



Rush County
Board of Commissioners

Room 212
101 East Second Street
Rushville, Indiana 46173

APPLICANT INFORMATION SHEET
RUSH COUNTY
FY26 U.S. EPA BROWNFIELD ASSESSMENT GRANT APPLICATION

1. Applicant Identification:

Rush County
101 East 2nd Street
Rushville, Indiana 46173

2. Website URL: <https://rushcounty.in.gov>

3. Funding Requested:

- a) Assessment Grant type: Community-wide
- b) Federal Funds Requested: \$500,000

4. Location:

- a) Rush County
- b) Indiana

5. Target Area and Priority Site Information:

- Target Area 1: **Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's Home**
- Target Area Census Tract: 9742 (GEOID 18139974200)
- Priority Site:
 - 10892 North State Road 140, Knightstown, Indiana
- Target Area 2: Town of Carthage
- Target Area Census Tract: 9742 (GEOID 18139974200)
- Priority Sites:
 - South Main Street, Carthage, Indiana

6. Contacts:

a) Project Director:

John McCane
Rush County Economic and Community Development Corporation
330 North Main Street, Rushville, Indiana 46173
Phone: 765-561-0727, Email: JohnMcCane@RushECDC.org

a) Chief Executive:

Ron Jarman
Rush County Commissioners
101 East Second Street, Room 2, Rushville, Indiana 46173
Phone: 765-938-1163, Email: rjarman@rushcounty.in.gov



**Rush County
Board of Commissioners**

Room 212
101 East Second Street
Rushville, Indiana 46173

7. Population: Carthage 925, 16,847 Rush County,
(U.S. Census Bureau, census.gov, 2023)

8. Other Factors Checklist:

Other Factors	Page #
Community population is 15,000 or less.	Page 1
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian tribe or United States territory.	No
The priority site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	No
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).	Pages 1, 2
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	Page 1
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	Page 3
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures	Page 3
The proposed project will improve local resilience to the impacts of extreme weather events and natural disasters.	Page 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).	No
The target area(s) is located within a community in which a coal-fired power plant has recently closed (2015) or is closing.	No

9. Letter from State or Tribal Environmental Authority: Attached



Rush County
Board of Commissioners

Room 212
101 East Second Street
Rushville, Indiana 46173

**SUPPORT LETTER FROM INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT**



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

100 N. Senate Avenue • Indianapolis, IN 46204
(800) 451-6027 • (317) 232-8603 • Fax (317) 233-6647 • www.idem.IN.gov

Mike Braun
Governor

Clint Woods
Commissioner

January 14, 2026

John McCane, Executive Director
Rush County Economic and Community Development Corporation
330 North Main Street
Rushville, Indiana 46173

Re: IDEM Acknowledgement Letter
U.S. E.P.A. Brownfields Grant Proposal
Community Wide Assessment Grant
Rush County Economic and Community
Development Corporation
Rush County

Dear Mr. McCane:

This letter is provided in support of the Rush County Economic and Community Development Corporation (Rush County) proposal to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) for Brownfields Community Wide Assessment Grant funding. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) acknowledges that Rush County is requesting \$500,000 for hazardous substances and/or petroleum assessment.

IDEM understands that Rush County has demonstrated its commitment to redeveloping brownfields by taking advantage of financial and technical assistance offered through the Indiana Brownfields Program (Program) and that Rush County, based on the information it has provided with its request, believes it has the capability to perform the proposed grant-funded activities. The requested community wide assessment grant funding will help Rush County with community outreach, evaluating and prioritizing site inventory, conducting Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments, and developing site specific cleanup and reuse plans.

Two targeted areas are proposed for this initiative, the Indiana Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's Home (ISSH) Site and the Former Smurfit Stone facility in Carthage. The ISSH was established in 1866 and has remained continuously occupied since then. The site encompasses over 50 buildings along with valuable agricultural land. As of 2011, 31 of these structures are recognized as contributing properties on the National Register of Historic Places, following a 2009 designation by Indiana Landmarks that listed the complex among the "10 Most Endangered" sites. The site is in the process of being vacated by the Indiana National Guard Youth Academy. An IDEM file review revealed the previous presence of multiple underground storage tanks (USTs), which have since been removed

Visit on.IN.gov/survey or scan the QR code to provide feedback.

We appreciate your input!



and closed out by IDEM. However, a thorough investigation has yet to be conducted. There is a possibility that additional USTs may still exist, and former activities on the site could have adversely affected the soil, groundwater, and soil gas. Additionally, given the age of the buildings, there is a risk of asbestos, lead, and other hazardous materials being present. This site is particularly important as it is located near US 40 and Interstate 70, and close to an upcoming industrial facility in Rushville that urgently needs employees. The unknown conditions regarding soil, groundwater, and building materials pose significant challenges to development, complicating planning efforts due to the site's extensive size. Therefore, it is crucial to assess this site promptly so that the County can formulate a redevelopment plan. The SSCH's strategic location makes it an ideal candidate for redevelopment for a vocational/workforce training facility, housing and a corporate campus.

The former Smurfit Stone facility in Carthage was a significant paperboard manufacturing site. Established to produce corrugated packaging materials, the facility operated for several decades before closing. Following its closure, concerns arose regarding environmental contamination, including potential pollutants in the soil and groundwater from manufacturing processes. The location's redevelopment potential is recognized due to its infrastructure and proximity to major transportation routes, making it an attractive site for future industrial or commercial use. The site currently sits vacant with a run down approximately 41,000 square foot former industrial building adjoining the Big Blue River. The site and building represent a public nuisance and eyesore for area residents. The environmental conditions of the site are unknown; however, the site is vacant/underutilized, and its former operations and fire likely have impacted soil, groundwater and the adjoining river. The site is also adjacent to single family residences. Harm to nearby receptors cannot be ruled out.


End-use plans include redevelopment of former ISSH into a mixed-use site consisting of a vocational/workforce training facility, housing and a corporate campus. The Smurfit Stone site will be repurposed as an advanced manufacturing facility.

Rush County has not yet selected specific sites to benefit from U.S. EPA brownfield grant funding. If Rush County is awarded the requested grant funding, the Program will work with U.S. EPA and Rush County to determine site eligibility once specific sites are identified.

IDEM has worked with Rush County on several projects. IDEM recognizes that Rush County is committed to working with the Program and/or the IDEM Voluntary Remediation Program for technical oversight of grant-funded site activities as applicable during the grant project period. The Program and IDEM are committed to continuing to support brownfield redevelopment within Rush County by providing technical and other assistance through the Program.

IDEM considers Rush County an excellent candidate to receive U.S. EPA assessment grant funding to continue its brownfields redevelopment efforts, which support Indiana's brownfields initiative. IDEM looks forward to continuing its partnership with Rush County and its constituent communities. For further assistance, please contact John Morris of the Indiana Brownfields Program directly at (317) 234-0235 and at jmorris@ifa.in.gov.

IDEM Acknowledgement Letter
U.S. EPA Brownfields Grant Proposal
January 14, 2026
Page 3 of 3

Sincerely,


Mitchell Smith
Technical Staff Coordinator
Indiana Brownfields Program

MS/JTM

cc: *(via electronic transmission)*

Jason Cheney, SME
John Morris, Indiana Brownfields Program

FY2026 U.S. EPA BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT GRANT APPLICATION
SUBMITTED BY RUSH COUNTY, INDIANA

1. Project Area Description and Plans for Revitalization

a. Target Area and Brownfields

Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area: The grant will support assessment-related activities for the future redevelopment of brownfield sites within Rush County, located in east-central Indiana. Rush County is bordered to the north by the historic National Road (US 40) followed by Interstate 70 and to the south by Interstate 74, both vital road corridors. Rushville, the county seat, contains 6,200 of the county's 16,847 residents. Founded in 1821, the County initially relied on agriculture as its primary economic driver. The arrival of the railroad in the 1850s marked a turning point, facilitating the growth of industries such as textiles, machinery, and food processing, which transformed the local economy. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the County enjoyed a boom in manufacturing jobs, attracting workers and spurring population growth. However, post-World War II economic shifts and the rise of automation led to a gradual decline in traditional manufacturing industries. Many factories closed or relocated, resulting in job losses, economic challenges for the community and brownfield sites scattered throughout the County as well as Rushville. Over the last 25 years, Rush County has gone from a population of over 18,000 to less than 17,000. From 2000 to 2020, over 1,500 people left the county. If this trend continues, by 2030 the County, could fall below 15,000 in population.

The County has identified two priority brownfield sites—the Indiana Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's Home (SSCH) campus and the former Smurfit Stone facility in Carthage—where the majority of assessment and cleanup planning funds from the grant will be focused. The targeted sites, tainted with various contaminants, pose a serious threat to the health of nearby vulnerable communities and endanger local waterways, including the Flatrock River. Through targeted assessment activities, the County will generate the information needed to support future workforce housing development, enable job creation, promote population stability, and reduce environmental risks. Without assessment and cleanup planning, these sites will remain barriers to reinvestment rather than assets supporting economic recovery and community health. On January 8, 2026, the County was informed by the Governor of Indiana that the current class of the Hoosier Youth Challenge Academy (HYCA) would be the last. The County is currently in process of preparing an MOU with the state to manage the site.

- **Target Area (1) - Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's Home (SSCH)**— Nearly 400-acre area in the flood zone of Three Mile Creek that includes over 50 buildings most recently occupied by the Hoosier Youth Challenge Academy. The SSCH was established in 1866 and has remained continuously occupied since then. The site encompasses over 50 buildings along with valuable agricultural land. As of 2011, 31 of these structures are recognized as contributing properties on the National Register of Historic Places, following a 2009 designation by Indiana Landmarks that listed the complex among the "10 Most Endangered" sites. A review by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) Virtual File Cabinet (VFC) revealed the previous presence of multiple underground storage tanks (USTs), which have since been removed and closed out by IDEM. However, a thorough investigation has yet to be conducted. There is a possibility that additional USTs may still exist, and former activities on the site could have adversely affected the soil, groundwater, and soil gas.
- **Target Area (2) Carthage** – Located in northern Rush County, Carthage has a population of approximately 900 (<https://carthagein.net/>). The Henry Henly Public Library, built in 1901 stands as a "vibrant hub of learning and connection" in the center of town. The town's motto, "Embracing Heritage, Building Tomorrow" foreshadows the stakeholder's wants and needs to build a vibrant sense of place. However, according to the Social Assets and Vulnerabilities Indicator program associated with Indiana University Indianapolis, Carthage sits in a food desert with few places for its residents to work. The former Smurfit Stone site, a priority site, was the town's largest employer before it closed in 2007. Now, nearly 76% of people in Carthage work outside Rush County compared to 26% in Indiana and 22% in the country.

