



Town of Forest City

R04-26-M-007

Town Manager
P.O. Box 728
128 N. Powell Street
Forest City, NC 28043
Phone: (828) 245-4747

1. Applicant Identification

Town of Forest City
128 N Powell Street
Forest City, NC 28043

2. Website URL: <https://www.townofforestcity.com/>

3. Funding Requested

- a. Grant Type: Multipurpose
- b. Federal Funds Requested: \$1,000,000

4. Location

- a) Town of Forest City, b) Rutherford County, c) North Carolina

5. Target Area and Priority Site Information

Target Area:

- *Downtown District*, which includes census tracts 37161960800 and 37161960900

Priority Sites:

- **Assessment Site.** Former Pepsi Cola Warehouse Facility: 135 Mill Street, Forest City, NC 28043
- **Cleanup Site.** Florence Mill: 186 Park Square Circle, Forest City, NC 28043

6. Contacts

a. Project Director

Janet Mason, Town Administrator
(828) 245-4747
janetmason@townofforestcity.com
128 N Powell Street, Forest City, NC 28043

b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Elected Official

Steve Holland, Mayor
(828) 289-1859
steveholland@townofforestcity.com
128 N Powell Street, Forest City, NC 28043

7. Population

Town of Forest City, NC: 7,368 (US Census 2019–2023 American Community Survey)



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7. Other Factors

Other Factors	Narrative Page #
Community population is 15,000 or less.	5
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).	N/A
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	N/A
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 20% 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.	N/A
The target area is impacted by a coal-fired power plant that has recently closed (2015 or later) or is closing.	N/A

8. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority

See attached.

9. Releasing Copies of Applications

Not Applicable.



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY
PROVIDED BY GOOGLE EARTH,
2025 AERIAL

— = 100 feet

FY26 Town of Forest City, North Carolina Multipurpose Grant

Former Florence Mill Property
186 Park Square Circle
Forest City, Rutherford County, North Carolina

Exhibit

1



NORTH CAROLINA
Environmental Quality

December 15, 2025

JOSH STEIN
Governor
D. REID WILSON
Secretary
MICHAEL SCOTT
Director

Janet Mason
Town Manager
Town of Forest City
128 N. Powell Street
Forest City, NC 28043
janetmason@townofforestcity.com

Re: U.S. EPA Brownfields Multipurpose Grant – Town of Forest City

Dear Ms. Mason,

The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Brownfields Redevelopment Section (BRS) acknowledges and supports the Town of Forest City's application for a U.S. EPA Brownfields Multipurpose Grant. We understand that your grant will focus on assessment at the Former Pepsi Cola Warehouse Facility located at 135 Mill Street and cleanup at the Former Florence Mill located at 186 Park Square Circle. Revitalization of these properties will be a wonderful success for this community and the Town of Forest City.

The goal of EPA Multipurpose funds is to facilitate redevelopment and economic growth within a community. To that end, BRS offers technical project guidance to help ensure assessments conducted utilizing grant funds are in accordance with our program requirements throughout the life of your project. Coordination with DEQ BRS is critical to ensure that the assessments make efficient use of the federal funds awarded. This will begin at grant initiation and continue with review of site-specific assessment plans. It is imperative that BRS be involved in field sample scope planning to ensure that a property is eligible for future entry into the North Carolina Program should a property owner or future developer desire. This is especially imperative for the 186 Park Square Circle property that is a recorded Brownfields Site (BRS #09003-15-081). A brownfields agreement outlines the controls needed to make the site safe for the intended reuse and is often a marketing tool for developers and instrumental in securing redevelopment financing. Additional tax incentives are also available upon completion of brownfields redevelopment if completed in the State's Program.

We hope that the Town of Forest City is successfully awarded this grant, and we will continue to support you in your brownfields redevelopment efforts whether a grant is awarded or not. We truly believe successful brownfields projects can rejuvenate a community.

Sincerely,

Jordan Thompson
Brownfields Grant Coordinator

cc: NCDEQ Brownfields Grant Collaborative Team



North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality | Division of Waste Management
217 West Jones Street | 1646 Mail Service Center | Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1646
919.707.8200



Town of Forest City, NC

**FY26 Brownfield Multipurpose Grant
Narrative**



1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION

Target Area and Brownfields. a. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area: The Town of Forest City (Town), located in Rutherford County, North Carolina, was once a thriving textile hub that anchored the region’s economy for much of the 20th century. The Town’s prosperity was built on its mills and manufacturing facilities, which provided jobs and shaped the community’s identity. However, the decline of the textile industry in the late 20th century triggered decades of economic disinvestment, leaving behind a legacy of vacant and underused industrial buildings, deteriorating commercial corridors, and an aging, limited housing stock. These conditions have created significant **lingering brownfield challenges** and have contributed to persistent social and economic hardship for residents. The **geographic boundary** for this project is the town limits of Forest City, with the **target area** focused on the **Downtown District (DD)**, which includes the Town’s downtown and the Grahamtown Neighborhood. The DD spans two census tracts (37161960800 and 37161960900), one of which is an **Opportunity Zone**.

On September 27, 2024, **Hurricane Helene** struck Forest City, causing severe disruption and continuing economic and infrastructural damage. **This natural disaster compounded existing brownfield challenges** in the target area, which contains the town’s highest concentration of vacant and underused historic industrial and commercial structures. Many of these properties are brownfield sites due to the potential environmental concerns caused by past land uses such as textile manufacturing, dry cleaning, and automotive services. The sites have remained idle for years, contributing to contamination and blight, lowering property values, and discouraging private investment. Vacant storefronts and deteriorating mill buildings have eroded the vitality of the DD, while underused parcels limit opportunities for economic growth and community-serving businesses. The hurricane intensified these issues, with local businesses suffering an average loss of \$322,000 each, and over 80% forced to close temporarily due to power outages, water service failures, and structural damage.¹ Key employment sectors—including manufacturing, tourism, and retail—were severely affected, leading to long-term economic instability. These conditions pose ongoing health and safety risks, hinder investment, and perpetuate cycles of poverty and disinvestment. Without targeted intervention, these properties will continue to impede the Town’s ability to attract new businesses, create jobs, and provide safe housing for residents.

