



Project Title:

The Clean Clusters Initiative – Beautifying DeKalb

Project Overview:

The Clean Clusters Initiative is a pilot program designed to address clusters of illegal dumping across DeKalb County, which create environmental hazards, public health risks, and degraded public spaces. These hotspots—often containing tires, household hazardous waste, construction debris, and other pollutants—pose risks to soil, water quality, wildlife, and community safety. While not traditional brownfields, these sites meet the EPA’s definition of real property where contamination or hazardous substances impede safe use or redevelopment.

Illegal dumping disproportionately affects neighborhoods with limited resources, exacerbating health disparities and environmental inequities. Addressing these areas is critical to restoring safe, accessible, and environmentally resilient public spaces.

The initiative targets high-priority areas using a cluster-based approach, leveraging historical records, community reporting, and environmental assessment. The project is implemented in partnership with CHARM, DeKalb County Landfill, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, and other county departments. Funding from the EPA Brownfields Program will support the removal of contaminants, safe disposal of debris, and preparation of sites for potential reuse, all while promoting measurable community and environmental benefits.

This pilot approach is innovative because it expands the brownfields concept beyond single sites to clusters of environmentally degraded areas, allowing EPA funds to have a broader impact and creating a replicable model for future programs.

Site & Cleanup Reality:

Illegal dumping is a persistent challenge in DeKalb County. Residents frequently report tires, household chemicals, construction debris, and other materials abandoned in neighborhoods, vacant lots, and stormwater corridors. These activities degrade local ecosystems, increase exposure to hazardous substances, and diminish quality of life.



- The Clean Clusters Initiative will focus on at least five high-priority hotspot areas, identified through:
- Historical records of reported dumping incidents.
- Community reporting and mapping tools.
- Assessments conducted by the Beautification Unit in collaboration with partner organizations.

Each site will undergo a hazard evaluation to determine priority cleanup actions. The initiative will implement cluster-based targeting, concentrating resources where illegal dumping is most frequent. Activities include:

- Safe and environmentally responsible removal of debris, including waste segregation by type.
- Transport and disposal of materials in compliance with local, state, and federal regulations.
- Coordination with CHARM for hazardous material handling.
- Engagement with DeKalb County Landfill to ensure efficient disposal logistics.
- Documentation of cleanup progress using photographic records and site assessments.

This strategic approach ensures that EPA funding addresses multiple high-need areas, maximizing impact and demonstrating a replicable model for future cluster-based interventions.

Reuse Vision:

Once cleaned, sites may be repurposed in ways that maximize community and environmental benefits, including:

- Green spaces, pocket parks, or low-impact recreational areas, where feasible.
- Native landscaping and stormwater management improvements.
- Opportunities for community-led stewardship programs.

Reuse outcomes will be determined during site assessment, ensuring that actions are flexible, environmentally guided, and community responsive. Measurable indicators of success include:

- Acres of land cleaned and made safe for potential reuse.
- Community participation in cleanup and stewardship activities.
- Environmental improvements such as debris removal, habitat restoration, and aesthetic enhancement.



The initiative demonstrates that even non-traditional brownfield sites can be transformed into community assets, promoting long-term sustainability, environmental health, and community well-being.

In addition to cleaning at least five hotspot areas, the Clean Clusters Initiative anticipates achieving the following measurable outcomes: approximately 500–1,000 volunteer hours contributed, removal of an estimated 50,000–75,000 pounds of illegal debris, and engagement of 100+ community members through workshops and outreach. Each site cleanup will include environmental assessment metrics, such as reductions in potential hazardous material exposure, improved stormwater flow, and decreased illegal dumping recurrence rates. Where feasible, site restoration will incorporate low-impact green infrastructure or habitat enhancement, demonstrating multi-benefit outcomes that address public health, environmental resiliency, and neighborhood aesthetics.