1.b. Description of the Priority Brownfield Sites: The SSCH Target area includes multiple developed areas with little or no history of investigation. The target area contains a laundry, maintenance shops, a power house, a steam plant, a paint shop, a paint storage building, a gas pump building, a chlorine house, various garages, an electrical hut and a salt storage barn. Priority sites in the target area include the power house, the maintenance shops and the gas pump building. Contaminants of concern include metals,

FY2026 U.S. EPA BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT GRANT APPLICATION
SUBMITTED BY RUSH COUNTY, INDIANA

volatile and semi-volatile organics (VOCs, SVOCs) and PCBs that could be entering nearby Three Mile Creek and migrating off-site. Additionally, given the age of the buildings, there is a risk of asbestos, lead, and other hazardous materials being present. This target area is particularly important as it is located near US 40 and Interstate 70, and close to soon to open industrial facility and dairy operation, both that urgently need a combined 250 **skilled** employees. The unknown conditions regarding soil, groundwater, and building materials pose significant challenges to development, complicating planning efforts due to the target area's extensive size. Reliable assessment data is critical for us to understand the necessary due care activities that will need to be budgeted for and implemented in our efforts to transform the property into mixed residential and commercial space. The SSCH's strategic location makes it an ideal candidate for redevelopment, given its proximity to highways and employment opportunities in Rushville.

The **former Smurfit Stone facility** in Carthage, Indiana, was a significant paperboard manufacturing site. Established to produce corrugated packaging materials, the facility operated for several decades before closing and subsequently burning to the ground during demolition activities. Over the years, it contributed to the local economy by providing jobs and supporting related industries. Following its closure, concerns arose regarding environmental contamination, including potential pollutants in the soil and groundwater from manufacturing processes (VOCs, SVOCs, dioxins, etc.). Carthage's main commercial area is along Main Street, extending from the northern town limits to the abandoned site. The town currently lacks major industries but the site is already zoned manufacturing. The town aims to collaborate with the current owner of the former Smurfit Stone property to revitalize the large industrial parcel for advanced manufacturing. Carthage has faced significant challenges, including the loss of Smurfit Stone, along with the closure of several downtown stores, and the recent shutdown of an elementary school. These setbacks have left the community searching for a new identity, and the town is now in a rebuilding phase. The location's redevelopment potential is recognized due to its infrastructure and proximity to major transportation routes, making it an attractive site for future industrial or commercial use. The site currently sits vacant with a dilapidated, approximately 41,000 square foot former industrial building, adjoining the Big Blue River. Several ponds utilized by residents for fishing are located in the complex. The site and building represent a public nuisance and eyesore for area residents. The environmental conditions of the site are unknown; however, the former operations and fire likely have impacted soil, groundwater and the adjoining river. The site is also adjacent to single family residences. Harm to nearby receptors cannot be ruled out. Assessment is needed to identify barriers to a successful development for advanced manufacturing.

1.c Identifying Additional Sites: If grant funds remain after assessing the priority sites, additional eligible sites will be identified within the County for assessment using grant dollars. Community outreach is an important component to the success of this type of grant project to ensure use of the funds in a manner supported by the community. We will incorporate brownfields education and outreach at scheduled public meetings. Brownfield inventorying is a dynamic process, and the County will work with community stakeholders to develop a prioritization matrix. The matrix will evaluate factors including active development interest, availability of leveraged funding, location near main streets and sensitive populations, and local stakeholder involvement. High priority will be given to sites with active development interest and where other funding can be leveraged. Prioritization of sites will continue throughout the term of the grant as projects are selected to receive assessment activities and cleanup planning resources.

Revitalization of the Target Areas: Propelled by the notable achievements stemming from the City of Rushville's former USEPA Brownfields Assessment Grant and in alignment with the 2016 Stellar Communities Award, the County has orchestrated an impressive influx of approximately \$461 million in publicly-announced investments including the development of a Diamond Pet Foods manufacturing facility that the owners believe will be the largest pet food manufacturing facility in North America, if not the world. The redevelopment of the former Indiana Soldiers and Sailors Home shall bring with it the potential for commercial, residential, educational, recreational, and industrial development. This is imperative as illustrated by two local housing studies completed that illustrate the need of new housing at all levels within the Rush County Community. The escalating demand for housing, exacerbated by the imminent workforce requirements of the burgeoning local industrial sector, threatens to intensify the already burdensome housing costs, disproportionately impacting the marginalized members of the community. With the anticipated demand for an additional 100-200 multi-family units and 50 new market-rate single-family units highlight that rapid residential development is imperative. Compounded by land scarcity for multi-family

FY2026 U.S. EPA BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT GRANT APPLICATION
SUBMITTED BY RUSH COUNTY, INDIANA

residential housing within the County, the prevailing economic challenges of inflation and soaring interest rates create considerable hurdles for developers to overcome in making new residential ventures financially viable. The County's capacity to address the costs of brownfield redevelopment is currently limited, significantly hindering the necessary influx of revenue from prospective residents. EPA-funded assessments and cleanup planning will remove uncertainty related to contamination and redevelopment costs, enabling the County to accurately scope projects, leverage tax increment financing (TIF) and the Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative program resources, and attract private investment necessary to implement these revitalization plans. This approach not only addresses the perceived issue of contamination at the target sites but also paves the way for the initiation of viable residential, commercial, and industrial redevelopment projects, essential for the County's sustainable growth amidst the prevailing economic landscape.

