

CHEROKEE COUNTY

110 RAILROAD AVENUE
GAFFNEY, SC 29340-3136
TELEPHONE (864) 487-2560
TELEFAX (864) 487-2594



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
MERV BISHOP
ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
KRISTY BRADLEY

COUNTY COUNCIL:

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MASTER CLERK TO COUNCIL
DORIS PEARSON

1. Applicant Identification
Cherokee County, SC
110 Railroad Avenue
Gaffney, SC 29340
2. Website URL: <https://www.cherokeecountysc.gov>
3. Funding Requested
 - a. Assessment Grant Type: Community-wide
 - b. Federal Funds Requested: \$500,000
4. Location
 - a) City of Gaffney, Town of Blacksburg
 - b) Cherokee County
 - c) South Carolina
5. Target Area and Priority Site Information
 - Target area: Census Tracts **450219702.01**, 450219702.03, 450219703.01, 450219703.02, and **450219704.01**
Bolded census tracts are Opportunity Zones
 - Priority sites
 - River Site – Southwest corner of River Drive and Victory Trail Road (Not numbered), Gaffney, SC 29340
 - DYS LLC Site – Northeast corner of Victory Trail Road and Cherokee Avenue, Gaffney, SC 29340
 - Exit 100 Site – 123 Simper Road, Blacksburg, SC 29702
6. Contacts
 - a. Project Director
Kenneth Moon
Executive Director – Cherokee County Development Board
864-206-2805
moonk@sccsc.edu
101 Campus Drive
Gaffney, SC 29341

b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Elected Official

Timothy Spencer
Council Chairman
864-761-6707

████████████████████
110 Railroad Avenue
Gaffney, SC 29340

7. Population

City of Gaffney, SC – 12,612 (US Census: 2023: ACS: 5-year Estimates)

Town of Blacksburg, SC – 2,158 (US Census: 2023: ACS: 5-year Estimates)

8. Other Factors

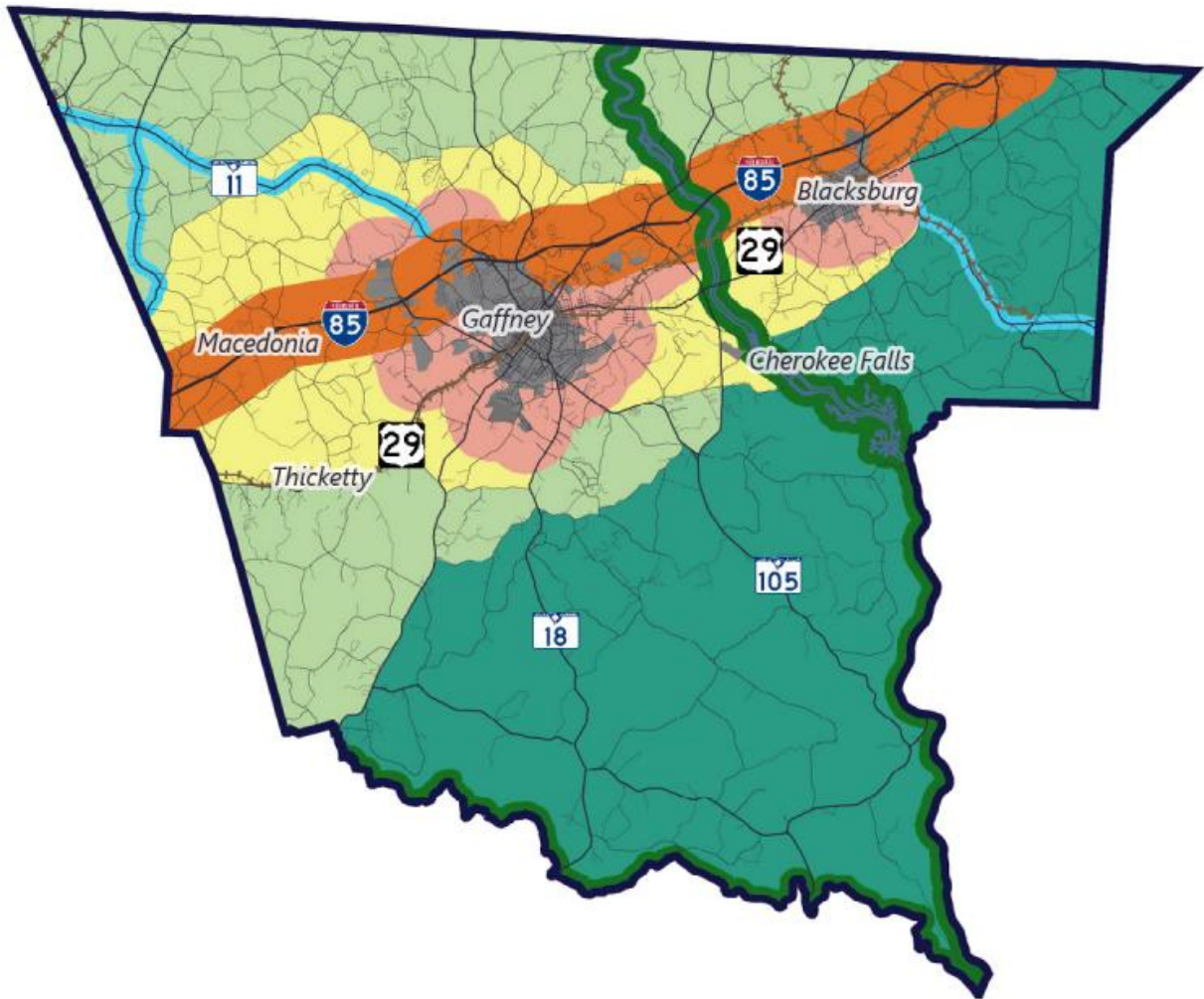
Other Factors	Page #
Community population is 15,000 or less.	N/A
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian Tribe or United States Territory.	N/A
The priority site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	1-2
The priority site(s) is adjacent to a body of water (i.e., the border of the 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).	2
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	1-3
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	3
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	3
The proposed project will improve local resilience to impacts of extreme weather events and natural disasters.	3
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).	9
The target area(s) is impacted by a coal-fired power plant that has recently closed (2015 or later) or is closing	N/A

9. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority









See attached.

