Incorporating Community Input: Jefferson County will maintain an inclusive and transparent engagement process that offers both in-person and alternative participation options throughout the project. Quarterly meetings of the Black River Brownfields Advisory Group will review progress, discuss site prioritization, and evaluate reuse concepts, complemented by neighborhood listening sessions at accessible corridor locations with flexible scheduling, childcare, and translation services as needed. For residents unable to attend in person, the County will provide online surveys, web-based comment forms, and virtual engagement opportunities. Project updates and engagement opportunities will be communicated through the County website, an interactive Story Map, mailed notices, postings in community centers, libraries, and transit stops, and door-to-door distribution of printed materials for residents with limited internet access. Community liaisons through partner organizations will support engagement of residents directly affected by brownfield conditions. All community input will be documented, reviewed with the Advisory Group, and used to refine site prioritization, assessment scopes, and reuse concepts, with summaries of how input influenced decisions shared through meeting notes, the Story Map, and follow-up communications to ensure transparency and accountability.

(3) TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS

Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs

Task 1: Project Management, Procurement, and Reporting

a. Project Implementation: EPA-funded tasks/activities: Jefferson County will issue a competitive RFP to procure a qualified environmental professional (QEP) and planning/community engagement consultant. Once selected, the consultant will complete all technical and administrative work under the cooperative agreement, including project management, QAPP preparation and revisions, coordination with subcontractors, ACRES updates, financial and performance reporting, scheduling, and documentation required by EPA. The consultant will support site inventory updates, screening, engagement coordination, and preparation of all reporting deliverables. Jefferson County will perform contract oversight but will not bill staff time to the grant. The County will also coordinate with the Public Health Service if Phase II findings warrant health monitoring. Non-EPA resources: Jefferson County will contribute in-kind staff time for procurement, coordination with partners, access negotiations, and participation in the Advisory Group.

b. Anticipated Project Schedule

- Months 1–3: Issue RFP; procure consultants; establish advisory group
- Months 1–48: Ongoing project management and reporting; coordination with EPA
- Quarterly: Progress reports; community-engagement coordination
- End of project: Grant closeout

c. Task/Activity Lead: Jefferson County Department of Planning and Community Development, with all technical activities performed by the consultant team.

d. Outputs: Executed consultant contract(s); procurement documentation; QAPP; quarterly and final EPA reports; ACRES updates; Advisory Group materials; project website and communications.

Task 2: Site Inventory, Prioritization, Community Engagement, Access, and Plan Coordination

a. Project Implementation: EPA-funded tasks/activities: The consultant will update the County’s brownfields inventory; conduct desktop research; review Sanborn maps, parcel data, and DEC records; and apply a prioritization rubric incorporating community input from the priority site areas and other disadvantaged neighborhoods. The consultant will conduct owner outreach, negotiate access agreements, and identify 10–15 sites for Phase I and Phase II assessments. The consultant will lead community engagement, coordinate with SIFS and Comprehensive Plan priorities, and support workshops, listening sessions, Story Maps, and surveys. Engagement will focus on priority sites and other communities along the Black River corridor. If participant support is used for community liaisons, stipends will follow local practice with documentation maintained. Non-EPA resources: Local partners (City of Watertown, DANC, JCIDA) will share relevant site data and redevelopment context.

b. Anticipated Project Schedule: Months 3–12: Inventory development, engagement, access. Months 12–48: Dynamic inventory maintenance and site additions.

c. Task/Activity Lead: Consultant team; County provides oversight and approvals.

d. Outputs: Updated inventory; prioritization matrix; access agreements; community workshops; engagement materials; public-facing maps and Story Maps; and summaries.