Residents in the target area face significant and disproportionate socioeconomic challenges. The **median family income is just \$43,832**, less than half the national average of \$96,922, and **26% of families live below the poverty level**, compared to 8% nationally.² A Multipurpose Grant presents a vital opportunity to reverse these trends by funding assessment, cleanup, and planning activities that will unlock the redevelopment potential at the heart of Forest City. Revitalization efforts will build on existing public spaces and amenities to create a vibrant, connected downtown that promotes health, recreation, and economic opportunity. The cleanup and reuse of brownfield properties will pave the way for safe housing, community-serving businesses, and job-generating enterprises. These investments will deliver transformative benefits for residents and position Forest City for long-term success.

b. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s): The target area contains the highest concentration of vacant and underused properties with potential environmental concerns in the town. A preliminary **windshield survey identified approximately eight potential brownfield sites**, including former textile mills, service stations, gas stations, vacant warehouses, and dry-cleaning

¹ <https://www.bpr.org/bpr-news/2025-08-06/regional-survey-finds-wnc-businesses-lost-an-average-of-322-000-during-helene>

² US Census 2019–2023 American Community Survey



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facilities. The target area is characterized by aging housing stock, high poverty rates, and economic disinvestment, making the cleanup and reuse of these sites critical to revitalization efforts. Additional brownfield sites will be identified by **target-area residents and project partners** during a grant-funded site inventory. This process will include thoroughly discussing sites and determining how the sites fit into the **Town's Brownfield Revitalization Plan** that will be developed as part of this grant. For this grant application, the Town has identified two priority sites, one for assessment and one for cleanup, due to their proximity to residents and businesses as well as their redevelopment potential. The Town has site access for assessment at the assessment priority site and owns the site for cleanup.

The **assessment priority site** is the **Former Pepsi Cola Warehouse** located at 135 Mill Street. This 0.3-acre parcel is occupied by a severely deteriorated, 16,000-square-foot brick and concrete structure originally constructed in 1920. The building's roof has collapsed, leaving the interior exposed to the elements, and the structure's walls, composed of brick and concrete masonry units, rest on a concrete slab foundation. The site is currently vacant and unoccupied, contributing to physical blight and posing safety concerns in the heart of the downtown area. Historically, the property has served as a bakery, a Pepsi Cola warehousing facility, and a design company. The building's age and its history of industrial and commercial use raise concerns about potential environmental contamination, including **lead-based paint (LBP) and asbestos-containing materials (ACMs)**. The dilapidated building poses an environmental health risk to the adjacent church and residential homes located within 0.5 miles. The applicant has secured site access for environmental assessment activities, and the property owner supports redevelopment efforts.

The **cleanup priority site** is the **Florence Mill (the Mill)**, located at **186 Park Square Circle**. This 9.14-acre property includes a two-and-a-half-story, 113,000-square-foot historic textile mill constructed in 1896, along with a boiler house and a 125-foot brick smokestack. The site operated as a textile manufacturing facility for more than a century before closing in 2001. Environmental assessments conducted between 1999 and 2005, prior to the Town's acquisition of the property, identified contamination from **chlorinated solvents (tetrachloroethylene [PCE] and trichloroethylene [TCE])** in groundwater, **petroleum-related compounds and total petroleum hydrocarbon (TPH) diesel range organics (DRO)** in soil and groundwater, and elevated levels of arsenic and other metals in soils. These assessments also confirmed that the property contains **LBP and ACM**, along with vapor intrusion risks that require mitigation under the North Carolina Brownfields Agreement governing the site. The site was contaminated with chlorinated solvents, including PCE, in soil and groundwater from former dry-cleaning operations. In 2006, the Town was awarded a Brownfield Cleanup Grant for the remediation of **PCE-impacted soil at the property**, the removal of a 10,000-gallon fuel oil underground storage tank (UST), and remediation of petroleum-impacted soil. Grant funds were used to remove and dispose of contaminated soil, construct a soil and asphalt cap, and install a passive vapor mitigation system, groundwater monitoring wells, and vapor sampling wells. The purpose of this Multipurpose Grant is to remediate **hazardous building materials (LBP & ACM) within the Mill building**. The vacant Mill is located within 0.5 miles of multiple schools, churches, and residential areas, contributes to blight, and serves no useful economic purpose. The Town owns the property and has granted access for remediation.

c. Identifying Additional Sites: In preparation for this grant application, the Town conducted a windshield survey of the target area and identified over **eight potential brownfield sites**. The Town, in coordination with residents and project partners, will create a tool to rank brownfield sites in the target area, giving priority to sites whose assessment and/or cleanup will most benefit



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the sensitive population's health and economic status. Referencing the county property-appraisal website, community input, and census data, the Town will identify and rank additional sites within the target area and geographic boundary, prioritizing those contributing to critical issues such as health disparities, pollution, and poverty. Any grant funds that remain after appropriate allocation to all target-area assessment work will be used to address additional sites found throughout the **geographic boundary** that most benefit Forest City's vulnerable populations.

