

# Dept. of Natural Resources: Awards Brownfields grant valued up to \$35,000 to City of Portage

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**MADISON, Wis.** – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) awarded a grant from the Wisconsin Assessment Monies (WAM) program to the city of Portage. The WAM program provides contractor services for environmental assessment worth up to \$35,000 for eligible sites. The DNR awarded the grant to the city of Portage for a property in the city's downtown that has been abandoned and left to the elements since 2018.

The property, located at 114/116 W. Cook St. in Portage, has a history in Portage that goes back to the 1950s when it was the Schulz Bros. Drug and Variety. Currently, the inside of the building has extensive water damage due to a large hole in the roof. Elements have taken a toll on the building as it has not been occupied, heated or winterized for a couple years.

“This property has the potential to contribute much more than it currently does to the city of Portage,” said DNR Remediation and Redevelopment Program's Brownfields, Outreach and Policy Section Chief Jodie Peotter. “City officials have reported that interested redevelopers and potential new buyers have been ‘scared off’ because of its current condition and history of use. The DNR's WAM award will lessen the uncertainty surrounding the property's past use, which will hopefully help to facilitate future redevelopment and occupancy.”

“Working with the DNR on this grant was straightforward and will help us move forward in redeveloping this site,” said Steven Sobiek, Director of Business Development and Planning for the city. “It's easy to see why WAM is a popular program. We'd definitely recommend it to other communities that might be

considering the cleanup and redevelopment of some property that has seen better days.”

Since 2009, the WAM program has provided more than \$2.5 million to 62 communities across the state, partnering to help clean up and redevelop old, often run-down or underused properties that distract from a community’s potential.

Administered by the DNR’s Remediation and Redevelopment program, WAM awards provide communities with professional environmental site assessments of properties with known or perceived contamination. The program is funded through a U.S. EPA brownfields assessment grant.

Participation in the WAM program requires minimal effort by local governments. Because there is no local financial match, WAM is an attractive opportunity for communities to gain knowledge of environmental conditions. In many instances, WAM awards are leveraged with other sources of funding to kick-start repurposing efforts on properties that may have been underutilized for many years.

Applications for WAM assistance may be submitted at any time. The DNR uses WAM funding to assess brownfields throughout the state, concentrating on industrial sites and closed, or closing, manufacturing plants. WAM awards are also made available to brownfields that may not have had a history of manufacturing but are in rural areas, racially diverse communities or economically disadvantaged areas.

For more information about WAM or other cleanup award programs from the RR Program, visit the DNR’s [WAM webpage](#) or the [brownfields webpage](#).