1.d Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans: The Rush County Area Plan Commission's vision for the **SSCH** site entails a comprehensive approach. Governmental, educational, civic, and economic partners in the community met and determined the best use to be a vocational/workforce training facility, a corporate campus and housing. Community input gathered through public meetings and the County's building scoring matrix will directly inform site prioritization, reuse concepts, and redevelopment phasing in the SSCH complex. Because this site consists of nearly 400 acres and more than 50 buildings, this proposed redevelopment strategy aligns with several of Rush County's overarching Comprehensive Plan objectives and land use plans. The County's Comprehensive Plan, developed in 2024, established goals for advancing "Rural Residential, Institutional, Commercial, and Industrial" opportunities in Rush County. Further, the location of the SSCH Complex opens the availability to boost regional partnering efforts, another key goal in the new county comprehensive plan. Its primary aim is to curate a vibrant hub that offers housing options, an array of educational opportunities, employment opportunities and places to live. Moreover, development of the target areas seeks to enhance connectivity between Rush County and neighboring Knightstown. In the new Rush County Comprehensive Plan passed in 2024, major goals include: Ensuring Rush County has affordable, diverse, and quality housing available for current and future residents; Enhancing Rush County's community facilities and utility infrastructure and maintain a high level of service for existing and future development; and building upon Rush County's strong rural and agricultural base by expanding agribusiness, retaining and attracting complementary companies, and providing support to small-town businesses. The EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant will serve as a powerful supporting tool in meeting the goals.

The County's vision for the **Former Smurfit Stone** site is to supplement the overall redevelopment and revitalization efforts focused in the immediate vicinity of the property. The location and existing zoning is primed for successful industrial redevelopment, adding much-needed career opportunities. Due to the site's dilapidated condition and financial burden, the former owner struggled to clean the site resulting in a worksite death. Due to the immediate proximity within the town center, the dire need to clean and/or redevelop this site is paramount to the safety and well-being of the Carthage community. Redevelopment of the site will remove a blighted site and create positive change related to community enhancements and a safer town center.

1.e Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy: The approach for the **Former Indiana Soldiers and Sailors Home** site is an absolute priority for Rush County and promises transformative outcomes. Through site assessment and cleanup, the project aims to address existing health, safety, and buildability apprehensions, thereby paving the way for successful development. The site's prime location, once relieved of the burdensome extra costs associated with assessment and cleanup planning, is poised to become an economically viable prospect for both public and private stakeholders. Existing walking paths and fishing pond will be rehabilitated and made available for public use. Where feasible, additional energy efficiency measures will also be incorporated into redevelopment plans. Due to age, many existing building inefficiencies exist. Successful redevelopment will ensure upgrades to HVAC/mechanical/electric that are significantly more energy efficient than what is currently in place. Solar and other green energy systems will be utilized where possible. The County expects tax revenue increases of \$51M on the conservative end to more than \$120M based on past local development. Existing non-profit organizations working with HYCA will continue to utilize the site and our vocational partner, Rush to Work, will have training space.

FY2026 U.S. EPA BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT GRANT APPLICATION
SUBMITTED BY RUSH COUNTY, INDIANA

The proposed transformation of the **Former Smurfit Stone** site falls within the town center of Carthage, Indiana. Redevelopment of the site stands to elevate the tax value of the surrounding properties, increase walkability, and increase community quality of place. This tangible community growth will signal the area's positive trajectory to prospective investors and residents alike. The anticipated economic stimulus resulting from the assessment and cleanup of additional brownfield sites across the town is expected to usher in a snowball of redevelopment, fostering an improved standard of living and a more robust tax base. While the cost benefits for the quality of place to the community are hard to enumerate, bringing this shuttered site back to operation may see an investment of \$25M.

Strategy for Leveraging Resources

1.f Resources Needed for Site Reuse: For the Priority Sites identified: At the time of redevelopment, we intend to designate as tax increment financing (TIF) allocation areas intended to assist developers fund projects through the capture of future tax dollars. The County has identified additional resources that will be used to support assessment, remediation, or reuse/redevelopment of priority sites and additional sites identified during the grant project as appropriate and applicable. The following table identifies the source/type, the County's eligibility for the funding, and the use on priority sites.

Funding Source	Description	County Eligibility	Funding Use
Economic Development Income Tax (EDIT) funds (\$3.8M available)	Income tax collected from County residents that is placed in a fund held by Rush County	The County is eligible for funds	Redevelopment/revitalization of brownfield sites. commercial, residential, educational, recreational, and industrial development on the SSCH property
Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI) Funding	Grants can be made by the State of Indiana for the redevelopment use based on a 1/1/3 match State/Local/Private	Rush County is part of the Accelerate Rural Indiana RDA that may apply for grant funding	Inclusion/redevelopment of brownfields into trails/greenways/parks/rec facilities. Rehab of the walkways and fishing pond at SSCH are planned.
Indiana Redevelopment Tax Credit	Tax Credits can be provided by the State of Indiana for redevelopment. Tax Credits can be monetized to provide cash to a project.	Rush County Economic Development Corporation can apply for the tax credits on behalf of the County.	Rehabilitation/reuse of structures on brownfields and redevelopment of brownfields into public-use facilities. Support medium to high-density affordable residential redevelopment at SSCH .