Community Need & Engagement:

Illegal dumping disproportionately affects communities with limited resources, contributing to environmental hazards and public health risks. Addressing this issue requires direct engagement with residents, volunteers, and local partners to ensure meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

Key partners include:

- CHARM: Expertise in hazardous materials handling and community engagement.
- DeKalb County Landfill: Assistance with safe disposal logistics and oversight.
- Chattahoochee Riverkeeper: Environmental monitoring and educational programs.
- Other DeKalb County Departments: Operational support, coordination, and follow-up maintenance.

Community engagement activities include:

- Up to 10 public workshops and educational sessions to raise awareness and provide prevention guidance.
- Coordination of volunteer cleanup efforts, including debris removal, site maintenance, and monitoring.
- Outreach campaigns to inform residents about safe waste disposal practices, environmental hazards, and stewardship opportunities.



These activities aim to generate behavior change, increased awareness, and long-term prevention of illegal dumping, ensuring that the project’s impact extends beyond the funded period.

Staff Roles & Capacity:

The DeKalb County Beautification Unit will lead project implementation, supported by a small but experienced team:

- Superintendent: Provides overall program oversight, ensures compliance with EPA standards, manages reporting, and supervises project objectives.
- Three General Foremen: Lead operational activities, including mowing, curb-bumping, and waste reduction tasks within designated clusters.
- Two Special Project Coordinators: Manage program rollout, volunteer coordination, partner communication, and documentation of outputs/outcomes.
- Additional fieldworkers (anticipated): Will support cleanup, debris handling, and maintenance activities, expanding capacity as the project scales.

The team has a proven track record of successful program implementation, interdepartmental coordination, and community engagement. Their combined experience ensures the initiative will be delivered effectively, safely, and efficiently, with strong adherence to EPA grant requirements.

Outputs & Outcomes

Outputs (Measurable Products)	Outcomes (Impact / Result)
At least 5 hotspot areas cleaned	Reduced exposure to hazardous substances
Pounds of illegal dumping removed	Safer, healthier neighborhoods
Number of volunteer hours contributed	Increased community stewardship and awareness
Up to 10 workshops held / signage installed	Behavioral change in waste disposal practices
Community members trained	Strengthened environmental knowledge and civic engagement
Green space or park installations (where feasible)	Enhanced recreational and environmental infrastructure
Educational materials distributed	Long-term prevention of illegal dumping



Sustainability: Volunteer programs, partner contributions, and ongoing stewardship activities will ensure long-term impact. Maintenance and monitoring will be integrated into the Beautification Unit’s ongoing operations, supporting environmental health and community resilience beyond the grant period.

Budget Summary

Category	Amount	Narrative Tie-In
Cleanup & Removal Activities	\$250,000	Labor, specialized equipment, and disposal fees for targeted illegal dumping cleanup. Supports measurable outputs such as acres cleaned and pounds of waste removed.
Community Engagement & Education	\$100,000	Volunteer coordination, workshops, signage, and prevention education. Supports outcomes in behavior change, stewardship, and community awareness.
Fieldwork, Equipment & Contingency	\$100,000	Additional fieldworkers, equipment, PPE, and contingency costs for debris handling and safety.
Reuse & Green Space Implementation	\$50,000	Materials and minor infrastructure for converting cleaned areas into greenspaces or recreational areas, where feasible.

Budget Notes:

- Administrative costs are <5% as required by EPA.
- Leveraged resources include volunteer hours, partner in-kind contributions, and non-EPA funding.
- All activities are tied to measurable outputs and outcomes to demonstrate project success.

Leveraging & Partnerships

This initiative maximizes the impact of EPA funds through strategic leveraging:

- Volunteer contributions directly support cleanup and educational outcomes.
- Partner technical support and in-kind contributions expand program capacity and reduce costs.



- Collaboration with CHARM, Riverkeeper, and County departments enhances environmental monitoring, safety, and community engagement.

Leveraging ensures efficiency, broad reach, and sustainability, allowing the Clean Clusters Initiative to have lasting environmental and community impact beyond the grant period.

