

WEDC: City of Brillion receives \$500,000 state grant to support redevelopment of former Brillion Iron Works Site

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WEDC funds will offset costs of clearing the site for first phase of \$10 million project

BRILLION, WI. DEC. 17, 2018 - In a major step in the redevelopment of the former Brillion Iron Works site, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) today announced the City of Brillion is receiving a \$500,000 grant to help finance demolition work on the site.

The Brillion Iron Works site consists of several buildings that have been home to numerous companies since the early 1900s. The city plans to redevelop the entire 145-acre parcel in two phases. The WEDC grant is for the first phase, a 70-acre parcel on the south side of the site that was acquired by the Ariens Co. in October.

The Ariens Co. plans to renovate the Farm Implement Building (also known as Plant 3) into a new research and development facility for the company. The research and development facility will support Ariens' operations, engineering and supply chain operations. The City of Brillion is supporting the renovation of Plant 3 with the construction of a new roadway and a bridge crossing, and the remaining structures on the site will be demolished. The first phase has a \$10 million budget. Work is now underway and is expected to be completed by the end of 2020.

"We are very honored to receive this grant and are excited about the opportunities this grant gives to the City of Brillion and the Ariens Co. to redevelop the Brillion Iron Works property," said Brillion Mayor Gary Deiter. "We are very fortunate to

have the support of the Ariens Co. for this project; without them it would not have been possible”.

“Eighteen months ago, Brillion was facing what looked like a devastating blight on the heart of this community,” said Dan Ariens, chairman and CEO of the Ariens Co. “Today, this grant from the WEDC will be a catalyst to create momentum around a new vision for the Brillion community and demonstrate the potential to others who might have an interest in joining us on this journey. I’d like to thank the WEDC for supporting this community in achieving its vision.”

Although he had no involvement in the current-day Brillion Iron Works site, the roots of the company reach back to Ariens’ great-grandfather who came to Brillion as a blacksmith. Henry Ariens ultimately built the Brillion Iron Works and ran the company from 1893 until 1933, when he lost the business during The Great Depression.

“I applaud the City of Brillion, the Ariens Co. and other partners for working together to redevelop what is now an underutilized parcel and transform it into a facility that will play a key role in the future of the city’s leading employer,” said Mark R. Hogan, secretary and CEO of WEDC, who joined company and city officials in announcing the grant on Monday. “This revitalization project will increase the city’s tax base, remove an eyesore in the community, and create new jobs as Ariens continues to grow.”

State Rep. Ron Tusler, who represents Brillion and also took part in the announcement, added: “Wisconsin should invest our resources in hardworking, tax-paying communities that have a strong will to succeed. Brillion has earned our trust. I am excited to hear that WEDC and Secretary Mark Hogan agree. Their financial support, coupled with the efforts of the Ariens Co. and the City of Brillion, will surely lead to new success within the frame of Brillion Iron Works.”

Officials expect phase one to be a catalyst for the second phase of the project, which is expected to consist of housing, commercial and retail development, as well as green space and a trail network along Spring and Mills creeks.

Brillion Iron Works was founded in 1890 as a manufacturer of hand and farm tools, and moved to the current site at 200 Park Ave. in 1900, when a foundry was constructed there. Over the years, Brillion Iron Works changed ownership several times before closing for good in November 2016.

In addition to the support from WEDC, the City of Brillion has committed to providing \$3 million in tax incremental financing for the project.

WEDC's Idle Sites Redevelopment Program, created in 2013, 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.

Since the program's inception, 23 communities have received more than \$16 million in grants for economic development projects expected to generate more than \$129 million in public and private investment.

"This is the perfect project for the Idle Sites program," said Jerry Murphy, executive director of The New North, a regional economic development organization serving 18 counties in northeastern Wisconsin. "This particular site needs investment, remediation and enhancement that will make it marketable and promising to new development. Without it, it would be difficult to market competitively. Now, with the help of WEDC, it has the potential to become something entirely new."

Other communities in the New North region that have received Idle Sites Grants include:

- Green Bay: \$425,000 for the redevelopment of the Larsen Cannery
- Manitowoc: \$500,000 for the demolition and redevelopment of the former Mirro Building
- Kimberly: \$500,000 to redevelop the former New Page Paper Mill
- Oshkosh: \$375,000 to redevelop the former Jen-Weld manufacturing site

The Idles Sites Grant is the second award made to the City of Brillion this year for a community redevelopment project. In March, the city received a \$250,000 Community Development Investment Grant to support construction of a downtown apartment building, a project that will improve the aesthetics of the business district and help meet the city's housing needs.