Revitalization of the Target Area. d. Overall Plan for Revitalization: The Town has adopted a comprehensive framework for downtown revitalization that directly supports the reuse of brownfield sites, including the Mill and surrounding properties. The Mill reuse strategy is fully integrated with the Town's **Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2012)**, which calls for the adaptive reuse of historic structures and the creation of vibrant, pedestrian-oriented spaces. Specifically, **Goal D2** directs the Town to "pursue the adaptive reuse of the historic Florence Mill buildings, rehabilitation of surrounding historic properties, and development of green space with pedestrian amenities." **Goal D3** promotes **additional residential development in and around the Downtown District by encouraging housing within the Florence Mill building, a "New Florence Mill Village"** adjacent to the mill site, and new homes and townhomes along Trade Street. These objectives are reinforced by the plan's broader vision to "cultivate the identity of Forest City as a hub of economic activity in the region with a small-town atmosphere" through new housing, downtown living, and a more varied community. The Plan also emphasizes stimulating private development of market-rate housing downtown through adaptive reuse of older buildings and appropriate new construction.

The plan further calls for the inventory and reuse of empty or underused commercial and industrial buildings and includes **Goal L7**, which "promotes the revitalization of commercial districts in neighborhoods such as **Grahamtown** and Alexander Mills." Assessment and future redevelopment of the **Former Pepsi Warehouse** priority site will support this goal and create new commercial opportunities in the heart of downtown, activating a currently blighted block and complementing the Mill redevelopment. Reuse plans for this site include a **small concert venue and bar**, which will attract visitors, support local businesses, and strengthen the downtown economy.

The Town has already invested more than \$13 million in public amenities that support these goals, including the Pavilion on Park Square amphitheater, the Thermal Belt Rail Trail, and streetscape improvements that enhance connectivity and quality of life. The proposed grant activities align directly with these plans by addressing environmental conditions that currently impede redevelopment. Assessment and cleanup through the Multipurpose Grant will enable the Town and its development partners to advance a feasible reuse strategy that includes affordable workforce housing, flexible commercial space for small businesses and nonprofits, and integration with public amenities such as the Thermal Belt Rail Trail and Pavilion on Park Square. Additionally, as a part of this grant project, the Town will create a **Brownfield Revitalization Plan** that will include feasible reuse strategies for the priority sites and brownfields throughout the target area.

e. Outcomes and Benefits of Overall Plan for Revitalization: The revitalization plan for the priority sites will deliver **transformative economic and community benefits** to the urban residents upon completion of environmental cleanup. **The Mill** redevelopment will create a **mixed-use anchor featuring affordable housing, ground-floor commercial space for small businesses and nonprofits, and direct connections to public amenities** such as the Thermal Belt Rail Trail and Pavilion on Park Square. These improvements will attract **new investment, generate jobs, and**



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expand the local tax base, reversing decades of economic decline. The project is expected to leverage millions of dollars in private and public investment, stimulate downtown business activity, and create long-term employment opportunities in construction, retail, and service sectors. The assessment and reuse of the **Former Pepsi Warehouse** will further strengthen downtown revitalization by creating new commercial opportunities in a highly visible location. Plans for the site include a small concert venue and bar, which will **activate a currently blighted block, draw visitors, and support surrounding businesses**. This redevelopment aligns with the Town's Comprehensive Plan goals to inventory and reuse vacant commercial and industrial buildings and to promote revitalization of commercial districts in neighborhoods such as Grahamtown. By transforming this underused property into an active commercial destination, the project will generate additional economic activity, attract private investment, and enhance the vibrancy of the downtown core.

Beyond economic benefits, the plan will **significantly enhance quality of life for residents**. Redevelopment of both priority sites will preserve a historic landmark while integrating greenspace and pedestrian-friendly design, creating a safe and vibrant environment for community gatherings, recreation, and cultural events. By removing environmental hazards and bringing deteriorating properties back to life, the project will **reduce blight, improve public health, and provide access to housing** and amenities for low-income populations.

The Town will work with developers via its redevelopment plans to improve environmental resilience, capacity, and sustainability that will benefit residents. The Town will encourage use of **renewable energy like solar lighting or wind energy**, and ensure developers are using **energy-efficient measures** in their designs. The Brownfield Revitalization Plan budgeted in this grant will include steps to **improve local resilience to the impacts of future extreme weather events and natural disasters (such as the recent disaster caused by Hurricane Helene in 2024 that crippled the Town's budget)** to ensure developments remain focused on resilient reuse for generations to come. The proposed Multipurpose Grant is the vital catalyst for these outcomes, enabling the Town to transform its most prominent brownfield sites into hubs of economic vitality and community life.

Strategy for Leveraging Resources. f. Resources Needed for Site Reuse: The Town has access to robust and diversified funding options to support the environmental assessment, remediation, and redevelopment efforts of the project. A public-private partnership has been established with a committed developer who plans to transform the Florence Mill site into a mixed-use building featuring affordable housing and ground-floor commercial space for small businesses and non-profits. The initial budget indicates that outreach and community engagement, inventory and assessment, cleanup/remediation/reuse planning, programmatic support and program management, cleanup, and cleanup oversight (for the former Florence Mill site) will cost \$1,450,000. This Brownfield Multipurpose Grant will cover assessments of sites such as the Former Pepsi Warehouse, with the remaining bulk of the \$1 million dollars funding the Mill cleanup. The remaining \$450,000+ will come from several different secured sources. This developer will use a combination of federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit proceeds, North Carolina Housing Finance Agency tax credits, historic tax credit proceeds, private equity, and institutional financing to bring the redevelopment vision to life. In addition to private investment, the Town was awarded a \$450,000 Collaboration & Innovation Grant from the Dogwood Health Trust in November 2025, which will directly support this project planning and implementation. This award reflects strong regional support and confidence in the project's potential to improve community health and economic vitality. The Town is also exploring other state-level funding