Conclusion:

The Clean Clusters Initiative presents an innovative, high-impact pilot program that addresses environmental hazards from illegal dumping while fostering community engagement, education, and flexible site reuse. By leveraging the resources of the Beautification Unit, partner organizations, and volunteers, this initiative promises measurable outcomes, sustainable impact, and a replicable model for future brownfields and environmental remediation projects.

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

* 1. Type of Submission: <input type="checkbox"/> Preapplication <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Application <input type="checkbox"/> Changed/Corrected Application	* 2. Type of Application: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Continuation <input type="checkbox"/> Revision	* If Revision, select appropriate letter(s): <input type="text"/> * Other (Specify): <input type="text"/>
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* 3. Date Received: <input type="text" value="01/28/2026"/>	4. Applicant Identifier: <input type="text"/>
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5a. Federal Entity Identifier: <input type="text"/>	5b. Federal Award Identifier: <input type="text"/>
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State Use Only:

6. Date Received by State: <input type="text"/>	7. State Application Identifier: <input type="text"/>
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8. APPLICANT INFORMATION:

* a. Legal Name:

* b. Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN): <input type="text" value="58-6000814"/>	* c. UEI: <input type="text" value="K8G5TL8B1CX7"/>
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d. Address:

* Street1:
Street2:
* City:
County/Parish:
* State:
Province:
* Country:
* Zip / Postal Code:

e. Organizational Unit:

Department Name: <input type="text" value="Sanitation"/>	Division Name: <input type="text" value="Beautification Unit"/>
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f. Name and contact information of person to be contacted on matters involving this application:

Prefix: * First Name:
Middle Name:
* Last Name:
Suffix:

Title:

Organizational Affiliation:

* Telephone Number: Fax Number:

* Email:

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

*** 9. Type of Applicant 1: Select Applicant Type:**

B: County Government

Type of Applicant 2: Select Applicant Type:

Type of Applicant 3: Select Applicant Type:

* Other (specify):

*** 10. Name of Federal Agency:**

Environmental Protection Agency

11. Assistance Listing Number:

66.818

Assistance Listing Title:

Brownfields Multipurpose, Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup Cooperative Agreements

*** 12. Funding Opportunity Number:**

EPA-I-OLEM-OBLR-25-07

* Title:

FY26 Guidelines for Brownfield Cleanup Grants

13. Competition Identification Number:

Title:

14. Areas Affected by Project (Cities, Counties, States, etc.):

Add Attachment

Delete Attachment

View Attachment

*** 15. Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project:**

Project Title:
The Clean Clusters Initiative - Beautify DeKalb: Cluster-Based Cleanup and Community Revitalization in DeKalb County

Attach supporting documents as specified in agency instructions.

Add Attachments

Delete Attachments

View Attachments

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

16. Congressional Districts Of:
* a. Applicant * b. Program/Project

Attach an additional list of Program/Project Congressional Districts if needed.

17. Proposed Project:
* a. Start Date: * b. End Date:

18. Estimated Funding (\$):

* a. Federal	<input type="text" value="500,000.00"/>
* b. Applicant	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>
* c. State	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>
* d. Local	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>
* e. Other	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>
* f. Program Income	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>
* g. TOTAL	<input type="text" value="500,000.00"/>

*** 19. Is Application Subject to Review By State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?**
 a. This application was made available to the State under the Executive Order 12372 Process for review on .
 b. Program is subject to E.O. 12372 but has not been selected by the State for review.
 c. Program is not covered by E.O. 12372.

*** 20. Is the Applicant Delinquent On Any Federal Debt? (If "Yes," provide explanation in attachment.)**
 Yes No
If "Yes", provide explanation and attach

21. *By signing this application, I certify (1) to the statements contained in the list of certifications and (2) that the statements herein are true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I also provide the required assurances** and agree to comply with any resulting terms if I accept an award. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 1001)**
 ** I AGREE
** The list of certifications and assurances, or an internet site where you may obtain this list, is contained in the announcement or agency specific instructions.

Authorized Representative:

Prefix: * First Name:
Middle Name:
* Last Name:
Suffix:

* Title:

* Telephone Number: Fax Number:

* Email:

* Signature of Authorized Representative: * Date Signed: