

**The City of Atlanta Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (BRLF)  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Cooperative Agreement #BF-954451091**

**Remerge Inc. Community Building Studio at 597 Auburn Avenue NE Subgrant  
Community Involvement Plan**

### **The City of Atlanta Brownfields Program**

A brownfield is a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Examples include former industrial sites, gas stations, dry cleaning establishments, and manufacturing facilities. In Atlanta, encouraging the reuse of brownfields through planning and economic incentives is critical to promoting smart and sustainable growth. Brownfield impacts are felt in many ways, including:

- Financially – the full tax value of properties that are brownfields is not collected;
- Socially – the presence of brownfields may act as a barrier to investment in communities;
- Community health – brownfields may contribute to actual or perceived health risks; and
- Environmentally – brownfields may negatively impact adjoining properties by contributing to off-site migration of environmental contamination.

The City of Atlanta’s involvement in brownfield remediation started in 1996 when it received a pilot brownfields assessment grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA). Since then, the City has successfully received and managed several U.S. EPA brownfield grants; including EPA Brownfields Assessment Grants (in 2005, 2010, 2013, 2017 and 2020); EPA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund grants (in 2009 and 2022) and an EPA Brownfields Area Wide Planning pilot grant (2010)<sup>1</sup>.

### **City of Atlanta Brownfields Program Goals**

Brownfield parcels in Atlanta are often abandoned or underutilized because they have actual or perceived environmental contamination. The presence of contamination along with the risks and costs associated with addressing contamination can be a significant barrier to redevelopment. The City of Atlanta Brownfields Program seeks to redevelop brownfield sites and improve the quality of life of impacted neighborhoods. The goals of the City’s Brownfields Program are to improve the quality of life, revitalize neighborhoods and increase the City’s tax base by:

- Encouraging sustainable redevelopment of brownfields;
- Protecting human health and the environment;
- Retaining and attracting jobs;

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Though this project has been funded, wholly or in part, by U.S. EPA, the contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the U.S. EPA.

- Maximizing the effectiveness of the Brownfields Program through collaborative efforts; and
- Educating and engaging the community about the Brownfields Program.

The City's Brownfields Program is implemented through its planning, assessment and cleanup initiatives. The purpose of the Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (BRLF) is to make loans and subgrants for brownfield remediation. Using BRLF cleanup funds, the City supports economic development, improved public health, cultural and recreational opportunities. Anticipated outcomes from investments in brownfield redevelopment are more jobs, businesses and greenspace, cleaner water and soil, and less blight, crime and health problems.

### **City of Atlanta - Invest Atlanta Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (BRLF) Program- BF-95445109**

The U.S. EPA awarded the City of Atlanta a \$1,000,000 BRLF grant in 2009. In addition, the City of Atlanta has received Supplemental Awards in 2012, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 totaling \$2, 275,000. The BRLF program is jointly administered by the Atlanta Department of City Planning Office of Zoning and Development and Invest Atlanta (the City of Atlanta's economic development agency). The purpose of the BRLF program is to support redevelopment of brownfields by financing remediation through loans and subgrants. The City targets cleanup funds in neighborhoods impacted by brownfields including the Brownfields Area Wide Planning area (Murphy Crossing), the Proctor Creek watershed, Groundworks Atlanta/Chattahoochee River, the Atlanta BeltLine and along redevelopment corridors

Funds are available to qualified private sector and non-profit owners or purchasers of "shovel ready" brownfields. The Invest Atlanta Board approves the loan/subgrant, sets the loan terms, services loans and pays invoices. The funds revolve by collecting principal and interest payments and re-lending and subgranting program income to future borrowers and subgrantees. The City of Atlanta and its Qualified Environmental Professional monitor the remediation to ensure that EPA's Terms and Conditions are met and are conducted based on an Environmental Protection Division approved Corrective Action Plan.