10. Releasing Copies of Applications

Not Applicable.



LEGEND

- | | |
|--|---|
|  I-85 Corridor |  Agriculture / Countryside Residential |
|  Primary Growth Area |  Rural Reserve |
|  Suburban Growth Area |  Scenic Byways |
| |  River Corridors |
| |  Municipal Jurisdiction |



Target area is located along the I-85 Corridor



SC DEPARTMENT of
**ENVIRONMENTAL
SERVICES**

Juli E. Blalock, Chief
Bureau of Land and Waste Management
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, SC 29201

January 7, 2026

Aditi Chakravarty
Region 4 Brownfields Coordinator
United States Environmental Protection Agency
61 Forsyth Street SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-8960

RE: EPA Brownfields Community-Wide Assessment Grant
Cherokee County, South Carolina

Dear Ms. Chakravarty:

The South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES), the State's environmental authority, acknowledges and fully supports Cherokee County's application for a Brownfields Community-Wide Assessment Grant. The funding will be primarily focused on the I-85 corridor.

SCDES appreciates your consideration of the application and hopes for a favorable outcome. Your positive response will assist Cherokee County in its efforts to revitalize properties in their communities. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Chris Kaibery, member of my staff, at 803-898-0924 or christopher.kaibery@des.sc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Juli E. Blalock".

Juli E. Blalock, Chief
Bureau of Land and Waste Management

cc: Betsy Seals, Area Director, Upstate BRLS
Preston Mousseau, Manager, Brownfields Program
Chris Kaibery, Project Manager, Brownfields Program



**Cherokee County, SC
FY26 Brownfields Community-Wide
Assessment Grant**

Narrative



1. Project Area Description and Plans for Revitalization; Target Area and Brownfields

1.a. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area - Cherokee County, South Carolina (Geographic Area for this grant; population 56,299¹), has a rich economic history rooted in manufacturing and textiles, which once thrived along the I-85 corridor between Charlotte, NC and Atlanta, GA. For decades, industries such as textile mills, brick manufacturing, and defense manufacturing (e.g., the DYS LLC Industrial Property, formerly used for MK-19 grenade manufacturing and testing) drove local employment and growth. However, the decline of domestic manufacturing and shifts in industrial practices left behind vacant, contaminated sites that now hinder economic revitalization. The closure of facilities like the former Boren Brick plant (River Drive Site, 237 acres) has resulted in blight, environmental concerns, and lost opportunities for job creation.

Today, the county’s economy is transitioning toward retail, logistics, and advanced manufacturing, but progress is stalled by the legacy of underutilized brownfield sites. **The I-85 Corridor (Target Area for this grant: Census Tracts 9702.01, 9702.03, 9703.01, 9703.02, 9704.01)**—a critical economic artery connecting major Southeastern markets like Charlotte, Atlanta, and Greenville-Spartanburg—remains chronically underdeveloped largely due to these challenges. Cherokee County faces systemic barriers to growth, exacerbated by socioeconomic disparities and environmental liabilities. **Persistent poverty and low incomes** are one of the challenges faced by Cherokee County. The county’s median household income (\$49,047) lags behind South Carolina (\$66,818) and the U.S. (\$78,538).¹ Poverty rates as high as 43.2% (vs 12.4% nationally) in the target area further impact growth and development, and have a disproportionate impact on **sensitive populations in the community (children, blacks/African Americans, and the impoverished)**.¹

Addressing brownfields along the I-85 Corridor is critical to Cherokee County’s economic future. By conducting Phase I/II Environmental Site Assessments made possible by this grant funding, the county will:

- **Unlock 1,000+ acres** for redevelopment, attracting advanced manufacturing and retail.
- **Create jobs** in tracts like 9703.02 (unemployment: 7.0%) and 9702.01 (unemployment: 7.1%).¹
- **Leverage Opportunity Zones** (tracts 9703.02 and 9704.01) to incentivize private investment.
- **Improve public health** by mitigating contaminants linked to elevated rates of respiratory illness and cancer.

This grant will catalyze a transformative shift from blight to opportunity, aligning with **Cherokee County’s vision to become a regional hub for commerce and innovation**.

1.b. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s) - Cherokee County’s I-85 Corridor is home to a variety of brownfields sites ranging from former industrial sites, to filling stations, and former defense manufacturing facilities. Cherokee County has identified 8 key brownfield sites accounting for over 1,000 acres in the target area. The County has identified over 15 additional potential sites (23 total sites). Redevelopment of priority sites and other brownfields sites is a critical step toward the creation of higher paying jobs in a community with a 7% unemployment rate and where 43.2% of the population lives below the poverty line.¹ Commercial and retail redevelopment of sites such as the former gas station at the Exit 100 site will remove blighted, underutilized properties from the community while creating jobs, bolstering the local economy, alleviating crime, and creating food security. The County has identified the three priority sites described below:

River Drive Site	Acreage: 237 acres	Location: River Drive (Not numbered), Gaffney, SC (CT – 9703.02)
Past Land Use: This site was historically occupied by the Boren Clay Products Company and utilized for the mining of clay for bricks and brick production. Clay mining in the region dates to the early nineteenth century with operations ending at this site during the early 2010’s.		
Current Land Use / Site Conditions: The 237-acre site is currently undeveloped with no structures remaining. The site is located adjacent to Cherokee Creek and portions of the site are in a federally designated flood plain. Portions of the site are still impacted by forming mining operations. No displacement is anticipated due to this redevelopment.		
Environmental Concerns: Potential contaminants include heavy metals such as lead, arsenic, and cadmium directly associated with the mining of clay as well as petroleum products associated with equipment and machinery from mining operations which pose a risk to site soils and nearby waterways. Clay mining can also result in acid mine drainage and the airborne release of heavy metals and silica leading to respiratory diseases including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease		

¹ 2023: ACS: 5-year Estimates



Cherokee County, SC
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and asthma.

Reuse/Redevelopment Plans: This site will be redeveloped into the **River Drive Industrial Park** providing space for advanced manufacturing operations.

DYS LLC Site	Acreage: 234.5 acres	Location: Victory Trail Road (Not numbered), Gaffney, SC (CT – 9703.02)
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Past Land Use: This site was historically occupied by a textile manufacturing facility operating from the late 1970s until 2007 when DYS opened an MK-19 grenade manufacturing and testing facility which operated on-site until 2017.