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sources to further bolster redevelopment efforts. The Town remains committed to identifying and securing additional public resources as the project progresses. Together, these funding streams combined with EPA support will ensure the site is not only assessed and remediated but transformed into a vibrant and sustainable community asset. **See the Town's attached secured funding commitment letter to complete the cleanup.**

g. Use of Existing Infrastructure: Work performed under this grant will build on the extensive infrastructure already in place within the target area and at the priority sites. Over the past 15 years, the Town has invested more than \$13 million in improvements downtown, and both priority sites have access to water, sewer, broadband and electric power. The Town also maintains the road network and public parking within walking distance, demonstrating that the core infrastructure needed for reuse and redevelopment is ready. At this time, it is not anticipated there will be a need for additional infrastructure upgrades. With this strong foundation, grant-funded assessment and cleanup activities can be efficiently transitioned into productive reuse. Importantly, the existing buildings at both priority sites will be incorporated into the new development.

2. COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Need. a. The Community's Need for Funding: The target area faces significant economic and social challenges that limit its ability to fund environmental assessment, remediation, and planning activities without outside assistance. The **small population of the target area is 4,846 residents**, many of whom live in conditions of persistent poverty.³ The **median family income is \$43,832**, less than half the national median of \$96,922.³ The target area's per capita income is \$23,731, nearly half the US average (\$43,289).³ Poverty is high in the target area, with **26% of families living below the poverty level (US 8%)**.³ The economic distress is compounded by decades of industrial decline following the collapse of the textile industry, which once served as the backbone of the local economy. The small population and low-income levels mean that the community cannot generate sufficient tax revenue or attract private capital to address environmental concerns on its own.

Recent extreme weather events have further strained the Town's financial resources and highlighted infrastructure vulnerabilities. The remnants of **Hurricane Helene** in September 2024 brought catastrophic rainfall, widespread flooding, stormwater system failures, and road damage. Tropical Storm Fred in 2021 resulted in localized flooding and drainage system overloads in downtown corridors. These disasters required emergency response and recovery efforts that diverted funds from scheduled capital improvements. Rising insurance premiums and increased construction costs have further eroded the Town's ability to finance redevelopment. While Forest City has incorporated resiliency measures into its planning, **these unplanned expenditures have reduced the Town's capacity to address environmental hazards and advance revitalization priorities**. A Multipurpose Grant is essential to break this cycle by providing the resources needed to remediate environmental hazards and unlock redevelopment opportunities. This funding will not only address contamination but also catalyze economic revitalization, improve public health, and create opportunities for residents who have been disproportionately affected by decades of economic decline and recent extreme weather event disasters.

b. Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations: The target area includes significant sensitive populations who face disproportionate health and welfare challenges. **Approximately 54% are female (US 50%) and a quarter of the population is under 18 years old (US 22%)**.³ In addition, **20% of residents are Black (US 12%)**, which is concerning due to a common pattern of worse health outcomes when impoverished minorities are exposed to environmental hazards.³ The target

³ US Census 2019–2023 American Community Survey



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area suffers from low incomes and persistent poverty. Poverty is pervasive, with **26% of families (US 8%), 60% of female head of household with children under the age of 18 (US 32%) and 30% of all people (US 12%) living below the poverty level.**⁴ To make matters worse, this poverty forces **36% of households to rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits**, more than three times the national rate (11%).⁴ These indicators reflect deep economic distress and limited access to resources that support health and well-being.

Housing conditions further impair these challenges. The homeowner vacancy rate is **5% (US 0.1%)**, signaling widespread disinvestment and instability in the housing market.⁴ The **median home value is \$153,900**, about half the national median of \$303,400, reflecting depressed property values and limited household wealth.⁴ To add to the existing housing burden, the target area has dated housing structures; 45% (US 36%) of all homes were built pre-1960,⁴ and the target area ranks in the **75th high percentile in the state for risk of lead-based paint exposure.**⁵ Aggravating this dated housing stock issue is the high percentage of mobile homes, with **CT 9606 having 18% of its housing stock as trailers (US 6%).**⁴ Safe, **affordable housing** is urgently needed. High unemployment, with current rates in the Town exceeding 7% (US 5%) and historical rates regularly fluctuating above state and national levels, reflects limited job opportunities in the wake of industrial decline and contributes to the housing burden.⁴ The lack of employment opportunities has left many residents dependent on public assistance, reinforcing cycles of poverty and limiting their ability to relocate away from contaminated or blighted properties.

Revitalization of the target area must go beyond environmental cleanup to address the underlying social and economic conditions that perpetuate hardship. The assessment of the Former Pepsi Company site and the cleanup of the Mill site will spur the revitalization of the DD target area and begin the process of alleviating the community's health and welfare issues. By leveraging EPA funding to remediate contaminated sites and prepare them for redevelopment, the Town can attract investment for mixed-use projects that combine housing, community amenities, and job-generating businesses.

c. Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions: The environmental conditions on the priority sites commonly intersect with alarming health statistics. **Asthma prevalence among adults in the target area is 12% (US 8%)** and is exacerbated by poor housing quality and vapor intrusion risks from contaminated soil and groundwater.⁶ **Target-area cancer prevalence is at 8% (US 5%),** and Rutherford County's age-adjusted cancer incidence rate is approximately 475.5 cases per 100,000 (US 439), indicating elevated cancer risk that may be associated with historical exposure to carcinogenic compounds such as VOCs and petroleum hydrocarbons from former textile and automotive operations.⁷ Chronic conditions like **high blood pressure (43%/US 48%) and obesity (43%/US 40%)** further compound vulnerability, as these conditions are linked to stressors associated with poverty and limited access to healthy environments.⁵ LBP and ACM in aging housing stock create additional risks for developmental delays, birth defects, and respiratory illnesses. African American children and low-income families are disproportionately affected by lead exposure, which is strongly correlated with older housing and poverty.