Task 3: Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs), Phase II ESAs, Cleanup and Reuse Planning

a. Project Implementation: EPA-funded tasks/activities: The consultant will conduct ASTM-compliant Phase I ESAs at priority sites, beginning with the Black River corridor within the City of Watertown. Work includes reconnaissance, interviews, historical research, and regulatory review. Findings will directly inform community-supported reuse planning. Where Phase I ESAs identify RECs, the consultant will conduct Phase II investigations, including soil, groundwater, vapor, and building-materials sampling. The consultant will prepare sampling plans, HASPs, analytical summaries, and delineation reports. The County will coordinate with the Public Health Service if contaminants warrant monitoring. The consultant will prepare site-specific and area-wide reuse scenarios, prepare ABCAs (if applicable), and develop planning-level diagrams and analyses.

b. Schedule: Rolling completion from Month 3 through Month 48.

c. Lead: Environmental consultant/QEP and planning consultant with technical input from the environmental consultant.

d. Outputs: 10–15 Phase I ESAs; updated risk profiles; reuse concepts; ABCAs; 4–6 Phase II ESAs; contamination delineation to support cleanup planning.

3.e. Cost Estimates: Project cost estimates are provided by task below. The County will not charge indirect costs and does not estimate administrative costs exceeding 5% of the total EPA funds requested. As shown below, well over 40% of grant funds are allocated to site specific work.

Task 1: Total: \$24,500 - All costs reflect consultant labor for management, reporting, and compliance. Project management and reporting: \$19,950 = \$175/hr. x 114 hrs. Travel: \$4,550 to Regional/State Brownfields Conferences (Location TBD): (\$2,275/trip/person (\$1,000 airfare/ground transit + \$600 hotel + \$400 per diem + \$275 registration) * 2 conferences)

Task 2: Total: \$84,000 - Inventory and prioritization: Based on consultant labor for research, GIS analysis, and mapping support. \$33,950 = \$175/hr. x 194 hrs.

Community Engagement, Access, and Plan Coordination: Reflect consultant hours for planning, facilitation, graphics, and technical review. \$50,050 = \$4,700 public webpage, written materials, etc. + \$20,500 community events (5 events @ \$4,100/event) + \$24,850 (142 hrs * \$175/hr)

Task 3: Total: \$391,500 - Phase I assessments: Reflect standard QEP labor rates and site complexity. \$31,500 = 7 sites x \$4,500 (average). Phase II: Based on sampling intensity, subcontractor costs, and laboratory fees.

Phase II ESAs: \$179,500 = 5 sites x \$35,900 each (average). QAPP: \$28,000 = \$8,000 generic QAPP + \$20,000 (\$4,000/specific QAPP/SAP * 5 sites). RBM surveys: \$52,500 = \$10,500/site * 5 sites. Site reuse plans:

\$100,000 = \$20,000/plan x 5 sites.

Budget Category	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Total
Personnel	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Fringe Benefits	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Contractual	\$24,500	\$84,000	\$391,500	\$500,000
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Direct Costs	\$24,500	\$84,000	\$391,500	\$500,000
Indirect Costs	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Budget	\$24,500	\$84,000	\$391,500	\$500,000

3.f. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results - Task 1: Measured through timely consultant deliverables, reporting milestones, ACRES updates, and adherence to the project schedule.

Task 2: Number of sites inventoried and prioritized; access agreements secured; updates to public-facing tools; number and quality of engagement events; alignment with BOA and Comprehensive Plan objectives.

Task 3: Number of ESAs completed; completion of sampling plans and Phase II reports; use of findings in reuse planning; reuse concepts prepared.

(4) PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE Programmatic Capability

a. Organizational Capacity; b. Organizational Structure; c. Description of Key Staff

Jefferson County has the administrative, financial, and programmatic capacity to oversee grant tasks and to carry out and manage the Brownfields Assessment Grant's programmatic, administrative, and financial requirements. The County maintains documented procurement, fiscal control, and reporting procedures aligned with federal Uniform Guidance and routinely applies these systems across federal and state funding programs. Jefferson County has extensive experience administering grants with eligibility, reporting, procurement, and compliance requirements comparable to EPA Brownfields grants and is prepared to meet all EPA-specific obligations, including quarterly reporting and ACRES data entry. The County's organizational structure is designed to ensure the timely and successful expenditure of funds and completion of all grant requirements. Upon award, the Department of Planning and Community Development will serve as the lead department and will coordinate closely with the County Treasurer's Office, Purchasing Department, Real Property Department, Public Health Department, and County Attorney's Office. This structure provides clear separation of duties, strong internal controls, and integrated technical support. Financial management and reporting are centralized through the Treasurer's Office, procurement and contract administration are overseen by Purchasing using standardized competitive procedures, and legal, data, and public health expertise are provided through established interdepartmental coordination protocols.

