

# Brownfields Success Story

## Strengthening Shubuta *A Brownfields Coalition Boosts Community in Clarke County, Mississippi*

Located in east-central Mississippi, Clarke County (population 17,200) is a rural area with an agricultural base in cotton cultivation. At the turn of the 21st century, the county's economy also was driven by electric engine equipment and textile manufacturing. However, when several plants closed, more than 10 percent of county residents lost their jobs, and blighted, vacant and underused brownfields were created.

Officials in Quitman, the Clarke County seat, mobilized other county leaders to reinvigorate the economy. "We spent hours planning redevelopment strategies," says Quitman Mayor Eddie Fulton. "When developers inquiring about an abandoned property asked whether an environmental site assessment had been conducted, we began to focus more on the redevelopment of brownfields."

### The Opportunity

In 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awarded Quitman a \$400,000 Brownfields Assessment Coalition Grant. The Quitman Brownfields Coalition included representatives from the city, the county and the towns of Enterprise, Stonewall and Shubuta. The coalition took inventory of brownfields and prioritized cleanup and redevelopment projects. In Shubuta, the coalition identified two opportunities for investment.

### Two Projects in Shubuta

The nonprofit Shubuta Outreach Family Clinic was built at the site of a former gas station. When some underground storage tanks began to leak, the clinic faced closure due to the steep fines from local environmental authorities and significant investment needed to remove the tanks. The Quitman Brownfields Coalition agreed to use its grant resources to address the tank issues on the site, funding both Phase I



The Quitman Brownfields Coalition helped clear the way for development of the Shubuta Senior Citizens Center.

**EPA Grant Recipient:**  
Quitman Brownfields Coalition

**Grant Type:**  
\$400,000 Brownfields  
Assessment Coalition Grant

**Former Uses:**  
Gas station, rural lot

**Current Uses:**  
Shubuta Outreach Family Clinic,  
Shubuta Senior Citizens Center



The Shubuta Outreach Family Clinic was one of several properties prioritized for brownfields assessment, cleanup and redevelopment in Clarke County.



An underground storage tank is excavated from the site of the Shubuta Outreach Family Clinic.

“ **The Brownfields Assessment Coalition Grant gave us the tools to spark new economic life into our community.** ”

*Mayor Eddie Fulton,  
Quitman, Mississippi*

and Phase II environmental site assessments. The Phase II assessment required removal of the tanks to allow for sampling and analysis of soils and groundwater beneath them. The county provided in-kind assistance to excavate and remove the tanks, allowing the clinic to continue operations.

The Quitman Brownfields Coalition also identified an investment opportunity at the site of a proposed senior center. Approximately 20 percent of Shubuta’s 510 residents are 62 years of age or older. For some time, the village’s senior citizens wanted a place for social gatherings. A centrally located lot was proposed for the site, but there were some concerns about past petroleum activities and possible underground storage tanks. The coalition commissioned a Phase I environmental site assessment to identify and address any contamination. The assessment did not reveal any recognized environmental concerns, and the property was cleared for redevelopment. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded a Community Development Block Grant to help build the center, which opened in 2012.

## The Benefits

Keeping the clinic’s doors open created temporary remediation work and saved the full-time jobs of the healthcare professionals and staff who work there. If the clinic had been forced to close, Shubuta’s residents would have lost convenient access to affordable primary healthcare. Building the senior center created approximately 16 temporary engineering, siting, design and construction jobs, and at least two people work there regularly. Shubuta’s older residents now have a place to get together, socialize and enjoy free meals.

“Modest government investments have strengthened this small town,” says Jay Estes, an environmental consultant who worked on the projects in Shubuta. “Saving a clinic and clearing the way for a new senior center have made a big difference in the community.”