The County's **infant mortality rate ranges from 6.1 to 7.2 deaths per 1,000 live births (US 5.5)**, and statewide data shows that congenital anomalies remain a leading cause of infant

⁴ US Census 2019–2023 American Community Survey

⁵ <https://pedp-ejscreen.azurewebsites.net/>

⁶ CDC Places <https://www.cdc.gov/places/index.html>

⁷ State Cancer Profiles <https://statecancerprofiles.cancer.gov/quick-profiles/index.php?state=northcarolina>



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morbidity and mortality.⁸ Studies, such as the 2024 study summarized by the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology, consistently demonstrate that minority and impoverished populations experience higher rates of asthma hospitalizations and adverse birth outcomes when exposed to environmental hazards such as lead, asbestos, and vapor intrusion from contaminated soil and groundwater. The proposed grant-funded activities will directly address these threats by identifying and remediating contaminated sites, mitigating vapor intrusion risks, and removing hazardous building materials such as ACM and LBP.

d. Economically Impoverished/Disproportionately Impacted Populations: Blighted and dilapidated structures throughout Forest City create a ripple effect—abandoned buildings generate no taxable revenue, depress surrounding property values, deter potential investors, and perpetuate disinvestment. Stabilizing the area becomes even more difficult as declining home values and occupancy rates compound these challenges. This grant will allow the Town to identify and remediate contamination at brownfield sites that the community prioritizes, reducing environmental threats that disproportionately impact low-income and vulnerable residents. The target area's poverty rate is 30%, far above the national average of 12%, and the median household income is only \$36,841, underscoring the economic hardship faced by many families.⁹ These disproportionately impoverished communities carry an unequal burden of negative environmental consequences from past industrial and commercial activity, including blight, unsafe conditions, and exposure risks. Through environmental assessments and redevelopment planning, the Town will mitigate these hazards while creating opportunities for affordable housing and business growth. These efforts will reduce health risks, generate jobs, and expand access to safe, healthy living environments. In doing so, the revitalization plan directly addresses inequities faced by impoverished neighborhoods and ensures redevelopment benefits are shared across the entire community.

Community Engagement. e. Prior/Ongoing Community Involvement: The Town is committed to transparent and ongoing community engagement throughout the Brownfields Program. Project status and updates are regularly shared with the public through council meetings, the Town's website, and social media channels. The Town announces its intent to submit grant applications via council agendas and online posts; for this EPA grant application, the announcement was made at the October 20, 2025, public council meeting. Public hearings are frequently held to educate residents and gather feedback from citizens and businesses. Updates are provided through the regional newspaper *The Daily Courier* and the Town's website. The Town maintains strong relationships with businesses in the target area, who have actively assisted with community engagement for previous cleanup activities. Virtual outreach methods, including Facebook, are used to ensure broad community input, and future meetings will be held both in person and virtually. For the previous Cleanup Grant project, the Town conducted several community meetings during the grant period to educate residents, project partners, local organizations, and stakeholders about brownfields activities and progress at the priority sites. In preparation for this grant application, the Town worked with project partners and residents to identify sites through the windshield survey.

f. Project Involvement & g. Project Roles: The project partners listed below will have a meaningful role during this grant project and will assist in site selection, site identification, community outreach, cleanup, and future reuse.

⁸ <https://www.nciom.org/nc-health-data/map/>

⁹ US Census 2019–2023 American Community Survey



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Organization & Mission	Person of Contact	Specific Involvement in Project
Explore Forest City – Promotes downtown, protects its historic character, and encourages economic growth and diversity among businesses	Melissa Cantrell, President melissa.cantrell@bankwithunited.com	Activity/Decision Making: Community outreach, site-reuse planning, and input on meaningful impacts of cleanup.
Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce – Serves as a regional brokerage of assets and talent development to improve prosperity for individuals, households, and businesses while strengthening local communities	Cindy Cobb, Executive Director cindycobb@rutherfordcoc.org	Activity/Decision Making: Community outreach, site-reuse planning.
Foothills Regional Commission – Provides regional planning and development services to improve prosperity and strengthen local communities	Preston Janco, Senior Planner pjanco@frcnc.gov	Activity/Decision Making: Funding assistance, outreach, planning support
Grahamtown Team – Plans, supports, educates, and executes opportunities to enrich quality of life for the community	Kisha McDowell, Executive Director kisha@grahamtownteam.org	Activity/Decision Making: Community outreach, engagement with residents
Rutherford Railroad Development Corporation (RRDC) – Promotes recreation, connectivity, tourism, and neighborhood revitalization	Doug Barrick, President DBarrick@rutherfordton.net	Activity/Decision Making: Outreach, identification of sites in the target area
Forest City Board of Planning & Adjustment / Historic Preservation Commission – Promotes public health, safety, and orderly growth	Marc Duncan, Chairman mduncan@rcsnc.org	Activity/Decision Making: Site inventory, planning, historic preservation input

h. Incorporating Community Input: The Town informed the public of its intent to apply for an EPA Brownfield Multipurpose Grant at the Town Council meeting held on October 20, 2025. The Town will cultivate productive and thought-provoking interactions between target-area residents, community organizations, and project partners, **especially those directly impacted by the project**. The Town has and will continue to seek valuable input from residents and community organizations to help identify potential brownfield sites, as they are the most aware of the area’s most important needs. The Town will create a Community Involvement Plan (CIP), which will provide an event schedule, an outline of planned community engagement activities, a project background, and a list of key players. The CIP will be made available for review at Town Hall and on the Town’s website and will foster engagement with the community.

