

City of Brillion receives two grants for BIW site

By David Nordby
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BRILLION – Grant help is on the way for the City of Brillion in the redevelopment of the Brillion Works site.

Two grants, one worth \$500,000 and another worth at least \$358,000, will go toward the cleanup of the site and the restoration of Spring Creek.

The city received notice last week that it will receive \$500,000 from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for cleanup purposes at the site under the EPA's Brownfields program.

"These communities are ready to move forward with redevelopment; they just lacked the funding to take that next step," EPA Regional Administrator Kurt Thiede said through a press release. "EPA's Brownfields



SMALL CITY, BIG HEART

grants help jumpstart the process by providing support for assessments and cleanups."

The city had previously received a \$500,000 idle site grant for demolition of the former Brillion Iron Works buildings from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC).

With demolition out of the way, cleaning contaminated areas on the

site is the next step.

"Before we can develop, we need to do some cleanup," Brillion City Administrator Lori Gosz said.

A "brownfield" is a property whose future use is complicated by potential presence of hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants. There are estimated to be more than 450,000 of them in the country.

Every grant that the city applies

for is unique. The city must match a percentage of the funding to receive the grant. Those vary by grant. Some funding allows the city to use other grants to meet their necessary match, like the EPA grant where they need to contribute a \$100,000 match.

"It is a relief. Without the help of those grants it would be harder to complete the projects that we want to get done in the timeframe that we want to get them done. The goal is to get development on that property so the [TIF #5] can start growing," Gosz said.

Ayres Associates assisted with applying for the EPA grant last fall.

"That's part of the process. We don't have any money, so we apply for whatever grants we can get and fortunately you [get] some once in a while," Brillion Mayor Mel Edinger

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said. "We're just glad to get it."

The other grant comes from Calumet County. The county awarded \$358,000 to the city through CDBG (Community Block Development Grant) CLOSE funding. Chilton, Hilbert, New Holstein and Sherwood also received a piece of the \$1.23 million pie.

CDBG CLOSE funding meets the federal objectives established by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development

Block Grant Program. The state has since closed the grant in Wisconsin, but Calumet County opted to give the funds to communities rather than county projects like roads.

"It's a really powerful thing for all of those communities. It really does jumpstart their ability to take on those important local projects," Calumet County Community Economic Development Director Mary Kohrell said.

Brillion will be using the funds to daylight Spring Creek as it goes through TIF #5 in the Brillion Works site.

Before they do that, they will apply for additional CDBG funds that would close to double the \$358,000

they are guaranteed to receive.

"It facilitates the city's ability to seek competitive CDBG grant funding which they really otherwise would not be able to do in 2020," Kohrell said.

If the city were to not get the competitive grants, they still would have the \$358,000 to use.

The timing worked out well for the city across the board as the county allocated the CDBG funds at the same time as the Brillion Works redevelopment. The competitive grant applications are due in June.

"They are extremely competitive. It's federal funding so everything CDBG is housing and urban development money," Kohrell said.

Seventy percent has to go for low to moderate income needs. The other thirty percent, where the Brillion Work site applies, aid in the prevention of blight or fill emergency needs.

"It's going to be difficult to secure the grant but no less it pays to try," Kohrell said.

If the city were granted the funds, they would have more than \$1 million for the site.

The city had previously applied for CDBG funding at a time when they fell under the low to moderate income criteria. The county has seen wages go up everywhere, with less communities falling under that criteria now, Kohrell says.

Grants remain a huge focal point of the redevelopment of the site. The city meets with the site's developer, Brillion Works LLC, monthly. Gosz says grants are a topic of conversation every meeting.

"Some you win, some you lose, but it doesn't stop us from trying," Gosz said.

Applying for grants has been part of the process since the beginning of redevelopment.

"We'll continue to try and to get as many grants as we can get, and that was one of the reasons for processing this the way we are, where the city actually owns the property because we can do that and Ariens Company can't," Edinger said.