1.g. Use of Existing Infrastructure: The two target sites have been developed and contain the required public infrastructure (water, sewer, electricity, etc.) to support most types of redevelopments. Each of the priority sites have a long history of commercial and industrial use, so the existing infrastructure (including roads and, in some locations, rails for access and transportation) extends to these sites and will support the revitalization plans discussed in **Section 1.b.i**. By dedicating funds to these areas, the County will be able to maximize and facilitate the use of this existing infrastructure. The most likely infrastructure improvement need will be high-speed fiber/other telecommunication technologies, which may be supported by City loan funds available for technology, manufacturing, and industrial companies investing in the County.

2. Community Need and Community Engagement

Community Need

2.a. Community's Need for Funding: The County, made up of small towns and rural areas, stands at the cusp of a transformative period, fueled by the burgeoning development of Diamond Pet Foods and a major proposed dairy operation. Despite this promising trajectory, the County is challenged with a pressing issue: the imperative redevelopment of prevalent brownfield sites. These blighted areas currently cast a shadow over the community's progress, hindering the much-needed expansion of housing options for the influx workers. Our small towns limit the amount of tax revenue we can get from Property taxes. Our target area, Carthage, has a population of under 1,000 people. We need housing and business to bolster our coffers. In response to this critical demand, the County commissioned a comprehensive plan in 2024, which unequivocally underscored the necessity for multifamily units and new single-family homes in the upcoming

FY2026 U.S. EPA BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT GRANT APPLICATION
SUBMITTED BY RUSH COUNTY, INDIANA

years¹. The redevelopment of the Indiana Soldiers and Sailor Home will be the catalyst for new housing opportunities, matched with the economic impact of a proposed 500 new full-time jobs, this goal is imperative for the responsible and responsive growth for the Rush County community as a whole. Not only will it help Rush County but neighboring Henry County as well, Knightstown, located less than two miles north of SSCH, has population of less than 2,200 people. While out of the County, Knightstown's residents would benefit greatly from our project. Nearly three times as large, Knightstown has very similar issues to Carthage. A surge in potential investments within the 400-acre site and redevelopment of the Smurfit Stone site will drive the creation of more employment opportunities creating new job seekers in need of feasible housing options in proximity to their workplaces. Carthage has unemployment rates for people between 25 and 29 years of 26.5% and over 37% for people aged 55 to 59. Redevelopment of the Smurfit site for advanced manufacturing is expected to add 50 to 75 jobs. This will be a massive addition to the small town. Failure to provide accessible housing could potentially precipitate a detrimental loss of local income taxes and curtail investments in the area's economic growth. However, the median household income (MHI) of the County residents is \$62,386 and \$43,598 for the town of Carthage (nearly 17% and 42% less than national value respectively)². The poverty rate for the town of Carthage is 16.3% with the census tract covering Smurfit and SSCH is 13% (compared to the national rate of 12.5%)⁴. These levels of poverty severely limit incoming funds to the County to spur this necessary development. Now, more than ever, the County is rallying for the needed funding to revitalize our brownfield sites and pave the way for an inclusive, sustainable future, where economic prosperity is not a dream but a tangible reality for its residents.

2.b. Health and Welfare of Sensitive Populations

The target areas include sensitive populations such as low-income individuals, children, and female-headed households. In these regions, poverty rates range from 13% to 18%, with significant percentages of children (18.7% to 32.4% under 18) and female householders (14.2% to 32.7%). Major health and welfare challenges stem from ongoing disinvestment in neighborhoods and commercial districts, alongside unchecked exposure to contaminated soil and groundwater, and buildings that may harbor hazardous materials. Brownfields in these areas are situated near residential neighborhoods and waterways, placing vulnerable populations at risk. Residents in the County routinely fish in the ponds on the Smurfit site. Many residents remain in these locations due to financial constraints that prevent them from relocating. The County aims to utilize grant funds to encourage investment in these areas while also mitigating community exposure to contamination and hazardous materials.

2.c. Greater than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions

The target areas include brownfields that may be adversely affecting residents, particularly vulnerable populations who are unable to relocate. These sites potentially expose them to various contaminants through direct contact, ingestion, inhalation of airborne particles, and vapor intrusion. The contaminants likely found at these priority sites are known to be linked to cancer and respiratory issues. Available health data indicates elevated rates of cancer and respiratory disease compared to state and national averages, warranting further investigation and mitigation through site assessment.

Health Complication Category	U.S.	Indiana	Rush County
Cancer Death Rate*	128.7 ³	183.5 ⁵	184.9⁵
Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease Death Rate*	49.2 ⁴	53.7 ⁵	85.7⁵
Lung Cancer Incidence Rate*	60.2 ⁵	71.9 ⁵	79.1⁵

*Age-adjusted rates per 100,000

Grant-funded assessments will identify and characterize specific health threats from brownfields affecting residents. Implementation of remediation measures and engineering controls during or prior to redevelopment will curtail these exposures. This approach will minimize spread of contaminated soil and

¹ *The County Housing Analysis, 2023*

² *U.S. Census Bureau 2022, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*

³ *CDC, State Cancer Profiles, 2016-2020*

⁴ *Indiana Mortality Report, 2017*

⁵ *Indiana Indicators, 2018-2022*

FY2026 U.S. EPA BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT GRANT APPLICATION
SUBMITTED BY RUSH COUNTY, INDIANA

groundwater, while eliminating hazardous building materials will ensure safer residential and commercial use, thereby reducing environmental risks and potential health issues in the target areas.