The Brownfield Team (BT), comprised of Town staff, will solicit, review and evaluate and respond to comments, community input, and suggested sites for the inventory during quarterly meetings. All community-member suggestions and information will be recorded in the minutes and posted on the Town’s Brownfield Program webpage. The Town’s CIP will incorporate several forms of media. Brownfield updates will be posted to the Town’s Facebook page in addition to the



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Town’s Brownfield Program webpage. The Town will provide resident **interaction via website and social media as an alternative to in-person community engagement**. As for those residents who have no transportation or internet access, the Town already uses mailers with information for other committees and meetings, and signage throughout government and community buildings. The Town will disseminate Brownfield Project information through press releases and local newspapers and will update organizations and community members through Town Council meetings. All promotional materials with the names and contact information of the Town’s BT will be posted on the Brownfield Program webpage, facilitating community-member contact with BT members.

3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS

Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs:

Task 1: Community Engagement	
a.	<i>Project Implementation: EPA Funded:</i> Community Involvement Plan (CIP), outreach materials, Brownfield (BF) project webpage, and social media posts will be developed by the Town’s BF Project Manager with assistance from the qualified environmental professional (QEP). Town staff will lead the community/educational meetings discussing project plans and updates.
b.	<i>Anticipated Project Schedule:</i> CIP created in Q1. Community/educational meetings held Q2 in Y1–4. BF webpage and outreach materials created in Q1 and posted throughout the grant project.
c.	<i>Task/Activity Lead:</i> Town: Amy Bridges, Downtown and Community Development Manager, BF Project Manager
d.	<i>Outputs:</i> CIP, BF webpage, 4 community/educational meetings, brochures/handouts, social media posts, summary of community meetings in EPA-required quarterly reports.
Task 2: Site Inventory & Assessment	
a.	<i>Project Implementation: EPA Funded:</i> The Town’s BF Project Director will work with target-area residents during outreach events to add to the site inventory. Identified abandoned and underused properties will be researched further by Town staff using GIS and the County’s property appraiser’s website. QEP will work with Town staff to create an evaluation ranking tool to determine the order the sites will be addressed. The QEP conducts Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs), starting with the priority sites listed in this application. ASTM-AAI-compliant Phase Is; Generic Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP); Phase IIs will include the Sampling and Analysis Plan (SAP). Prior to assessment, site access agreements and property eligibility determinations approval will be obtained. National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultations will be addressed when applicable.
b.	<i>Anticipated Project Schedule:</i> Meeting held in Q2 will continue the preliminary inventory process. Evaluation ranking process and assessments begin in Q3 and continue throughout the grant.
c.	<i>Task/Activity Lead:</i> The QEP will implement the technical aspects of the project with oversight from the Town: Janet Mason, City Administrator, BF Project Director.
d.	<i>Outputs:</i> Evaluation ranking tool, site inventory list, 5 Phase I ESAs, 1 Generic QAPP, 2 Phase II ESAs including SAP, site access agreements, property eligibility determinations, Section 106 determinations (if applicable).
Task 3: Reuse Planning	
a.	<i>Project Implementation: EPA Funded:</i> The QEP will prepare the Analysis for Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA) and Cleanup Plans for additional sites identified. Cleanup planning will include evaluating cleanup alternatives, calculating cleanup costs, and determining site-appropriate remediation and/or reuse planning to reduce health/environmental risks. The QEP will also assist



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	the Town in hosting charrettes/visioning session for the purpose of determining aspects of the redevelopment and reuse of the site. And a planner will create the following EPA-approved planning documents: a Brownfield Revitalization Plan.
b.	<i>Anticipated Project Schedule:</i> Plans and charrettes begin in Q6 and will continue throughout the grant period.
c.	<i>Task/Activity Lead:</i> The QEP will implement the technical aspects of the project with oversight from the Town: Amy Bridges, Downtown and Community Development Manager, BF Project Manager.
d.	<i>Outputs:</i> 2 ABCAs, 1 vision session/charrette, 1 Cleanup QAPP, 1 Abatement Specifications, and 1 Brownfield Revitalization Plan

Task 4: Program Management

a.	<i>Project Implementation: EPA Non-funded:</i> Using its own funding, the Town will procure a QEP to assist with the BF Grant project. The Town’s BF Project Finance Manager will oversee grant implementation and administration to ensure compliance with the EPA Cooperative Agreement work plan, schedule, and terms and conditions. <i>EPA Funded:</i> The QEP will assist in completing ACRES database reporting, yearly financial reporting, quarterly reporting, and additional programmatic support for the five-year term of the grant. The travel budget allows for two staff to attend three BF training conferences/workshops.
b.	<i>Anticipated Project Schedule:</i> Procure QEP in Q1. ACRES & quarterly reporting begins in Q1 and continues throughout the grant. Annual reporting and forms created in Q5, Q9, Q13, Q17 and final closeout.
c.	<i>Task/Activity Lead:</i> Town: Roxanne Stiles, Finance Director, BF Project Finance Manager.
d.	<i>Outputs:</i> ACRES database reporting, 5 annual financial reports, 20 quarterly reports, programmatic support for the five-year grant period. Two staff to attend three conferences.

