



## **Office of the Cook County Board President**

**Toni Preckwinkle**

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## **Grant-Funded Assessment is Key First Step in Redeveloping**

### **‘Brownfield’ Sites in Western Suburbs: Preckwinkle**

Assessment of vacant, abandoned or underutilized “brownfields” in seven western suburbs that could eventually lead to their cleanup and redevelopment will proceed following action by the Cook County Board of Commissioners today.

At its regular meeting today the County Board approved a measure to formally authorize the acceptance of a \$600,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The grant award, first announced in May by the U.S. EPA, follows application by the County’s Department of Environmental Control and a coalition of municipal partners in this project: Bellwood, Forest Park, Franklin Park, Maywood, Melrose Park, Northlake and Schiller Park.

Proceeds of the grant will be used specifically for environmental assessment of potentially contaminated properties within those communities, a first step toward their eventually revitalization.

“This grant allows us to move forward with initial determinations on the condition of these brownfields,” said County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. “Assisting these local communities with existing environmental problems that can help stimulate growth and economic

development is a key priority of my administration, and an important part of that is working toward turning long-neglected land to productive use.”

At least 87 vacant, abandoned or underutilized sites have been identified in the coalition communities, and the communities themselves have identified additional brownfields, some on the sites of closed manufacturers. Redevelopment is often stymied because sites are contaminated, or believed to be so, and developers are therefore unwilling to assume unknown economic liabilities.

With this grant, the County and partner communities will be able to assess brownfield sites and their redevelopment potential. This work funded through this grant could also pave the way for ultimately creating a revolving loan fund to assist with cleanup and specific redevelopment projects.

"Intergovernmental cooperation and collaboration allows us to work together to leverage grant funding that we may not be able to secure on our own," stated Franklin Park Mayor Barrett Pedersen. "This grant will help to address environmental issues that hinder redevelopment and to ultimately attract new investment to our community."

The County's Department of Environmental Control has begun working with coalition member communities on next steps, including public outreach and education.

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