2.d. Economically Impoverished/Disproportionally Impacted Populations: Poverty rates in the target area census tract (16.3%) exceed those of the U.S. and Indiana (12.5% and 12.3%, respectively)⁶, and median household and per capita incomes in the County (\$62,386 and \$29,735) are approximately 16-29% lower than the U.S. (\$75,149 and \$42,261)². Per capita income in town of Carthage is \$20,812, 50% lower than the state. Approximately 11.2% of the County's residents receive public assistance¹³ with residents in target areas at 5.9%. This is compared to 9% in the State. Median home values in the County are 61% of the U.S. median value of \$281,900². Our target areas are also home to our impoverished neighborhoods. As the quantity of jobs in the County have decreased our residents have had to look elsewhere for employment. In the State, 26.4% of people travel outside their county of residence for work. Rush County's residents and the residents of our target areas leave the County at rates of 55.5% for the County and 64.3% in Carthage. Data in the table below came from USEPA's EJSCREEN which combined environmental and demographic indicators to understand how existing pollution may present potential adverse human health or environmental effects on communities. Our communities bear a disproportionate burden of the environmental and economic repercussions stemming from the transformation of industrial and commercial operations into brownfields. These areas have historically been neglected or overlooked, and with recent efforts and funds are only just beginning to be directed towards the revitalization of these struggling neighborhoods.

Target Area	Environmental Indicators*	Health Disparities Indicators*				Socioeconomic Indicators*	
	Lead paint	Low life expectancy	Cancer	Asthma	Heart Disease	Low Income	Unemployment rate
Carthage	84	41	68	65	74	79	74

*Compared to the U.S. An indicator of 95 means that only 5% of the U.S. block groups have a higher or worse value.

EPA Brownfields funding represents the only mechanism available to directly address these cumulative environmental burdens while simultaneously advancing economic recovery in these communities.

The County has formed an at-large site selection community to provide regular community input on proposed assessment sites and redevelopment plans, ensuring local stakeholder needs are considered at the onset of each project. The committee will be tasked with gathering public input on potential projects and will meet once a month along with local, state, and military stakeholders and report their findings to the County. The committee will also report back to the public at regular county council meetings. Committee member information is provided in the table below. By leveraging grant-funded assessments and subsequent redevelopment initiatives, community-prioritized and targeted interventions can be introduced to incorporate these marginalized communities. The identification, removal, and effective management of contamination in the target areas will serve as a foundational step in promoting a healthier living environment. The focused redevelopment of target properties will help us retain our current residents and businesses as our residents now have to leave to find jobs and maintain their livelihoods. The creation of new job opportunities within walkable distances will play a pivotal role in boosting household incomes and reducing the community's reliance on fossil fuel-based energy. Furthermore, the resulting expansion of tax bases will allow the County to better provide essential services to residents, thereby contributing to the promotion of environmental equity and socioeconomic stability within the affected population.

Community Engagement

2.e. Project Involvement and 2.f. Project Roles: The grant project is set to involve a robust coalition of community partners, each playing a pivotal role in partnering with the County. These collaborators will have representation on an advisory group that will contribute their expertise and guidance throughout the process, aiding in critical decisions, and offering technical support for the selection, cleanup, and revitalization of the brownfield sites.

Partner Name	Point of Contact	Role in Project
--------------	------------------	-----------------

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau 2021, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

FY2026 U.S. EPA BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT GRANT APPLICATION

SUBMITTED BY RUSH COUNTY, INDIANA

Rush County Commissioners	Ron Jarman*, Commissioner 765-745-0013 R.Jarman@RushCounty.IN.gov	Provide brownfields redevelopment planning help and assist with acquiring additional funds to support remediation/ redevelopment.
Indiana National Guard	General Michael Grundman 317-247-2080 Michael.P.Grundman.mil@Army.mil	Identify/select sites needing assessment and cleanup, support redevelopment planning following assessments
Rush County ECDC	John McCane* Executive Director 765-561-0727 JohnMcCane@RushECDC.org	Identify/select sites needing assessment and cleanup, collect and disseminate feedback regarding assessment and future reuse plans, and inform community members of the grant progress.
City of Rushville	Michael P. Pavey*, Mayor 765-932-3735	Provide leadership in developing strategy and seeking funding opportunities.
Selection Committee Members	Brian Sheehan*, Rush County resident Robby Hamilton, Lifelong Resident of Carthage	Provide input on site selection and outreach to stakeholders.

2.g. Incorporating Community Input: Upon selection, the County will disseminate information via press releases, local newspapers, and digital platforms. Radio ads will target a wider audience, while notices at libraries, community centers, and churches will enhance accessibility. Key community organizations will also be involved in outreach efforts. Spanish versions and translators will be available for inclusive engagement of our Spanish speaking stakeholders. The County will prioritize employing multiple methods for information sharing and engagement to involve a more diverse community. A public kick-off meeting will initiate the brownfield project, incorporating public input. Updates on selected sites will be regularly communicated. Stakeholder meetings will ensure ongoing feedback. Public meetings in accessible locations with remote attendance options will facilitate community engagement. Regular updates will be provided at bi-monthly The Rush County Commissioners meetings. Project materials will be archived online and at the Rush County Courthouse for community access. Our site selection committee is committed to attending public meetings, gathering feedback from community stakeholders, consolidating that feedback, and sharing it back to the County and community stakeholders.