Task 5: Cleanup & Oversight

a.	<i>Project Implementation: EPA funded:</i> The Town and QEP will work with a remediation contractor as they perform site cleanup activities, including contractor mobilization/demobilization and cleanup implementation. The Town will work with the QEP as they manage the site cleanup activities, perform confirmation sampling, contractor oversight, cleanup reporting, and final remedial action report. <i>EPA Non-funded:</i> The City has secured \$450,000 for remediation, as documented in the attached leveraging agreement, and will use this EPA Multipurpose Grant to bridge the remaining funding gap.
b.	<i>Anticipated Project Schedule:</i> Cleanup implementation 03/2027–09/2027. Final remedial action report 01/2028.
c.	<i>Task/Activity Lead:</i> The remediation contractor will implement cleanup activities with oversight from QEP and Town: Janet Mason, City Administrator, BF Program Director.
d.	<i>Outputs:</i> 1 site ready for reuse, 1 job for oversight, and 5 jobs for cleanup activities, 1 cleanup report, 1 final remedial action report.

e. **Cost Estimates:** Below are the anticipated cost estimates for this project *based on past brownfield projects as determined by local market standards with contractual hourly rates based on the skills needed for the specific tasks.*

- **Of the budget, 79% will be spent on remediation and 88% on site-specific work.**

Task 1 Community Engagement: Contractual: CIP \$1,500 (10 hrs × \$150); BF webpage, outreach brochure/handouts, social media posts \$1,500 (10 hrs × \$150); 4 community/educational



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meetings \$4,200 (\$1,050 per mtg.; 7 hours per meeting to include preparation and execution × \$150).

Task 2 Site Inventory & Assessment: Contractual: BF site inventory and evaluation ranking tool creation \$3,750 (25 hrs × \$150); 5 Phase I ESAs \$19,000 (\$3,800 each); 1 Generic QAPP \$5,200; 2 Phase II ESAs including SAP \$50,000 (\$25,000 each).

Task 3 Reuse Planning: Contractual: 2 ABCAs \$13,500 (\$6,750 each); 1 vision session \$3,000 (\$3,000/meeting); 1 Cleanup QAPP \$5,000; 1 Abatement Specification \$7,500; 1 Brownfield Revitalization Plan \$60,000 (Principal Planner: 80 hrs × \$250; Senior Planner: 80 hrs × \$200; PM Planner: 80 hrs × \$175; Support Personnel: 80 hrs × \$125).

Task 4 Program Management: Contractual: ACRES database reporting, yearly financial reporting, quarterly reporting \$22,500 (150 hrs × \$150). Travel: 2 staff to attend 3 conferences for a total of \$9,900 (flights at \$500, 3 nights in hotel at \$250/night, incidentals and per diem at \$100 per day × 4 days × 2 staff × 3 events). Other: \$1,200 conference registration (\$200 per event per person).

Task 5 Cleanup & Oversight: Construction: Lead-based paint removal **\$575,000** (50,000 square feet x \$11.50). Asbestos abatement **\$40,000:** floor tile \$35,000 (2,500 square feet x \$14); pipe insulation \$1,500 (500 feet x \$3); boiler housing \$3,500. Universal waste removal **\$80,000:** Light ballasts \$42,000 (1,680 x \$25); thermostats \$1,736 (28 x \$62); exit signs \$1,764 (84 x \$21); emergency lights \$8,400 (280 x \$30); bulbs \$26,100 (870 x \$30). Contractual: Remediation oversight **\$97,250:** \$92,250 (50 days x \$1,845 to include per diem, mileage, daily oversight); final report \$5,000.

Category	Tasks					Totals
	<i>Community Engagement</i>	<i>Site Inventory & Assessment</i>	<i>Reuse Planning</i>	<i>Program Management</i>	<i>Cleanup & Oversight</i>	
Travel				\$9,900		\$9,900
Other				\$1,200		\$1,200
Contractual	\$7,200	\$77,950	\$89,000	\$22,500	\$97,250	\$293,900
Construction					\$695,000	\$695,000
Total Budget	\$7,200	\$77,950	\$89,000	\$33,600	\$792,250	\$1,000,000

f. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results: To ensure timely project completion, the Town’s internal Brownfield Team, and including the QEP, will meet quarterly to track **outputs identified in 3.d.** and will record progress using Excel to track the scope of work, goals, and objectives. The Town will submit quarterly and annual reports to the EPA. Project expenditures and activities will be monitored quarterly against the five-year timeline. Site-specific information will be recorded in the ACRES database. Key performance indicators/outputs, such as the number of neighborhood meetings, community groups, and partners meetings; environmental assessments; and cleanup plans, will be tracked. Additionally, outcomes like community participation, acres assessed, acres made ready for reuse, redevelopment dollars leveraged, and jobs created will be monitored. To address potential project delays, the Town has contingency plans in place, including monthly communication with the EPA Project Officer and the development of a Corrective Action Plan, if necessary, to ensure the project is completed on schedule.

4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE

Programmatic Capability. a. Organizational Capacity, b. Organizational Structure, & c. Description of Key Staff: Forest City has the organizational capacity, structure, and experienced personnel necessary to successfully manage the programmatic, administrative, and financial



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requirements of this EPA Brownfields Multipurpose Grant. The Town's leadership team brings decades of experience in municipal management, economic development, and financial oversight. **Dr. Janet H. Mason**, Town Manager, will serve as the **Brownfield Project Director**. Dr. Mason has led Forest City for six years, overseeing all municipal operations, strategic initiatives, and intergovernmental partnerships. She manages the Town's budget, personnel, and compliance with state and federal regulations and will provide overall leadership for the Brownfields project. Her prior experience as Superintendent of Rutherford County Schools reflects her strong background in organizational leadership and public administration. **Amy Bridges**, Downtown and Community Development Manager, will serve as the **Brownfield Project Manager**. Ms. Bridges has more than 11 years of experience leading Forest City's Main Street Program and coordinating public-private partnerships to spur economic development. She has extensive experience writing and monitoring federal, state, and local grants through her prior work with the regional Council of Government. Amy will manage day-to-day grant activities, including communication, reporting, and coordination with contractors and community stakeholders, ensuring that site-reuse planning aligns with community priorities. **Roxanne Stiles**, Finance Director, will serve as the **Brownfield Finance Manager**. Ms. Stiles has directed the Finance Department for 10 years, overseeing all financial operations including budgeting, disbursement, accounting, and compliance. A Certified Public Accountant, she previously served as controller for Arey Oil Company for 20 years, where she managed petroleum storage compliance and financial reporting. Roxanne will oversee all financial aspects of the grant, including draw downs through ASAP.gov, budget tracking, and audit compliance, ensuring full adherence to EPA and federal requirements. A qualified environmental professional (QEP) will assist with the technical portions of the project.

d. Acquiring Additional Resources: The Town will hire a qualified QEP to support the technical and reporting aspects of the Brownfield Multipurpose Grant, adhering to EPA's Professional Service procurement process and local contracting requirements. Throughout the project, additional resources or contractors will be acquired as needed.

Past Performance and Accomplishments. e. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant (1) Accomplishments: The Town previously received an EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant in FY06 in the amount of \$200,000 to remediate the Florence Mill site. The site was contaminated with chlorinated solvents, including tetrachloroethylene (PCE), in soil and groundwater from former dry-cleaning operations. Grant funds were used to remove and dispose of contaminated soil, construct a soil and asphalt cap, and install a passive vapor mitigation system, groundwater monitoring wells, and vapor sampling wells. These cleanup activities were successfully reported to the EPA Project Officer. The grant closed on schedule on September 30, 2009, with all funds expended.

(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements: Forest City complied fully with the workplan, schedule, and all terms and conditions of its previous EPA Brownfields grant. All quarterly performance reports and deliverables were submitted on time and accepted by EPA. Cleanup activities were conducted in accordance with approved Quality Assurance Project Plans and regulatory standards. Required reporting was maintained throughout the project, and all outputs and outcomes were accurately reflected in ACRES. The Town demonstrated strong financial stewardship, ensuring timely draw downs and adherence to federal procurement and audit requirements. No corrective actions were required, and the project closed successfully with documented compliance. This history of effective EPA Brownfields grant management demonstrates Forest City's ability to administer federal funds responsibly and deliver measurable environmental and economic outcomes.



Town of Forest City, NC

**FY26 Brownfield Multipurpose Grant
Threshold Criteria**



Threshold Criteria

1. Applicant Eligibility

- a. The Town of Forest City, NC (Town), is eligible to apply for an EPA Brownfields Multipurpose Grant as a unit of local government as defined under 2 CFR § 200.64.
- b. The Town is not exempt from Federal taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code.

2. Community Involvement

The Town informed the public of its intent to apply for an EPA Brownfield Multipurpose Grant at the Town Council meeting held on October 20, 2025. The Town will cultivate productive and thought-provoking interactions between target-area residents, community organizations, and project partners, **especially those directly impacted by the project**. The Town has and will continue to seek valuable input from residents and community organizations to help identify potential brownfield sites, as they are the most aware of the area's most important needs. The Town will create a Community Involvement Plan (CIP), which will provide an event schedule, an outline of planned community engagement activities, a project background, and a list of key players. The CIP will be made available for review at Town Hall and on the Town's website and will foster engagement with the community.

The Brownfield Team (BT), comprised of Town staff, will solicit, review and evaluate and respond to comments, community input, and suggested sites for the inventory during quarterly meetings. All community-member suggestions and information will be recorded in the minutes and posted on the Town's Brownfield Program webpage. The Town's CIP will incorporate several forms of media. Brownfield updates will be posted to the Town's Facebook page in addition to the Town's Brownfield Program webpage. The Town will provide resident **interaction via website and social media as an alternative to in-person community engagement**. As for those residents who have no transportation or internet access, the Town already uses mailers with information for other committees and meetings, and signage throughout government and community buildings. The Town will disseminate Brownfield Project information through press releases and local newspapers and will update organizations and community members through Town Council meetings. All promotional materials with the names and contact information of the Town's BT will be posted on the Brownfields Program webpage, facilitating community-member contact with BT members.

3. Target Area

The target area for this Multipurpose Grant application is the Downtown District located in census tracts 37161960800 and 37161960900.

4. Affirmation of Brownfield Site Ownership

The Town is the sole owner of the Florence Mill (186 Park Square Circle, Forest City, Rutherford County, North Carolina), having acquired this site in August 2004. The Town affirms that these parcels meet the CERCLA § 101(39) definition of a brownfield and are:

- a) are not listed (or proposed for listing) on the National Priorities List;
 - b) not subject to unilateral administrative orders, court orders, administrative orders on consent, or judicial consent decrees issued to or entered into by parties under CERCLA;
- and



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c) not subject to the jurisdiction, custody, or control of the US government.

5. Use of Grant Funds

The Multipurpose Grant funds will be used to conduct assessment, cleanup, and programmatic support of the Multipurpose Grant. In addition, funds will be used to conduct community outreach, brownfield inventory and prioritization, and remediation/reuse planning, thus moving closer to the overall redevelopment goals of the noted priority sites within the target area. The plan for assessment and cleanup expenditures is presented on the following pages of the narrative portion of this application:

- Five (5) Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) – **pages 9, 10**
- Two (2) Phase II ESAs – **pages 9, 10**
- One (1) Brownfields Revitalization Plan preparation including at least one (1) priority site remediation/feasible reuse planning – **pages 2, 3, 9, 10**
- One site remediated and ready for reuse – **pages 2, 9, 10**

6. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds

The Town affirms it does not have an open EPA Brownfields Multipurpose Grant or Assessment Grant.

7. Contractors and Named Subrecipients

Not Applicable.