USEPA BROWNFIELD PROGRAM FUNDING/TESTIMONY BY MARK ALBRECHT, CITY OF AKRON MAYOR'S OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 2-14-08

Background – Akron, Ohio

- Mark Albrecht serves as the Brownfields and Economic Development Manager for the City of Akron. I have been involved in planning, economic development, and brownfield redevelopment for over 30 years. I have directly involved in brownfield redevelopment for the past 12 years. I also serve on the Board of the National Brownfield Advisory Board, a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and reuse of brownfields. The NBA has established and operational chapters in over 20 States.

- Population – City of Akron 207,000 and County of Summit 550,000

- Economy based on a legacy of heavy industry and manufacturing – 1970 there were over 35,000 rubber production jobs in City of Akron – by 1990 fewer than 3000 rubber production jobs were left.

- Historically, manufacturing represented over 30% of our work force, today it is 19%, which although above the national average, is requiring a major retooling of our economy. Akron remains strong in polymers and plastics, metal working, instruments and controls, and specialty chemicals. A medical and biomedical cluster is emerging.

- Akron is comprised of 62 square miles of which less than 2% is vacant land.

- Akron has been proactive in recapturing brownfields in order to return unproductive and underutilitized land and building parcels for reuse in industrial, commercial, and retail redevelopment. In recapturing these brownfields, the City has been able to retain, expand, and attract new industrial, commercial, office, and retail businesses to our city.

- Brownfield recapture is an economic necessity for Akron to compete in today's marketplace. Without viable and marketable land and buildings we cannot compete with the suburbs and other regions of the country that have plentiful greenfields.

- In the past 10 years, the City has utilitized USEPA funding to assist with major Brownfield redevelopments including:

    - Advanced Elastomer Systems (AES) adaptive reuse of the former B.F. Goodrich buildings 41 for its World HQ and R&D. (It won the Phoenix award from USEPA for Region V)

- GO Industries adaptively reused the former B.F.Goodrich HQ for its HQ and R&D with the City's assistance in its brownfield cleanup.

- Lockheed Martin High Altitude Airship Project– former Goodyear Airdock facility will permit production of this vital defense system after airdock remediation.

- Middlebury MarketPlace, the first new retail center in center city Akron in almost 40 years was assisted by assessment funding from USEPA.

- Ohio and Erie National Heritage Corridor represents a 110 mile multi-purpose trail, of which 16 miles dissect the City of Akron is spurring redevelopment contiguous to it. Beech St. Power Plant was assessed using USEPA funding leveraging additional funding for its removal.

- Akron is currently working on brownfield redevelopments with Goodyear Tire and Rubber and Bridgestone Firestone to retain their World and North American HQ in our city. Both of these projects involve brownfield recapture. Goodyear's project entails transfer of over 500 acres to a private developer who with brownfield assessment and cleanup assistance from the City will invest $600 million in new corporate, office, and retail facilities.

USEPA Brownfield Program

- Akron has received three USEPA Brownfield grants.
  - 2000 pilot City-wide Hazardous Assessment grant – used to prepare assessments that leveraged CleanOhio grants for site cleanup for many of the above referenced sites.

  - 2004 City-wide Petroleum Assessment grant – used to assess a variety of sites including the Ohio and Erie Heritage towpath trail and Downtown development sites along the Canal.

  - 2006 Site Specific grant – site specific demolition of co-mingled contaminated arson burned building.

- **Meeting Brownfield Project Needs**
  - Establish multi-purpose grants to provide flexibility in meeting meet the full range of brownfield requirements including assessment and cleanup under direct grants and RLF.

- Maintain and if possible increase overall USEPA Brownfield funding commensurate with the demonstrated demand nationally. Over the past two years, USEPA has turned down nearly 800 grant applicants.

- **Improvements to simplify and enhance USEPA Brownfield Program**

  - Eliminate petroleum set-aside grants. The current two track application and monitoring system process is time consuming to the applicant and also lengthens the review process by USEPA. Petroleum and City-wide Hazardous grants compete with each other both in the application process and their administration. One of current problems is in the responsiveness of grant awards, which typically lag 6-8 months following submittal. Reducing the number of applications that USEPA must review would permit a shorter review period and allows the applicant to be more responsive to the private sector.

  - Combining the petroleum and hazardous grant applications increases program flexibility and permits increasing the maximum grant award per successful applicant. Recommend increasing grant award to $300,000.

  - The maturity of the brownfield program should now permit more risk-based corrective action and use of institutional controls. This would suggest lifting the 10% limitation on use of the grant for such controls.

  - All Appropriate Inquiry Rule – the restriction on grant funds being used on sites that were acquired before the 1-11-02 Brownfield Revitalization Act should be lifted if the applicant did not cause or contribute to the contamination. The current law places an undue hardship for cities that landbanked properties prior to the enactment of the law.

- **Program Administration** – There are several specific actions which could streamline and enhance the application process and its administration.

  - The current application could be simplified by creating a standard format of questions that each applicant must respond to. Currently, the application requires each community to interpret broad policy questions that results in duplication and redundancy.

  - Use of QAPP (Quality Assurance Project Plan) – In lieu of each applicant preparing a QAPP, the agency could identify QAPP protocol standards by region for applicants. Applicants are expending unnecessary grant dollars for this exercise that would be better expended in preparing assessments.

- **Summary** – The USEPA Brownfield Program is a very valuable to local communities. It has become an important source of first step funding in addressing brownfield redevelopment. Continued funding is critical to cities like Akron in our efforts to revitalize and redevelopment our local economy and environment.