Key staff who will successfully administer the grant include Hartley Bonisteel Schweitzer, AICP, Director of Planning and Community Development, who serves as the County's authorized program lead with responsibility for overall grant oversight, compliance with federal requirements, consultant procurement coordination, and formal reporting and communication with EPA. Aileen Anderson, the County's Community Development Coordinator, serves as the day-to-day program manager, managing grant administration, consultant coordination,

deliverable tracking, advisory group support, and community engagement. The Coordinator brings extensive federal grants management expertise, including 13 years with the United States Department of Agriculture as a GMCP-certified Senior Grants Management Specialist overseeing complex grant portfolios. A Senior Planner, reporting to the Director, provides technical planning support, assists with site prioritization and reuse planning, and coordinates technical input from partner departments. Key staff bring extensive experience in federal and state grant management, environmental review under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)-aligned programs, countywide planning initiatives, procurement, community engagement, and interagency coordination. Together, this team provides the expertise, redundancy, and institutional capacity necessary to successfully implement the Brownfields Assessment Grant.

d. Acquiring Additional Resources: Jefferson County will issue a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) to procure qualified environmental and planning consultants, with equal weighting given to environmental assessment experience and community engagement/reuse planning expertise. This procurement approach ensures that environmental work, community priorities, and redevelopment planning proceed in a unified manner. The County will follow all competitive procurement requirements in 2 CFR Part 200, 2 CFR Part 1500, and 40 CFR Part 33, including implementation of the Six Good-Faith Efforts for DBE participation. Contractors will not have been involved in drafting the RFP or scope of work. The County maintains a standardized procurement process through its Purchasing Department to ensure transparency, competitive pricing, and selection based on qualifications and cost reasonableness. Consultants will operate under County supervision and will not act as subrecipients.

Past Performance and Accomplishments

f. Has Not Received an EPA Brownfields Grant but Has Received Other Federal or Non-Federal Financial Assistance Agreements Jefferson County has not previously received an EPA Brownfields Grant but has received other assistance agreements which were completed on time, on budget and in compliance with regulations.

Grant Agency	Awarded Grant \$	Date Award/Completed	Purpose	Outputs	Accomplishments
Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) - HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) Grant	\$35,660,254.80 since 1994 – 2023 Award (\$903,345) 2024 Award (\$766,272.03) 2025 Award (\$938,996.80)	1994 to current	To provide grants for affordable housing assistance to low-to-moderate income families across the three-county region.	Homeowner-occupied rehabilitation and new rental construction to increase affordable housing units.	2023: 22 units of homeowner-occupied rehabilitation. 2024: 19 units of homeowner-occupied rehabilitation and 5 units of new rental construction. 2025: 17 units of homeowner-occupied rehabilitation & 24 units of existing rental rehabilitation.
NYS Homes and Comm. Renewal/ Affordable Housing Corp (HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding)	\$13,000,000 since 2005 - 2023: \$1,000,000; 2024: \$750,000; 2025: \$750,000	2005 to current	Home improvement projects to correct structural defects that threaten health and safety of the residents, and prolong home life.	Remediation of code deficiencies in low-mod income homeowner dwellings	396 Residential Units Assisted

(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements: During the administration of the above-mentioned grants, Jefferson County officials and interested parties met at milestones to assess progress and implement necessary changes. A review was conducted to assess overall success and identify areas for improvement upon conclusion and submission of the grants to the awarding agency, per grant requirements. Reporting requirements within each grant (monthly or quarterly) were completed on time and submitted in the required report formats. No corrective actions were required during the administration of the grants.

