

Here's how the state budget will impact Ohio development, brownfield remediation

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The recently signed state budget sets aside half a billion dollars for brownfield remediation and demolition of abandoned buildings, which state and local leaders say could be transformative for Ohio communities.

The recently enacted operating budget includes \$500 million to support brownfield remediation, building demolition and site renovation grants to revitalize neighborhoods and improve sites for future development. The program will distribute \$1 million to each county in Ohio; the remaining funds will be competitive.

Gov. [Mike DeWine](#) signed the budget on July 1. Lt. Gov. [Jon Husted](#) told *Columbus Business First* the final rules are not written yet on



TRISTAN NAVERA

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the brownfield remediation and building demolition programs, but he hopes to have the program up and running as soon as possible.

"This is something that has widespread support," Husted said. "A lot of these properties are located in legacy communities that might not necessarily have the funds to remedy these issues. In concept, we would like to focus on properties that communities have prioritized, but wouldn't get done otherwise."

The funds, which will be managed by the state's Development Services Agency, come from some Covid-19 relief money the state received.

"This is a way for one-time funds to have a last impact on our communities and a near-term impact," Husted said. "This could be transformative for some communities and have an impact for decades to come."

Husted said the program will be "bottom-up," meaning communities will bring projects to the program.

"These buildings are potentially an environmental hazard, they drag down the entire neighborhood. These properties have negative momentum and fixing them can dramatically change the culture of the community," he said.

Quinten Harris, deputy director for jobs and economic development for Columbus, said this program will be especially beneficial to cities like Columbus, which have a mix of urban, suburban and rural areas.

"We are really excited about this program, especially given the new equity agenda the city has adopted. This program will help revitalize neighborhoods and clean up nuisance buildings all over the city," Harris said.

Harris said Columbus has brownfield areas and abandoned buildings that could be fixed with this program.

"This is huge if you don't have a boatload of money to invest in demolishing an abandoned building," Harris said. "This can help blighted neighborhoods, urban neighborhoods."

Central Ohio is growing rapidly, Husted said, and more office or industrial development and residential developments will need to be built to accommodate the growing population. With brownfield sites, the infrastructure, like utilities and roads, are already in place.

Husted said the program will aim to aid communities that need help. Parts of the state that are hot for development will be taken care of by the market, Husted said, but this program will help areas that may have been overlooked.

Harris said he can see the city using the program to leverage public dollars if a private sector company expresses interest in coming to the area. Harris said it is also important to keep industrial and manufacturing sites up-to-date to attract potential new businesses and retain businesses that are already here.

Businesses want to be near their workforce, Harris said, and this program can help cities invest funds they would be using on these types of development and reinvest in neighborhoods to make that possible.

"This is a potentially catalytic program," Harris said. "These funds can help a city reinvest in neighborhoods and reinvent themselves."

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