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Joe Courtney
Congress of the United States
2nd District, Connecticut

WASHINGTON OFFICE:

2332 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
P (202) 225-2076
F (202) 225-4977

DISTRICT OFFICES:

55 MAIN STREET, SUITE 250
NORWICH, CT 06360
P (860) 886-0139
F (860) 886-2974

77 HAZARD AVENUE, UNIT J
ENFIELD, CT 06082
P (860) 741-6011
F (860) 741-6036

January 10, 2022

Administrator Andrew Wheeler
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

RE: Town of Stafford, Connecticut's Application for FY22 EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

I write to you in strong support of the Town of Stafford's application for the EPA's FY22 Brownfields Cleanup Grant. Stafford has a unique opportunity to begin revitalizing a property near the center of town, creating opportunities for improved food access, additional recreational amenities, and affordable senior housing. Additionally, revitalization of the former Witt School, located on the Hyde Park property, could accommodate renewable energy development due to its proximity to a nearby river. Stafford would benefit immensely from an economic investment into their development, working to improve the community's physical and economic health.

Stafford has experienced economic difficulties due to the past decline of their industrial base, which left behind abandoned properties and dangerous contaminants. The town is constrained financially to fund brownfield remediations through existing revenue sources. Stafford has been further restrained by the continued abandonment of this property, being in the heart of the town and well suited for economic development. The cleanup site is well-deserving of grant investment, as the site is less than a quarter mile from a designated Environmental Justice community and the larger Hyde Park site is designated as a Federal Emergency Management Agency Zone B flood plain. If funded, Stafford would be able to begin a process of contaminant remediation and economic revitalization that will have far-reaching benefits.

The town has garnered community input to the future uses of the former Wilt School, with the prevailing plan one that would establish access to farm fresh food, revitalize the gymnasium and kitchen for community use, and in a partnership with the Stafford Housing Authority, create senior housing and an adult day care center. These uses are well fitted to the needs of the town and would help shape a healthier and more economically successful Stafford.

Stafford's plan to remediate the former Wilt School building joins a growing push to improve both hard and soft infrastructure in communities across the nation. Their plans are backed by community engagement and support, public health, and economic analysis. The town's plans align with their long-term goals and the needs of the community and will directly assist disadvantaged communities and seniors. This cleanup grant will provide Stafford an opportunity for an economic boost that will have reverberating effects on the lives of residents and those who visit Stafford for their recreational opportunities. Given these benefits, I ask you to carefully consider Stafford's application for brownfield cleanup funding.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,


JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress

