

Gov. Walker: Announces \$500,000 state grant to support redevelopment of former national envelope corporation site

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WEDC grant will help fund demolition of area to make way for new commercial center

TOWN OF GRAND CHUTE – Governor Scott Walker today announced that the Town of Grand Chute is receiving a \$500,000 state grant for the redevelopment of the former National Envelope Corp. building, which has been demolished to make way for a new commercial center.

“We are taking a huge step forward toward removing this blighted 55-year-old building on a highly visible location off I-41 and replacing it with a modern retail center,” said Governor Walker, who joined town and business leaders in Grand Chute to make the announcement. “Through the \$500,000 grant we are showing how state and local governments are working together with the private sector to find new opportunities for economic development that will create jobs and spur future growth. This investment is good news for the entire Fox Valley and the State of Wisconsin.”

The grant from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) will be used to help offset the costs of demolishing existing structures and associated infrastructure of the 300,000-square-foot building. Now that demolition is complete, the site will be redeveloped into the new home for WG&R Furniture, a family-owned

business with nine locations in northeastern Wisconsin.

The initial phase of the \$4 million redevelopment project includes a 94,000-square-foot facility for WG&R. Future phases of development on the 28-acre site include additional high-quality retail and restaurant tenants, and possibly a hotel or an outpatient medical facility.

Construction of WG&R Furniture's new facility is expected to be completed in 2019.

"This location will be WG&R Furniture's new flagship location, incorporating exciting new showroom features that we believe will be a benchmark for future showrooms in the furniture industry," said Jim Greene, CEO of WG&R Furniture. "This is a major milestone for our company, and the support from the Town of Grand Chute and the State of Wisconsin was a key part of making this important project a reality."

"Mr. Greene is transforming this highly-visible site along the I-41 corridor from an abandoned industrial building to a vibrant retail destination," said Town Chairman Dave Schowalter. "This development will have a significant impact on the Town of Grand Chute and the entire region."

At one point, more than 37 billion envelopes per year were manufactured at the facility, which closed its doors in 2014 after the National Envelope Corp. and a subsequent owner filed for bankruptcy. Over the last four years, several developers have tried unsuccessfully to redevelop the property because of challenges related to infrastructure and environmental issues.

The grant comes from WEDC's Idle Sites Redevelopment Program, which was created in 2013 and stimulates investment and job creation at idle, abandoned and underutilized manufacturing sites that cannot be redeveloped solely by the private sector due to their scale and complexity.

The grants may be used for demolition, environmental remediation or site-specific improvements defined in the community's redevelopment plan. The goal of the program is to advance the site to shovel-ready status or to enhance the site's market attractiveness to encourage business growth.

"There were numerous challenges that prevented other developers from taking on this project," said Mark R. Hogan, secretary and CEO of WEDC, the state's lead economic development organization. "Through the Idle Sites Program, WEDC can

help offset some of the developer's costs to make a project like this economically viable."

Since the program's inception, WEDC has provided 18 Idle Sites grants to 24 communities throughout the state for redevelopment projects that are expected to create more than 6,000 jobs and have an economic impact of more than \$600 million.

Other Idle Sites grants that have been awarded in the region include:

\$425,000 for the redevelopment of the former Larsen Cannery along the Fox River in Green Bay. The site will be home to an upscale office, retail and residential development ultimately incorporating \$25 million in private investment.

\$500,000 to redevelop a long-vacant 90-acre New Page Paper Mill site located along the Fox River. Ultimately, the project will include a \$12 million mixed-use neighborhood including 60,000 square feet of commercial space and 800 residential units.

\$1 million for Phase I of the Central Wisconsin Applied Research and Business Park in Port Edwards.