

# Montgomery County Land Bank awarded \$500K EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant

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A federal agency has awarded a local land bank with new grant funding to clean up vacant and abandoned properties. This funding will help remediate the sites to support redevelopment opportunities.

The Montgomery County Land Reutilization Corp. (MCLRC) received a \$500,000 Community-Wide Brownfield Assessment Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The grant provides funding to inventory, characterize, assess and conduct a range of planning activities, including developing site-specific cleanup plans.

MCLRC, also known as the Land Bank, will use the funding to support Montgomery County communities struggling with environmentally challenged, vacant and abandoned properties.



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These properties, remnants of past environmental practices by defunct businesses, are a blighting and destabilizing influence on neighborhoods, the county says.

"The Montgomery County Land Reutilization Corporation is grateful for the opportunities this funding award provides to expand our impact in areas where blighted, abandoned brownfield sites have resulted in disinvestment," Montgomery County Commissioner and Land Bank Board Chair Carolyn Rice said. "This funding will facilitate MCLRC and communities transition of environmentally challenged sites into viable, marketable properties."

MCLRC is one of six Ohio entities to be selected for this type of grant.

"The Montgomery County Land Reutilization Corporation submitted an outstanding application, and we deeply appreciate the tremendous commitment of time and energy that went into its preparation," said David Lloyd, director of the Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization for the U.S. EPA.

Abandoned, non-productive brownfield properties are frequently tax delinquent and often located in underserved, lower-income communities. These sites are known to reduce property values and adversely impact the health and welfare of neighboring residents. According to Land Bank officials, the EPA grant will create opportunities to expand collaboration with county jurisdictions and leverage resources to address these issues.

"The U.S. EPA grant allows the Land Bank to assist Montgomery County communities that would otherwise not have the financial, technical or administrative resources to address these properties," MCLRC Executive Director Mike Grauwelman said. "This will be a catalyst for repositioning these sites for future economic development."

Remediating environmentally contaminated property can be costly and time consuming. The process first requires an understanding of ownership and liability status, followed by an extensive assessment, characterizing the contaminants and developing a remediation plan to address them. Implementing the plan can entail years of sustained community effort and financial resources.

But remediating brownfields can have multi-faceted benefits to communities. It reduces the need for additional infrastructure for sprawling new development, increases property values and expands the tax base.

“Transforming idle, environmentally compromised property benefits the entire community,” Montgomery County Treasurer John McManus said. “It encourages investment and redevelopment, creates wealth through increased property values and raises tax revenue which benefit schools, fire, health services and our whole community.”

The Montgomery County Land Reutilization Corporation is a nonprofit agent for the county whose mission is to reposition distressed real estate to support communities in building quality of life and vibrant neighborhoods.

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