Current Land Use / Site Conditions: The 234.5-acre site is currently vacant with remnant structures, including two closed wastewater lagoons. A portion of the original manufacturing facility is occupied by American Decorative Fabrics; however, it is no longer part of the DYS site and will remain in operation. No displacement of current operations is anticipated. **The site is located adjacent to the Broad River and portions of the site are in a federally designated flood plain.**

Environmental Concerns: Potential contaminants include volatile organic compounds (VOCs), semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs), solvents, petroleum products, heavy metals, and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

Reuse/Redevelopment Plans: This site will be redeveloped into an industrial park providing space for advanced manufacturing operations.

Exit 100 Site	Acreage: 5.58 acres	Location: 123 Simper Rd, Blacksburg, SC (CT 9704.01)
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Past Land Use: This site was formerly occupied by a large truck stop/filling station dating back to the late 1980s; however, in 2017, the facility was closed due to the formation of a large sinkhole on the site.

Current Land Use / Site Conditions: There are currently no on-site operations. The site structures have been demolished; however, the sink hole still poses a problem. No displacement is anticipated due to this redevelopment.

Environmental Concerns: Potential contaminants include petroleum products, VOCs, SVOCs, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) associated with the former fueling operations.

Reuse/Redevelopment Plans: The site is located adjacent to the I-85 exit 100 off-ramp. Current redevelopment plans consist of multi-unit retail/commercial development including tenants offering fresh food options.

1.c. Identifying Additional Sites - In addition to the priority sites, more than 20 additional potential brownfield sites have been identified with plans to expand the inventory through regional partnerships. A Brownfields Task Force (BTF) will prioritize sites using ranking criteria which includes redevelopment viability, economic impact, contamination risk, community input, **impact on underserved and disadvantaged communities**, and alignment with county strategic plans. After review and ranking by the BTF, top-ranked sites will advance for assessment.

Revitalization of the Target Area

1.d. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans - Cherokee County will utilize the Appalachian Council of Governments *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* as our guiding framework for economic revitalization. The redevelopment of three priority brownfields directly advances this strategy through targeted implementation of its core priorities:

1) Fostering Economic Prosperity through Cluster Development - The transformation of the **River Drive Site** and **DYS LLC Site** into modern industrial facilities aligns with our regional advanced manufacturing/logistics cluster development goals. These remediated properties will provide asset-based growth opportunities through upgraded infrastructure and flexible industrial space, supporting advanced manufacturing such as electric vehicle component manufacturing, industrial automation systems, precision machining operations, and composite materials production industries identified as key regional economic drivers.

2) Cultivating Entrepreneurship & Innovation - Redevelopment of the **Exit 100 Site** into a retail/commercial hub creates prime space for small business incubation along the I-85 corridor. This strategic location will house retail development supporting emerging concepts in hospitality and service industries.

3) Expanding Development-Ready Inventory - All three site conversions directly address the strategy's site readiness objectives by transforming blighted properties into:

- **River Drive/DYS Sites:** 471.5 acres of rail-served industrial land with utility capacity for immediate build-to-suit development
- **Exit 100 Site:** A prime multi-tenant commercial/retail site with space for tenants providing fresh food options, with highway visibility, and existing traffic counts exceeding 25,000 vehicles/day.



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The strategic revitalization of the I-85 Corridor (target area) brownfields serves as the foundation for Cherokee County's sustainable economic vision. Utilizing this grant, the County intends to develop a comprehensive **Brownfields Revitalization Plan** that functions as both technical roadmap and community commitment. This dynamic document will position the county as a local leader in brownfields innovation through replicable redevelopment models while rigorously aligning with Cherokee County's core priorities. It will establish measurable evaluation metrics to track reuse outcomes against specific economic indicators. By systematically converting corridor blight into catalytic development opportunities, the plan will institutionalize a community-driven approach where each remediated property advances community-specific objectives while contributing to broader countywide economic transformation, ensuring every intervention directly supports both localized needs and regional growth goals. Through this targeted brownfield redevelopment, Cherokee County will activate underutilized assets to simultaneously remove barriers to investment, create job-ready infrastructure, and stimulate growth across multiple economic sectors - achieving comprehensive strategy implementation through focused property reuse.

1.e. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy - The strategic redevelopment of Cherokee County's three priority brownfield sites generates targeted economic benefits through distinct yet complementary pathways. The **River Drive and DYS LLC sites** transformation into advanced manufacturing hubs creates high-wage technical jobs, capitalizing on the local workforce's manufacturing experience, while establishing critical supplier networks for regional industries such as the automotive and aerospace industries. Simultaneously, redevelopment of these sites strengthens the county's position in regional supply chains, attracting distribution centers and value-added processing facilities. Redevelopment of the **Exit 100 Site** lays the groundwork for establishing a new commercial corridor and directly addresses community needs through the facilitation of small business creation, fostering local retail entrepreneurship while creating accessible service-sector employment. Together, these sites form an economic ecosystem where the industrial zones' higher-wage jobs stimulate consumer spending that sustains commercial businesses, while the commercial hub's amenities, including much needed supermarkets, help attract and retain industrial workforce talent.

This strategy specifically addresses historical economic disparities by locating opportunities across different skill levels and sectors - from precision manufacturing at the River Drive Site to entry-level retail positions at the Exit 100 Site - ensuring inclusive growth. The sites' geographic distribution across the county also prevents economic activity from concentrating in single areas, promoting balanced regional development. By activating these three strategic properties, the county simultaneously removes environmental liabilities, recaptures underutilized land, addresses food insecurity, and creates interconnected economic engines that reinforce each other's success.

Redevelopment of the **River Drive Site** and **DYS LLC Site** (both partially located in flood plains) **will increase flood resilience** by incorporating building materials and features such as permeable pavements, elevated building pads, and bioswale networks to efficiently manage stormwater, transforming former vulnerabilities into resilience assets, ensuring continued economic functionality during disruptions while protecting adjacent communities from cascading disaster impacts. **Redevelopment of the priority sites will also incorporate energy efficient measures** including solar outdoor lighting, motion activated LED fixtures, IECC 2021 compliant insulation, and smart HVAC systems.