Jefferson County, NY
Threshold Criteria for Community-Wide Assessment Grants

III.B.1. Applicant Eligibility

I affirm that my organization is a city, town, or county and therefore, eligible to apply for this assessment grant.

III.B.1.a. Applicant Type and Eligibility Demonstration

The County of Jefferson is eligible to apply for the EPA Brownfields Community-wide Assessment Grant as a County (a General Purpose Unit of Local Government).

III.B.1.b. Exemption Under 501(c)(4)

As a General Purpose Unit of Local Government, the County is not one of the two types of organizations exempt under Section 501(c)(4) and so is not exempt from Federal taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the IRC.

III.B.2. Community Involvement

Jefferson County will engage a broad coalition of local organizations, municipal partners, businesses, and residents to ensure meaningful involvement throughout site identification, environmental assessment, and reuse planning within the Black River Corridor. Community-based organizations, health and housing service providers, disability advocates, neighborhood and faith-based groups, local businesses, and municipal departments will assist with outreach, site access coordination, identification of community concerns, and integration of assessment findings into planning and revitalization efforts. Meaningful involvement will occur at defined decision points, including site prioritization, selection of sites for Phase I & Phase II assessments, and review of assessment findings and reuse concepts. Jefferson County will consider and incorporate partner and community input into site selection, assessment scope refinement, and reuse planning and will adjust priorities where health, safety, or equity concerns are identified. Additional partners will be engaged as new communities and rural sites are identified through the countywide screening process.

Organization / Entity	Mission / Focus	Point of Contact	Specific Involvement in Site Selection, Cleanup, and Reuse
Black River Brownfields Advisory Group	Resident- and stakeholder-led forum guiding corridor revitalization	Chair (TBD)	Participate in site selection and prioritization; review assessment findings; advise on cleanup approaches and reuse concepts; support community outreach
Watertown Urban Mission	Social services for low-income and at-risk households	Executive Director	Convene resident focus groups; identify health and safety concerns influencing site selection and cleanup priorities;

			assist with information distribution
North Country Family Health Center	Community health care and prevention	Community Health Director	Provide input on health indicators and exposure concerns; participate in risk communication related to assessment and cleanup
Transitional Living Services of NNY	Housing stability and supportive services	Program Manager	Engage residents in housing; identify housing-related environmental concerns; inform reuse planning tied to residential compatibility
Disabled Persons Action Organization	Advocacy and services for individuals with disabilities	Executive Director	Advise on accessibility needs; identify mobility and infrastructure barriers; contribute to inclusive reuse planning
Watertown City School District / Parent Groups	Support for children and families	Community Liaison	Engage families; identify child-specific safety concerns; inform site selection
Local Small Businesses along the Black River Corridor	Commercial and light industrial activity	Individual Owners	Provide insight on operational constraints, contamination concerns, and redevelopment compatibility
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evaluate reuse concepts, complemented by neighborhood listening sessions at accessible corridor locations with flexible scheduling, childcare, and translation services as needed. For residents unable to attend in person, the County will provide online surveys, web-based comment forms, and virtual engagement opportunities. Project updates and engagement opportunities will be communicated through the County website, an interactive Story Map, mailed notices, postings in community centers, libraries, and transit stops, and door-to-door distribution of printed materials for residents with limited internet access. Community liaisons through partner organizations will support engagement of residents directly affected by brownfield conditions. All community input will be documented, reviewed with the Advisory Group, and used to refine site prioritization, assessment scopes, and reuse concepts, with summaries of how input influenced decisions shared through meeting notes, the Story Map, and follow-up communications to ensure transparency and accountability.

III.B.3. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds

I affirm that my organization does not have an active EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant nor Multipurpose Grant.

III.B.4. Contractors and Named Subrecipients

Not applicable - contractor has not been procured at the time of application submission. Not applicable - subrecipients are not anticipated for this project.