

Brownfields: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Awards East Arkansas Planning and Development District \$300,000 for Assessments



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The United States Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) announced in an April 25th news release that it had awarded \$300,000 to the East Arkansas Planning and Development District (“East District”).

The East District is headquartered in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

The \$300,000 is targeted for Brownfields assessment grants.

Many states (including Arkansas) and the federal government have statutes, regulations, and policies that are intended to address “Brownfields.” Brownfields are often referred to as real property (improved or unimproved), the expansion, redevelopment, or use of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants. Incentive provisions, grant programs, liability exemptions, action/cleanup standards have been utilized for a number of years to attempt to reduce the barriers to reuse or redevelopment of Brownfield properties. The goal of Brownfield programs is to encourage redevelopment and investment in such properties to increase the local tax base, facilitate job growth, utilize existing infrastructure, encourage infill, and take pressure off greenspace.

Redevelopment can include any number of uses. For example, the World Series champions’ Houston Astros Minute Maid Park is the site of a former 38-acre Brownfield. It was redeveloped pursuant to the City of Houston’s “Brownfield Redevelopment Program.” The site was an abandoned intercity passenger terminal prior to its redevelopment.

The award to the East District is part of a \$54.5 million that EPA states it is distributing to 145 communities nationwide to assess and clean up underutilized properties.

The news release quotes East District Executive Director Melissa Rivers as stating:

This grant affords us an unparalleled opportunity to aid communities in addressing the unique Brownfield challenges that face our region. It will position our region to compete in our global economy and create an environment fostering job growth and economic development. We are excited to work with EPA and our communities to see the project through to fruition.”

EPA states that the East District will receive two assessment grants targeting 12 counties in eastern Arkansas. A community-wide hazardous substances grant of \$200,000 will be used to conduct Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments. A \$100,000 grant for petroleum will also be used for similar site

assessments. Both grants are stated to be targeted to update the area's brownfields inventory, prioritize brownfields sites, prepare cleanup and reuse plans, and support community outreach activities.

[A copy of the news release can be downloaded here.](#)