



Development authority seeking public input for two potential redevelopment plans in Rome

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-John Bailey, Rome News-Tribune-

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The Rome Floyd County Development Authority is using a federal grant to not only assess current properties with potential environmental hazards but also to compile a list of additional properties for future development.

A [presentation given Wednesday by the authority](#) outlined some of the work currently going on to assess potential environmental issues preventing the development of certain sites.

Jessica Turner with GEI Consultants and Alisa Goren with BRS Inc. are the development authority's grant administrators and are seeking information about brownfield sites in Rome and Floyd County.

According to the EPA, brownfields are generally considered to be abandoned or underutilized properties where redevelopment or expansion may be complicated by possible environmental contamination.

It's not the first time Rome and Floyd County have sought to catalog brownfield sites.

The City of Rome has done brownfields assessment on properties in the past and was awarded a federal assessment grant in 2008. One of those two sites — the O'Neill Manufacturing plant in North Rome — was also one of the main subjects of that assessment fifteen years ago.

It's important, Goren said, for a municipality to address sites that are often brownfields. They can be dilapidated and signal neglect or decay in a community and they're also often a "breeding ground for illegal activities."

It's also land, she said, that could be put back on the tax rolls and be used to address the specific needs of a community.

During a meeting Wednesday, the authority gave an overview of a \$500,000 federal environmental assessment grant. The main focus of that grant will be the former Northwest Georgia Regional Hospital site now known as the Battey Business Complex and the former O'Neill Manufacturing Co. in North Rome.

The bulk of that assessment grant will be spent on those two sites, Development Authority Missy Kendrick said. But there will be some left over and they're planning to use it for other brownfield assessments in Rome and Floyd County.

Timeline



Nothing's firm at this point and will depend much on what the environmental assessments turn up on each site.

They've currently completed the gathering of information and samples to complete the assessment of the Battey site, Kendrick said. They'll complete that assessment and then begin using funds

from a \$5.1 million HUD grant to begin cleanup and demolishing buildings to prep the site.

They will seek bids for the clean-up of the site and demolition of buildings on the site as well as both and see if they can come up with competitive pricing on the project.

"That's not going to be enough (for the Battey site)," Kendrick said.

The former O'Neill Manufacturing location has long been at the top of the list in Rome for redevelopment. But the 7-acre tract off Anderson Street in North Rome has been tied up in bankruptcy proceedings for decades.

The company located on Anderson Street treated and manufactured custom wood products until it closed in 2000 following the death of Sean O'Neill, its last chief executive officer.

Once site assessment at that time turned up two 500-gallon containers of Wood Life, a wood treatment preservative known to contain significant amounts of the probable carcinogen pentachlorophenol.

There's hope for movement there but even if the assessment is completed the authority cannot get a cleanup grant unless they own that property.

Kendrick said they've been in contact with the family and have hopes to come to an agreement.

LOCAL WEATHER

ROME WEATHER  93°F clear sky

Fri	Sat	Sun
		
97°F 72°F	97°F 72°F	99°F 72°F



There's also a chance that some of the chemicals on that site have dissipated naturally over time. Rome City Manager Sammy Rich indicated that some previous testing at the site indicated that may be the case.

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