Strategy for Leveraging Resources

1.f. Resources Needed for Site Reuse - Cherokee County possesses the governmental standing to pursue multi-level funding opportunities essential for comprehensive brownfield revitalization. This EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant serves as a catalytic tool, enabling strategic prioritization of contaminated properties while preserving additional public and private funding sources for implementation-phase financing. With a documented history of successful grant acquisition, the County will strategically layer funding sources to maximize target area redevelopment. Example funding sources include:



Cherokee County, SC
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Funding	Description
US EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant (federal) (up to \$4 million)	Funds the cleanup and remediation of brownfields sites.
SC Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (federal/state)	Funds the cleanup and remediation of brownfields sites.
SCDES Brownfields Voluntary Cleanup Program (state)	Encourages private development of brownfields sites through tax incentives.
HUD Community Development Block Grant (federal) (up to \$100k)	Supports community development activities aimed at improving the quality of life from low- and moderate-income individuals including site reuse and development.
US EDA Grants (federal) (various funding amounts)	US EDA has a wide variety of grants and funding opportunities that support economic development and site reuse.

I.g. Use of Existing Infrastructure - Cherokee County's target area along the I-85 corridor benefits from established infrastructure including state-maintained arterial roads, regional water system connections, and industrial-capacity utilities at priority sites like the **River Drive Site**. While current wastewater capacity at many sites meet baseline redevelopment needs, the County has recently secured over \$7M in SC Rural Infrastructure Authority funding to address identified water capacity improvements. If needed, Cherokee County has the ability to pursue supplemental grants through programs including EPA WIFIA, ARC POWER Initiative, USDA, and EDA Public Works grants to support future brownfield redevelopment and adaptive reuse requirements.

2. Community Need and Community Engagement; Community Need

2.a. The Community's Need for Funding - Cherokee County's 2023 estimated population is approximately 56,299.² The median household income in the target area is \$49,047 (CT 9702.01: \$52,390; CT 9702.03: \$48,771; CT 9703.01: \$46,773; **CT 9703.02: \$26,726**; CT 9704.01: \$39,884), significantly below South Carolina's \$66,818 and the national \$78,538.² Approximately 99% of the County's 2025-2026 operating budget is allotted to basic county services and programs and general overhead with only 1% of the budget allotted to Economic Development. **The low income of the county** means property tax increases or business licensing fee increases are not viable, limiting local capacity to fund environmental assessments and remediation. The EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant is essential to initiate environmental assessments and planning to unlock private and public investment along the I-85 corridor (target area) to facilitate subsequent redevelopment/reuse of brownfields sites.

2.b. Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations - Sensitive populations in the target area include **children, blacks/African Americans, and the impoverished** (See table below). **Children under the age of 5 years make up a significant percentage of the population in the target area** (CT 9702.01: 11.1%; CT 9702.03: 9.4%; CT 9703.01: 7.4%; CT 9703.02: 5.2%; CT 9704.01: 6.3%) compared to County (5.9%), State (5.5%), and National (5.7%) averages.² **Blacks/African Americans make up more than three times the National population percentage (5.7%)** in several of the target area census tracts (**CT 9702.03: 43.3%**; **CT 9703.01: 41.7%**; **CT 9703.02: 42.6%**; CT 9704.01: 9.6%; CT 9702.01: 25.7%).² And the County's poverty rate is 18.5% (CT 9702.01: 6.8%; CT 9702.03: 15.7%; CT 9703.01: 12.9%; **CT 9703.02: 43.2%**; **CT 9704.01: 23.6%**), exceeding the state rate of 14.2% and the national rate of 12.4%.²

Demographics	CT – 9702.01	CT – 9702.03	CT – 9703.01	CT – 9703.02	CT – 9704.01	County	State	National
Population under 5 years ²	11.1%	9.4%	7.4%	5.2%	6.3%	5.9%	5.5%	5.7%
Black or African American ²	25.7%	43.3%	41.7%	42.6%	9.6%	18.9%	25.3%	12.4%
Population below poverty level ²	6.8%	15.7%	12.9%	43.2%	23.6%	18.5%	14.2%	12.4%
Median Income ²	\$52,390	\$48,771	\$46,773	\$26,726	\$39,884	\$49,047	\$66,818	\$78,538
Unemployment Rate ²	7.1%	7.0%	3.8%	7.0%	5.0%	3.6%	3.0%	3.3%

*Shaded cells indicate exceedances of State and/or County values.

Crime within the target areas is a significant welfare concern for sensitive populations. According to CrimeGrade.org, Cherokee County received an Overall Crime Grade of D, meaning that the crime rate is higher than the average US county. Several communities in the central part of the county (which are included in the target area), received Overall Crime Grades of F. Additionally, Cherokee County ranks in the 18th percentile for

² 2023: ACS: 5-year Estimates



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safety. Meaning that 82% of counties in the US are safer than Cherokee County.³ According to a 2025 study, *The Relationship Between Poverty and Crime*, poverty creates predispositions toward crime with factors such as economic desperation, insufficient employment opportunities, and socioeconomic inequalities significantly influencing crime rates.⁴ Data from the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program indicates that in 2024, both violent crime and property crime rates were nearly three times as high in communities with a poverty rate of 20% or higher compared to communities with a poverty rate of 10% or lower.⁵ In situations where individuals lack access to basic necessities like food, shelter, and clothing, they may turn to crime as a means of survival. This is particularly true for crimes such as theft, robbery, and burglary, where the primary motivation is economic gain. **The strategic revitalization of priority brownfield sites such as the River Drive and DYS LLC Sites will serve as an economic catalyst, attracting private investment while generating employment opportunities that elevate household incomes creating upward mobility pathways through direct job creation. This strategy will create living-wage jobs that will serve to decrease poverty-related crime.**

Food insecurity is another significant welfare concern for sensitive populations within the target area, particularly children. Cherokee County's pressing challenge of food insecurity, where 47% of SNAP recipients are children and three census tracts within the target area (702.01, 703.01, and 703.02)⁶ qualify as food deserts⁷, demands an integrated economic solution. Strategic redevelopment initiatives focused on retail development of brownfields sites, such as the **Exit 100 Site**, can simultaneously stimulate job growth and improve nutritional access by attracting supermarkets to underserved areas. Creating living-wage employment opportunities through industrial (**River Drive Site and DYS LLC Site**) and commercial (**Exit 100 Site**) redevelopment of brownfields sites empowers families to allocate more resources toward nutritious food purchases, reducing reliance on assistance programs. Concurrently, transforming vacant properties into retail hubs with targeted incentives for fresh food providers directly addresses geographic barriers - cutting grocery trip distances from 20+ miles to under 5 miles in neighborhoods within the target area. This dual approach generates compounding benefits: new supermarkets create local jobs, while improved earnings enable families to maximize SNAP/WIC benefits through convenient access to affordable produce. For the children facing food-insecurity in the target area, this synergy between economic mobility and food infrastructure offers a sustainable path to healthier development, breaking the cycle of poverty-driven dietary limitations through coordinated community investment.