3. Task Descriptions, Cost Estimates, and Measuring Progress

Description of Tasks and Activities: The County intends to utilize the grant to evaluate priority sites within the target areas and identify other high-risk sites, facilitating their cleanup and redevelopment. The County has readily available access to the target sites. General Grundman of the ING shared in writing his support of these goals. The majority of the assessment funding will be expended on our target sites. Likewise, the majority of our cleanup planning dollars are set aside to be spent on the target sites; however, we are planning on at least two other cleanup plans to be prepared. To execute this plan, the County has outlined four key tasks for the grant project. Tasks 1 and 2 will manage overall grant operations, while Tasks 3 and 4 will directly focus on the priority and additional identified sites. In-kind County staff time will be contributed for Tasks 1, 2 and 3 and for travel not accounted for in 3.b.

Task 1 – Programmatic
<p>a. Project Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Work Plan will be prepared. • The Cooperative Agreement (CA) will be executed. • A qualified environmental consultant (QEC) will be retained in compliance with applicable federal procurement regulations. • Activation of the site selection committee. • A project “kick-off” meeting will be hosted by the County and consultant. • County will complete all required quarterly reports; the Assessment, Cleanup, and Redevelopment Exchange System (ACRES) will be updated; and final project closeout documentation will be submitted. • Staff will attend brownfields training programs.
<p>b. Anticipated Project Schedule</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Work Plan will be prepared within one month of receiving notification of the grant award. • The CA will be executed within three months of award.

FY2026 U.S. EPA BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT GRANT APPLICATION
SUBMITTED BY RUSH COUNTY, INDIANA

- A QEC will be retained within three months of award.
- Quarterly reports will be submitted within 30 days of the end of the quarterly reporting period and ACRES will be updated as Priority and non-Priority Sites are assessed. ACRES will subsequently be updated with cleanup and/or redevelopment information during and/or after the performance period. Final project closeout documentation will be submitted as required once the performance period ends.
- A "kick-off" meeting will be held within two months of receiving notification of the award.

c. Task/Activity Lead-The County will lead the day-to-day coordination of grant activities, performance reporting, and ongoing training of staff.

d. Outputs-Satisfaction of administrative requirements of the grant including the Work Plan, CA, quarterly reports (16); ACRES updates; staff training; public meetings and development of outreach materials; final project closeout documentation.

Task 2 – Community Outreach/Site Inventory

a. Project Implementation

- Community outreach and education at public meetings.
- Monthly meetings (or as needed) of the site selection committee.
- Correspondence with community stakeholders about assessments will be ongoing.
- Assistance will be requested from the County health department as appropriate throughout the performance period to understand and prioritize health risks at brownfield sites identified for assessment.
- A selection system for assessments will be developed to identify and prioritize sites in addition to the priority sites based on: 1) active development interest 2) availability of leveraged funding 3) location near main streets and sensitive populations 4) local stakeholder involvement.
- Non-priority sites will be added to the inventory.
- In-kind staff time and travel will be contributed for amounts over those accounted for in 3.b.

b. Anticipated Project Schedule

- An initial public information and input meeting within two months of notification of award.
- Community outreach activities will continue throughout the performance period.
- The prioritization system will be developed within three months of grant award.
- Non-priority sites will be added to the inventory throughout the four-year performance period.

c. Task/Activity Lead-The County will coordinate/conduct community meetings and community outreach activities in conjunction with the environmental consultant. Frequency of the meetings will be determined based on community engagement. The County will be the lead and work with the QEC to update/maintain an inventory of brownfield sites.

d. Outputs

- Facebook and website posts, fact sheets, meeting minutes and, more generally, effective communication to the public and stakeholders regarding the objectives and progress of the project.
- A more complete and comprehensive inventory of Brownfield sites in the County.

Task 3 – Site Assessment

a. Project Implementation

- The selected environmental consultant will prepare a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and submit to EPA.
- Priority sites and additional sites identified during the grant period will be evaluated through performance of Phase I and/or Phase II ESAs, conducted in accordance with All Appropriate Inquiry (ASTM Standard E1527-21). Hazardous Materials Assessments will also be conducted. Health & Safety Plans (HASPs) will be prepared prior to each assessment.
- Assessments on both priority and other sites following securing site access will continue.
- County and QEC will meet to ensure required site access has been secured, individual assessments are progressing, and the overall project schedule is met.

b. Anticipated Project Schedule

- Phase I and/or Phase II assessments will continue throughout the performance period.
- Phase II assessments will begin after submission/approval of the QAPP; within three months of environmental consultant selection and grant start date.

FY2026 U.S. EPA BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT GRANT APPLICATION
SUBMITTED BY RUSH COUNTY, INDIANA

**No indirect costs will be incurred.*

3.f. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results: The County will diligently track, measure, and report on the success of the project utilizing ACRES to track the following outputs: number of Phase I & II ESAs completed and cleanup planning documents. The actual outputs will be compared to the estimated number of outputs listed in **Section 3.b**. The County will track, measure, and report the following outcomes in ACRES: acres of land assessed; land remediated & redeveloped; acres of parks and greenspace preserved or created; number of jobs created or retained; tax revenue generated; redevelopment investment value; and other funding leveraged. The County will report outcomes/outputs that cannot be easily entered into ACRES (i.e., website updates, staff training, community outreach/meetings, and brownfields) in quarterly reports. The County will also evaluate the extent to which site assessments, cleanup planning, and future redevelopment result in the protection of human health and the environment. The County will evaluate progress semi-annually against the goals in **Section 3.b** and, if goals are not being met or are off-schedule, will meet with local stakeholders and the environmental consultant to discuss the challenges and adjust the project approach and schedule, as needed.

4. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance

Programmatic Capability:

4.a. Organizational Capacity, 4.b. Structure, and 4.c. Key Staff: The County has experience managing grants and other projects and will employ the same project team during the entire four-year grant period. The project team includes The Executive Director for the Rush County Economic and Community Development Corporation (**John McCane**), **Leslie Shaul**, and an **environmental consultant** (see 4.a.ii). The team will be led by **Mr. McCane**, who has been an integral part of Rush County for nearly 30 years, including serving as Mayor of Rushville from 1992 to 1995. Mr. McCane was also responsible for the day-to-day activities of Rushville's \$364k FY2015 Community Wide Assessment Grant. Mr. McCane's experience consists of redevelopment, brownfield, and municipal financial management experience. He will be responsible for all grant operations & management of the environmental consultant. **Ms. Shaul** will serve as assistant Project Manager. She has spent her career working in the arena of workforce development and strategy. The Rush County Auditor will also provide financial management support. This experienced project team will be able to quickly and effectively complete all administrative and financial requirements for the grant to ensure the project is successfully completed within the 4-year period.

4.d. Cooperative Agreement, the County will prepare the project Request for Qualifications and will direct and oversee the procurement process and select a consultant within 3 months of award. The consultant will have managed U.S. EPA Assessment Grant projects and be familiar with programmatic requirements.

Past Performance and Accomplishments

4.e. The County has not been awarded an EPA Assessment grant.

(1) Accomplishments: While Rush County has not previously received an EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant, the County has successfully administered multiple federal funding programs demonstrating its ability to meet EPA reporting and compliance requirements. We did receive federal ARPA funding (\$3.22M), Indiana LPA Road/Bridge Grants (\$10M) and federal Broadband Grants (\$1.1M). These grants have helped to provide critical broadband connectivity in rural areas while also developing invaluable infrastructure improvements for the public safety of the citizens.

(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements: the County has successfully developed Work Plans and successfully negotiated Cooperative Agreements with several federal agencies. The County has utilized their ARPA funding to drive private investment within Rush County. They have also utilized ARPA funding as the foundation for the development of the Love Community Center. This facility will bring together funding from state, local, private and federal partners for the redevelopment of a former big box store that will bring together the public library, the Senior Center, daycare/childcare, the county food pantry and fitness together under one roof. The County has extensive experience working with federal funding for police and public safety, infrastructure development, expanding broadband for education and throughout Rush County's rural communities. The County has prepared progress reports as required for each grant and no corrective actions were needed. ARPA funding is required to be spent down by the end of 2026 and the County is on track to meeting that goal.

**THRESHOLD CRITERIA
RUSH COUNTY
FY26 U.S. EPA BROWNFIELD ASSESSMENT GRANT APPLICATION**

THRESHOLD CRITERIA

1. **Applicant Eligibility:** **A.** Rush County is a General Purpose Unit of Local Government in the State of Indiana. **B.** The County is not a 501(c)(4).

2. **Community Involvement:** The main stakeholders in this grant project will be citizens and employees, employer companies, business organizations, lenders, and developers in Rush County. Upon selection, the County will disseminate information via press releases, local newspapers, and digital platforms. Radio ads will target a wider audience, while notices at libraries, community centers, and churches will enhance accessibility. Key community organizations will also be involved in outreach efforts (see table below). Spanish versions and translators will be available for inclusive engagement. The County will prioritize employing multiple methods for information sharing and engagement to involve a more diverse community, including formation of a site selection committee to provide regular community input on proposed assessment sites and redevelopment plans. A public kick-off meeting will initiate the brownfield project and will incorporate public input. Updates on selected sites will be regularly communicated. Regular publicized stakeholder meetings, including the site selection committee meetings, will ensure ongoing feedback. Public meetings in accessible locations will facilitate community engagement. Regular updates will be provided at regular County Commission meetings. Project materials will be archived online and at the County courthouse for community access.

The grant project is set to involve a robust coalition of community partners, each playing a pivotal role in partnering with the County. These collaborators will have representation through various advisory groups (see below) that will contribute their expertise and guidance throughout the process, aiding in critical decisions, and offering technical support for the selection, assessment, cleanup, and revitalization of the brownfield sites.

Partner Name	Point of Contact	Role in Project
Rush County Commissioners	Ron Jarman, Commissioner 765-745-0013 RJarman@RushCounty.IN.gov	Provide brownfields redevelopment planning help and assist with acquiring additional funds to support remediation and redevelopment of priority sites.
Indiana National Guard	General Michael Grundman 317-247-2080 Michael.P.Grundman.mil@Army.mil	Identify/select sites needing assessment and cleanup, support redevelopment planning following assessment of priority sites
Rush County Economic and Community Development Corp	John McCane Executive Director 765-561-0727 JohnMcCane@RushECDC.org	Identify/select sites needing assessment and cleanup, collect and disseminate feedback regarding assessment and future reuse plans, and inform community members of the grant progress.

City of Rushville	Michael P. Pavey, Mayor 765-932-3735	Provide leadership in developing strategy and seeking funding opportunities.
At Large Representative	Brian Sheehan, Rush County Resident	Provide input on site selection and outreach to stakeholders
At Large Representative	Robby Hamilton, Lifelong Resident of Carthage	Provide input on site selection and outreach to stakeholders

3. **Expenditure of Assessment Grant Funds:** The County does not have an open EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant or Multipurpose Grant.

4. **Contractors and Named Subrecipients:** The County has not procured a contractor and a subrecipient has not been named.