



The City of Lenoir received a \$300,000 Appalachian Regional Commission grant to help clean up the old Broyhill Furniture plant at the corner of Virginia Street and College Avenue.

### City receives \$300K to help clean up blighted property

Tuesday, April 23, 2019

The City of Lenoir received a \$300,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission to help clean up a blighted property in town. The property, remnants of an old furniture plant, sits at the corner of Virginia Street and College Avenue.

City Council accepted the grant and authorized the City's \$250,000 cash match Tuesday, April 23, during the Committee of the Whole meeting.

"The property is in a good location in the city," City Manager Scott Hildebran said. "But developers aren't very interested given the uncertainty of its condition. The grant funds will help us clean up the site and prime it for redevelopment."

The 15-acre site was home to a furniture plant for more than 100 years. In 2009, Applied Abatement Concepts demolished buildings on the property for scrap. The company then abandoned the site, went bankrupt, and left debris everywhere. In 2014, the City foreclosed on the property for taxes owed.

"Staff researched a lot of options, but given the issues with the site, no one wanted to take it on," Hildebran said. "The City stepped up and took ownership through foreclosure. Staff has been working since to clean up the site." During that time, Public Utilities Director Radford Thomas and Greg Icenhour with Mid-Atlantic Associates led efforts to secure an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields grant. The Brownfields program helps local governments evaluate and clean up abandoned industrial sites.

Earlier this year, thanks to the efforts of Thomas, Icenhour, and the City's Brownfields Committee, the City received its first \$300,000 Brownfields grant.

Last year, the Western Piedmont Council of Governments helped the City apply for the ARC grant. Staff will leverage the ARC grant and City funds to clean up the site and then use the Brownfields grant to perform an environmental evaluation of the property. The goal is to secure a Brownfields agreement for the site.

Brownfields agreements remove environmental liability from owners. Potential environmental liability usually drives away developers and investors.

The Virginia Street property is next to the City's Rail Trail Greenway as well as the Unity Park Community Gardens. The Rail Trail will connect the historic Lenoir Freight Depot, the Community Gardens, the Virginia Street site, and the City's first residential/industrial building permitted in Lenoir. Carolina Custom Cabinet's property houses two residential apartment units within the manufacturing building.

"The City's vision for this area as 'Funkytown' includes promoting the redevelopment of historic industrial properties with a variety of new uses," Planning Director Jenny Wheelock said. "We're encouraging a mix of industrial, commercial, and residential uses to co-exist with the recreational opportunities in the area."

Carolina Custom Cabinet's property was recently placed on a study list of historic properties, along with the Lenoir Freight Depot, the Blue Bell building, the Steele Cotton Mill (a.k.a Bost Lumber), and Fairfield Chair Plant #1.

The City plans to start paving the Rail Trail Greenway this year. The Rail Trail eventually will be certified as a segment of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

"A lot of pieces of the Funkytown puzzle are starting to come together," Wheelock said. "It's really exciting. There is a lot of potential in that area of town."

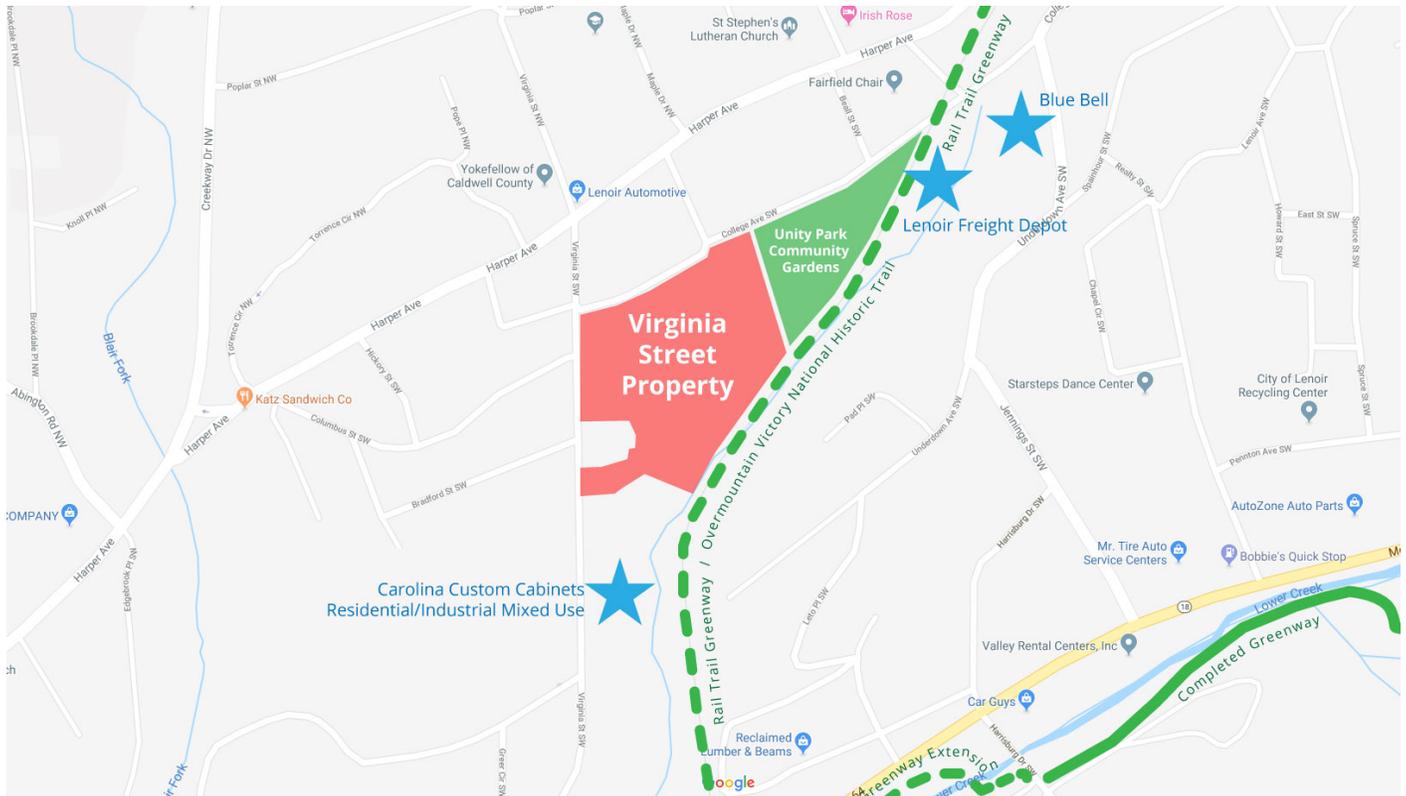
The total project budget is \$768,000. The budget includes \$45,000 in EPA Funds, \$173,000 in in-kind funds (appraised value of the property), the \$300,000 ARC grant, and a required cash match of \$250,000 in City funds.

Hildebran said he appreciated the hard work of everyone involved in the project.

"I want to thank all the folks who've made this possible," Hildebran said. "It's taken a lot of work to get to this point."

Related:

- [Lenoir receives \\$300K EPA grant, NC Opportunity Zones](#)
- [Brownfields Presentation, Greg Icenhour, Nov 20, 2018](#)



*The Virginia Street property is a key piece of the Funkytown puzzle.*

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