2.c. Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions - Exposure risks associated with brownfields sites, including priority sites, range from: petroleum and VOC impacts to soils, groundwater, and air (**Exit 100 Site/DYS LLC Site**); heavy metals impacts to soil, surface water and sediments, and air (**River Drive Site**); to SVOCs, solvents, and PFAS (**DYS LLC Site**). Sensitive populations located in close proximity to brownfields sites in the target area face barriers to healthcare and are disproportionately affected by environmental hazards with **16.5% of adults reporting to have delayed medical care due to cost.**⁹ The following table summarizes various diseases and adverse health conditions, often linked to hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or petroleum, impacting target area residents at a greater-than-normal incidence rate.

Health Data	CT – 9702.01	CT – 9702.03	CT – 9703.01	CT – 9703.02	CT – 9704.01	County	National
High Blood Pressure ⁸	39.3%	40.1%	43.6%	46.6%	40.8%	39.8%	34.4%
Cancer ⁸	7.5%	8.1%	7.9%	7.4%	8.8%	8.5%	7.9%
Asthma ⁸	10.3%	10.2%	10.4%	11.6%	10.6%	10.3%	9.8%
Heart Disease ⁸	6.8%	7.1%	7.2%	9.4%	8.7%	7.7%	6.4%

*Shaded cells indicate exceedances of State and/or County values.

Airborne contaminants associated with clay mining operations, primarily heavy metals and silica can lead to respiratory diseases including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, and cancer. Asthma is a significant health concern in Cherokee County, with rates exceeding national averages. According to the CDC, asthma prevalence

³ CrimeGrade.org

⁴ [The Relationship Between Poverty and Crime](#)

⁵ FBI Crime Data Explorer - <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/>

⁶ 2023: ACS: 5-year Estimates

⁷ USDA Food Access Research Atlas

⁸ CDC – PLACES: Local Data for Better Health - [PLACES: Local Data for Better Health | PLACES | CDC](#)

⁹ Live Healthy SC: Cherokee County Snapshot



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in each of the census tracts within the target area (CT 9702.01: 10.3%; CT 9702.03: 10.2%; CT 9703.01: 10.4%; CT 9703.02: 11.6%; CT 9704.01: 10.6%) exceed national prevalence (6.4%).¹⁰ Environmental pollutants commonly associated with brownfield sites—such as volatile organic compounds from the Exit 100 Site, and heavy metals, particulate matter, and other airborne contaminants from the River Drive Site—can exacerbate asthma symptoms and increase hospitalizations. The high rates of asthma contribute to increased healthcare utilization and reduced quality of life, particularly among children and sensitive populations living near contaminated sites.

While census tract specific cancer data is not available, the most recent **Cherokee County Cancer Profile** (2022) provides county-level data indicating that the county’s age-adjusted 5-year average cancer incidence rate (2015-2019) is **484 cases per 100,000 population**, exceeding the South Carolina average of **444 per 100,000**. Cherokee County ranks 5th highest among the state’s 46 counties. The 5-year average cancer mortality rate is **181 deaths per 100,000**, higher than the state average of **161 per 100,000**, ranking 12th in the state. Notably, lung and bronchus cancer incidence (**78 per 100,000** vs. SC average 61; ranking 6th in the state) and mortality (**52 per 100,000** vs. SC average 41) are significantly elevated, making lung cancer the leading cause of cancer death in the county. Colorectal cancer incidence (**48 per 100,000** vs. SC 37) and mortality (**18 per 100,000** vs. SC 14) are also higher. Breast and prostate cancer rates are near state averages. Cherokee County has a higher proportion of late-stage cancer diagnoses (**41.3%**) compared to the state (**38.4%**), which reduces treatment success and increases mortality risk. These elevated cancer rates may be associated with environmental exposures from historical industrial and commercial activities, including brownfield sites along the I-85 corridor such as the River Drive Site, DYS LLC Site, and Exit 100 Site.¹¹

Data from the **South Carolina Department of Public Health Vital Statistics (2023)** and the **Cherokee County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)** reveal that infant mortality remains a critical health issue in Cherokee County, with rates exceeding state and national averages. The most recent data indicate an infant mortality rate of approximately **7.5 deaths per 1,000 live births** in Cherokee County, which is higher than the South Carolina state average of **7.0 per 1,000** and the national average of about **5.6 per 1,000**. Racial disparities persist, with **Black infants experiencing mortality rates more than twice those of White infants** (11.7 vs. 5.2 per 1,000 live births statewide). This rate reflects the number of infants dying before their first birthday. The primary causes of infant mortality in South Carolina and likely in Cherokee County include **disorders related to short gestation and low birth weight (16.4% of infant deaths) and congenital malformations and birth defects (18.1%)**. Environmental contaminants potentially present at brownfield sites are known risk factors for adverse birth outcomes, including birth defects and low birth weight.^{12,13}

The target area for this grant experiences a greater-than-normal incidence of several chronic diseases and adverse health conditions compared to state and national averages, including cancer, asthma, birth defects, and infant mortality. These health disparities are linked to environmental exposures from brownfield sites and other social determinants of health, underscoring the critical need for environmental assessment and remediation. Assessment of these sites through this brownfields grant will help to identify threats to populations in the target areas and subsequent remediation and redevelopment of the identified contaminants will directly reduce exposure threats to these populations by removing or mitigating contamination sources contributing to these health disparities. Reducing exposure to hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, and petroleum will improve respiratory health, reduce cancer risks, support healthier birth outcomes, and reduce overall incidences of disease and adverse health conditions. Redevelopment will also stimulate economic growth and improve access to healthcare and social services, addressing broader social determinants of health.

2.d. Economically Impoverished/Disproportionately Impacted Populations - This EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant prioritizes redevelopment in Cherokee County’s most distressed census tracts (the target area), where systemic inequities disproportionately impact children, low-income households, and Black/African American

¹⁰ CDC – PLACES: Local Data for Better Health - [PLACES: Local Data for Better Health | PLACES | CDC](#)

¹¹ SCDES – Cherokee County Cancer Profile 2022

¹² SC Department of Public Health Vital Statistics – Infant Mortality - 2023

¹³ Cherokee County Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) 2022-2025



Cherokee County, SC

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residents. In tracts like 9703.02, where **43.2% of residents live below the poverty line** (nearly triple the national rate) and median household income falls to **\$26,726** (vs. \$49,047 countywide)¹⁴, legacy industrial sites hinder economic mobility. Assessment of these legacy sites and other brownfields will help identify threats to sensitive populations in the target area such as vacant and underutilized former industrial and commercial sites which face impediments to redevelopment due to environmental stigma. Subsequent remediation and redevelopment of these sites will directly reduce these threats to sensitive population by creating opportunities for the establishment of new businesses and manufacturing facilities. Advanced manufacturing redevelopment directly addresses these challenges: 34.2% of workers in tract 9702.03 are already employed in manufacturing, yet the sector’s median earnings of **\$27,484** lag behind state averages due to lack of advancement opportunities. Retooling brownfields for advanced manufacturing will provide opportunities for advancement, creating living-wage jobs in communities where up to **53.5% of families with children under 18 experience poverty** (CT 9702.01: 2.7%; CT 9702.03: 24.8%; CT 9703.01: 9.0%; CT 9703.02: 53.5%; CT 9704.01: 28.5%) and up to 26.4% of employed workers lack health insurance.¹⁴ Simultaneously, commercial/retail revitalization targets food deserts in tracts like 9702.01, where **85.8% of households with children rely on SNAP benefits** (vs. 47.2% nationally).¹⁴ Strategic reuse of vacant sites near high-poverty Black/African American neighborhoods (CT 9702.01: 25.7%; CT 9702.03: 43.3%; CT 9703.01: 41.7%; CT 9703.02: 42.6%; CT 9704.01: 9.6%)¹⁴ would combat systemic barriers hindering sensitive populations in target areas. By converting contaminated sites into advanced manufacturing hubs (River Drive/DYS LLC Sites) and equitable retail corridors (Exit 100 Site), this initiative utilizes current workforce expertise while creating career advancement pathways to disrupt cycles of poverty and attracting employers to tracts burdened by unemployment rates up to **7.1%** (9702.01).¹⁴

Community Engagement; 2.e. Project Involvement & 2.f. Project Roles – The following organizations will provide assistance and support for the brownfields grant project.

Organization	Entity’s Mission	Point of Contact	Specific Involvement
Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce	To be an advocate for its members by promoting the growth of business, industry, and community.	Frannie Stockwell fstockwell@cherokeechamber.org	Support outreach efforts by promoting the County’s Brownfields Program at chamber events and will assist with site selection by serving as a liaison between the county and commercial partners.
City of Gaffney	To enhance quality of life by delivering exceptional public services through well-managed departments, community programs and events, and accessible municipal resources.	James Taylor jtaylor@cityofgaffney-sc.gov	To host outreach meetings, provide community outreach support, and serve as a community liaison. Will assist with site selection and reuse planning based on community-needs.
Town of Blacksburg	To promote, enhance, and sustain the quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors.	Shane Childers, MBA shane@townofblacksburg.com	To host outreach meetings, provide community outreach support, and serve as a community liaison. Will assist with site selection and reuse planning.
Spartanburg Community College – Cherokee County Campus	SCC empowers our region through exceptional, innovative, holistic experiences that accelerate economic development and provide an educated community, committed to lifelong learning and financial prosperity.	Holly Nix nixh@scsc.edu	To serve as a community liaison for Cherokee County through outreach support and to assist Cherokee County with workforce development to support economic development opportunities. Will assist with reuse planning.
Appalachian Council of Governments	To assist local governments & other organizations by providing relevant approaches to local and regional needs in economic development, social planning and development, and public administration.	Jill Francisco jfrancisco@scacog.org	To assist Cherokee County in identifying and obtaining additional funding for assessment, remediation, and reuse of brownfields sites and to assist with planning and economic development services.

2.g. Incorporating Community Input - Cherokee County will develop a Community Involvement Plan (CIP) as part of this grant initiative. Recognizing the critical importance of public engagement in successful brownfield redevelopment, the County will create this plan to establish structured community participation processes. The CIP will outline specific engagement activities, project timelines, background information, and key stakeholder

¹⁴ 2023: ACS: 5-year Estimates



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roles. County leadership emphasizes that community buy-in remains essential for revitalization success. To achieve this, Cherokee County will implement multiple engagement strategies including:

- Hosting quarterly town hall meetings (both in-person and virtual)
- Conducting targeted visioning sessions in affected communities
- Maintaining a dedicated brownfields section on the County website with regular updates
- Distributing informational materials through local libraries, community centers, and partner organizations

The County will particularly focus on inclusive outreach by:

- Providing translation services at public events when needed
- Collaborating with local schools and churches to disseminate information
- Establishing a Brownfields Task Force (BTF) representing diverse neighborhood interests

Community input will be solicited through the various outreach activities and will be considered during project calls/meetings. Progress updates and community input will be presented and responded to at quarterly meetings, through the County website, and through social media.

3. Task Descriptions, Cost Estimates, and Measuring Progress; Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs; 3.a. Project Implementation, 3.b. Anticipated Project Schedule, 3.c. Task/Activity Lead, 3.d. Outputs

Task 1: Programmatic Activities
a. Project Implementation: Task includes: 1) Quarterly, Annual, and Final Reporting; 2) Progress and Financial tracking and ACRES database entries; 3) Monthly progress updates and meetings; 4) Procurement of Qualified Environmental Consultant (QEC); 5) Travel to national/regional Brownfields conferences/workshops
b. Anticipated Project Schedule: 1) Quarterly reporting begins in Q1 and continues throughout grant; Annual reporting in Q5, Q9, Q13, and grant closeout; 2) Progress and Financial tracking and ACRES entries begin in Q1 and continue throughout grant; 3) Monthly progress updates and meetings being in Q1 and continue throughout grant; 4) QEC will be procured in Q1; 5) Conference/workshop attendance in Year 1 and Year 3
c. Task/Activity Lead: Ken Moon, Brownfields Program Director with assistance from QEC
d. Outputs: 16 quarterly reports, 4 annual financial reports, 4 MBE/WBE forms, ACRES database reporting, 48 monthly meetings/calls. Contract with QEC, Two staff to attend two conferences
Task 2: Community Outreach
a. Project Implementation: Task includes: 1) Development of Community Involvement Plan (CIP); 2) Newsletters, Surveys, Social media/website updates, and other outreach material; 3) Community Meetings; 4) Brownfields Steering Committee (BSC) creations and meetings
b. Anticipated Project Schedule: 1) CIP developed in Q1 and updated as needed; 2) Newsletter, surveys, and social media/website updates begin in Q1 and continue throughout grant; 3) Community Meetings held in Q1, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q9, Q12, Q15; 4) BSC created in Q1 with quarterly meetings/calls (more as needed)
c. Task/Activity Lead: Ken Moon, Brownfields Program Director
d. Outputs: 1 CIP, Newsletters, surveys, social media posts, website updates, 7 community meetings with summary reported quarterly, 16 BSC meetings
Task 3: Site Inventory / Assessment
a. Project Implementation: Task includes: 1) Brownfields Site Inventory; 2) Generic Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP); 3) Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs), Phase II ESAs with Site Specific QAPPs (SSQAPPs) and Health and Safety Plans (HASPs), and additional eligible assessments (Asbestos Survey, Lead Paint Survey, etc.)
b. Anticipated Project Schedule: 1) Site inventory begins in Q1 and continues throughout grant as needed; 2) Generic QAPP completed in Q2; 3) Assessment activities will begin in Q2 and continue throughout grant
c. Task/Activity Lead: QEC with direction from County (Ken Moon, Brownfields Program Director)
d. Outputs: 1 GIS/web-based Brownfields Site Inventory, 1 Generic QAPP, 15 Phase I ESAs, 5 SSQAPPs and HASPs, 5 Phase II ESAs, 2 additional eligible assessments (Asbestos Survey, Lead Paint Survey, etc.)
Task 4: Cleanup / Reuse Planning
a. Project Implementation: Task includes: 1) ABCAs, 2) Visioning Sessions/Charettes, 3) Brownfields Revitalization Plan, 4) Site Reuse Plans, and 5) Land Use Assessments
b. Anticipated Project Schedule: Activities under this task will begin in Q6 and continue throughout grant
c. Task/Activity Lead: QEC with direction from County (Ken Moon, Brownfields Program Director)
d. Outputs: 3 ABCAs, 2 Visioning Sessions, 1 Revitalization Plan, 2 Site Reuse Plans, 2 Land Use Assessments



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3.e. Cost Estimates – Cost estimates were developed based on local market rates. The budget includes travel, contractual, and other costs. **Of the total budget, site specific work accounts for 70.2% and eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities account for 39.3%.**

Task 1: Programmatic Activities– **Travel:** Two staff to attend two conferences \$5,000 (Per trip - Flight: \$800; Hotel – 3 nights: \$1,200; Incidentals and per diem: \$500; total: \$2,500); **Contractual:** ACRES, Quarterly, Annual Financial, MBE/WBE, Closeout Reporting, and BTF and Project Team meetings for 4 year grant period \$20,000 (100hrs x \$200); **Other:** Conference registration for two conferences: \$1000 (\$500 ea x 2 conferences)

Task 2: Community Outreach– **Contractual:** Development of CIP \$3,000 (20hrs x \$150); 7 Community meetings/events \$14,000 (70hrs x \$200; \$2,000/meeting); Social media, website updates, fliers, and brochures \$3,000 (20hrs x \$150).

Task 3: Site Inventory/Assessment–**Contractual:** Develop Site Inventory and Ranking Tool \$20,000 (100hrs x \$200); 15 Phase I ESAs \$54,000 (avg. \$3,600 ea); 1 Generic QAPP \$4,500; 5 Phase II ESAs including SSQAPP/HASP \$175,000 (avg \$35,000 ea); 2 additional assessments (asbestos, lead paint, etc) \$4,000 (avg. \$2,000 ea).

Task 4: Cleanup/Reuse Planning– **Contractual:** 3 ABCAs \$19,500 (avg \$6,500 ea); 2 Visioning Sessions \$13,000 (\$6,500 ea); 1 Brownfields Revitalization Plan \$70,000; 2 Site Reuse Plans \$70,000 (\$35,000 ea); 2 Land Use Assessment \$24,000 (\$12,000).

	Task 1: Programmatic Activities	Task 2: Community Outreach	Task 3: Site Inventory / Assessment	Task 4: Cleanup/Reuse Planning	Total
Travel	\$5,000				\$5,000
Contractual	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$257,500	\$196,500	\$494,000
Other	\$1,000				\$1,000
Total Direct Costs	\$26,000	\$20,000	\$257,500	\$196,500	\$500,000
Total Budget	\$26,000	\$20,000	\$257,500	\$196,500	\$500,000

3.f. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results – To ensure outputs, results, and outcomes align with the grant narrative and workplan, all project elements will be tracked, measured, and evaluated weekly by the project team through a shared real-time database. This system enables continuous progress monitoring and schedule adherence. Monthly summary reports generated from this data will be shared with the Cherokee County Brownfields Task Force (BTF) for review during monthly project team meetings and quarterly BTF meetings. These reports will form the basis for quarterly submissions through EPA's ACRES database. Following each assessment activity, the project team will receive a summary report and ACRES will be updated. Tracked outputs (defined in Section 3.d) include quantities of completed Phase I/II assessments, QAPPs, ABCAs, revitalization plans, cleanup/reuse plans, and community meetings. Quarterly outcomes reporting will cover leveraged funding, job creation, public engagement, and acreage prepared for reuse. The County will maintain monthly update calls with their EPA Project Officer, with corrective actions implemented for any project deviations.

4. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance; Programmatic Capability

4.a. Organizational Capacity, 4.b. Organizational Structure, 4.c. Description of Key Staff - Cherokee County operates under a Council-Administrator form of government. The County possesses strong organizational capacity to manage complex projects, with strategic oversight provided by the Cherokee County Development Board. This structure ensures effective execution of initiatives through professional administration while maintaining accountability via legislative leadership from the Council Chair and six district representatives. **Kenneth Moon**, Executive Director of the Cherokee County Development Board, will serve as Brownfields Program Director, responsible for daily operations, ensuring compliant fund expenditure, and fulfilling administrative/financial obligations under EPA brownfields guidelines. Kenneth has been spearheading economic growth initiatives in Cherokee County since 2015. With over a decade of experience in economic development, he focuses on attracting new industries, expanding existing businesses, and fostering public-private partnerships. Moon has played a pivotal role in advancing key projects along the I-85 industrial corridor, driving job creation and infrastructure improvements. His collaborative approach with local governments, educational institutions,



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and community stakeholders has positioned Cherokee County as a competitive destination for investment and innovation. **Noah Beason**, Deputy Director of the Cherokee County Development Board, will serve as Brownfields Project Manager, providing programmatic support through grant documentation management, interdepartmental coordination, and progress tracking to maintain project timelines. Noah has been supporting strategic economic initiatives in Cherokee County since 2023. He leads business retention/expansion programs and coordinates infrastructure projects along the I-85 corridor. Beason has been instrumental in advancing the River Drive Industrial Park redevelopment and implementing the county's workforce training partnership with Spartanburg Community College. His data driven approach to industrial recruitment and focus on sustainable growth have strengthened Cherokee County's position in advanced manufacturing and logistics markets. **Kristie Howell**, Finance Director for Cherokee County since 2018, will serve as Finance Director for Cherokee County's Brownfields Program, managing the finances and all drawdowns through ASAP.gov for this EPA Grant project. Kristie oversees fiscal strategy and budget management for the county. A Certified Public Accountant with 15+ years of municipal finance experience with an expertise in public-private financing models, she has implemented innovative financial controls and secured critical funding for infrastructure projects along the I-85 economic corridor.

4.d. Acquiring Additional Resources - Cherokee County will utilize its established procurement protocols to engage a qualified environmental consultant (QEC) for technical support and reporting components of the Brownfields Project, following **EPA's "Professional Service" procurement requirements**. The Cherokee County Procurement Office will administer all contracting through competitive processes aligned with Cherokee County Ordinances, ensuring proper acquisition of specialized expertise for project implementation. The county maintains a robust vendor registration system that prioritizes local businesses and certified minority/women-owned enterprises (M/WBEs). Cherokee County will actively solicit bids from these qualified firms, building on successful partnerships demonstrated in recent I-85 corridor infrastructure projects.

Past Performance and Accomplishments; f. Has Not Received an EPA Brownfields Grant but has Received Other Federal or Non-Federal Assistance Agreements; 4.f.(1) Purpose and Accomplishments - Cherokee County has a proven track record of successfully managing and implementing both federal and state grants. In 2023, the County was awarded a **\$50,000 Regional Planning Grant from the South Carolina Department of Commerce (SCDOC)**. This grant was used to support the development of Cherokee County's 2024 Comprehensive Plan and also provided assistance with identifying additional federal funding sources, such as this EPA Brownfields Grant, for use in completing goals established in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan. Outputs of this grant were the 2024 Comprehensive Plan document, vision & goals, implementation strategies and identification of additional funding sources. Outcomes include a clearly articulated community vision for the county's future that will allow the county to align development decisions with the community's long-term goals. Measures of success include plan adoption & periodic review, updates to policies/ordinances, alignment of capital projects, measurable changes in land use & services, and pursuit and acquisition of grant funding opportunities.

In 2025, Cherokee County received a **\$60,192 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Recovery Grant** for road repairs for Mintz Farm Road after damage was incurred during Hurricane Helene. Outputs for this grant include roadway repairs and upgrades. Outcomes include restored roadway access, improved connectivity, improved resiliency to future storm events, and a reduction in safety hazards. Measures of success include completion of all scopes of work and traffic volume recovery.

4.f.(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements - SCDOC Regional Planning Grant: Cherokee County remained in compliance with the workplan, schedule, and terms and conditions of this grant. Cherokee County demonstrated a history of timely and acceptable reporting, meeting the expectations of the awarding entity. This grant was closed out on time and within the budget. **FEMA Disaster Recovery Grant:** Cherokee County remained in compliance with the workplan, schedule, and terms and conditions of this grant. Cherokee County demonstrated a history of timely and acceptable reporting, meeting the expectations of the awarding entity. This grant was closed out on time and within the budget.



**Cherokee County, SC
FY26 Brownfields Community-Wide
Assessment Grant**

Threshold Criteria



Cherokee County, SC
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Threshold Criteria

1. Applicant Eligibility

- a. Cherokee County, South Carolina affirms their eligibility to apply for a US EPA Community-Wide Brownfields Assessment Grant as a general-purpose unit of local government as defined under 2 CFR § 200.64.
- b. Cherokee County is **not exempt** from Federal taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code.

2. Community Involvement

Cherokee County will develop a Community Involvement Plan (CIP) as part of this grant initiative. Recognizing the critical importance of public engagement in successful brownfield redevelopment, the County will create this plan to establish structured community participation processes. The CIP will outline specific engagement activities, project timelines, background information, and key stakeholder roles. County leadership emphasizes that community buy-in remains essential for revitalization success. To achieve this, Cherokee County will implement multiple engagement strategies including:

- Hosting quarterly town hall meetings (both in-person and virtual)
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- Distributing informational materials through local libraries, community centers, and partner organizations

The County will particularly focus on inclusive outreach by:

- Providing translation services at public events when needed
- Collaborating with local schools and churches to disseminate information
- Establishing a Brownfields Task Force (BTF) representing diverse neighborhood interests

Community input will be solicited through the various outreach activities and will be considered during project calls/meetings. Progress updates and community input will be presented and responded to at quarterly meetings, through the County website, and through social media.

3. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds

Cherokee County affirms that they do not have an open EPA Brownfields Assessment or Multipurpose Grant.

4. Contractors and Named Subrecipients

Not Applicable.