### **Community Involvement in BCRLF Cleanup Activities**

Community involvement is an essential component to Atlanta's Brownfield Program. All loans and subgrant awards require a site-specific Community Involvement Plan (CIP) that includes providing reasonable notice to the community, and the opportunity for public involvement and comment on the proposed cleanup option. Community involvement activities must be initiated prior to the cleanup of a site and a 30-day community comment period has to be provided.

Each awarded BRLF loan or subgrant has an Administrative Record containing relevant site information and documents. An important aspect of community involvement is allowing the public to comment on the administrative record. The community involvement process activities include:

- Providing public notice of the availability of the administrative record. The notice may be placed in a major local newspaper of general circulation, on a website, or similar measure to inform the general community and target area of the availability of the administrative record for public review;
- Providing the opportunity for written and oral comments on the administrative record. Upon timely request, extend the public comment period as needed, and
- Holding a meeting during the public comment period to discuss the proposed cleanup and solicit comments from interested parties.

## **Remerge Inc.**

Remerge Inc was created in 2016 from previous organizations that started as early as 1999. Remerge facilitates collaborative opportunities that accelerate belonging and flourishing in local communities. Remerge's Reconnect, Rethink and Reimagine strategy is implemented through its various programs- Sweet Auburn Friends, The Sweet Auburn Community Museum, the Giving Grace Network, the Community of Reconcilers, and Color ATL Many of Remerge's programs including Reimagine Solutions, Education and Training, Immersion Experience and neighborhood tours are conducted at its Community Building Studio, currently located at 340 Auburn Avenue. In addition, neighborhood events, with a focus on inclusion of the most vulnerable, are held there.

Remerge purchased 597 Auburn Avenue NE for use as a dedicated space for the Community Building Studio. At the new location, The Community Building Studio will continue to focus on systemic challenges and creating new opportunities for individuals. The entrepreneurship accelerator, that will operate from this location, will operate with two tracks. One will be dedicated to empowering low-income and single mothers with business acumen and assist them in creating their own businesses. The other track will focus on specific neighborhood challenges. The estimated cost to redevelop the site for Remerge's Community Building Studio is \$600,000. Remerge's current location will become a permanent art center.

## **597 Auburn Avenue NE**

597 Auburn Avenue NE is located within Land Lot 19 of the 14<sup>th</sup> District, Fulton County in the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood of NPU-M, and in Council District 2. ( in the future, it will be in Council District 5). The triangular shaped parcel (# 14 001900100453) is approximately 0.082 acres and fronts on the south side of Auburn Avenue NE, the north side of Old Wheat Street NE and the east side of Randolph Street NE . Marie Cowser Memorial Park is located directly to the north of the parcel.

### **Historic use of the site**

The site is currently developed with a 3,600 square-foot one-story building with a basement. Based on aerial photographs, the parcel was originally developed with a residential building dating to before 1911. The building was converted to church use in the 1940s. Most recently it

was used as a place of worship by the Outreach Deliverance Ministries. The building, originally sided with wood and asbestos siding, is now mostly sided with brick and vinyl siding. The front and sides of building are located adjacent the sidewalk and a small grassy area is located in the rear yard. No vehicular access is provided to the property. The parcel is zoned HC20C SA4/BL (Martin Luther King Jr Landmark District Subarea 4/BeltLine Overlay).

### **Environmental Site Assessments**

As part of the due diligence prior to purchasing 597 Auburn Avenue SE, Cardno completed a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA), dated 12/23/2021, in conformance with the scope and limitations of ASTM E1527-13 and in accordance with Practices for All Appropriate Inquiries for the use and benefit of Remerge Inc. Through the review of historical records, interviews, and site reconnaissance, the Phase I ESA revealed an off-site Recognized Environmental Condition (REC) to the north at 594 Auburn Avenue. Robert's Dry Cleaners operated in the 1970s out of a commercial structure at this location and is now developed as Marie Cowser Memorial Park.

Phase II Environmental Site Assessment, dated 1/22/2022, was conducted to further evaluate the nature and extent of contamination of the identified Recognized Environmental Condition (REC). Two soil borings, which were converted to temporary monitoring wells, were advanced on the site. The first sample, SB-1, was taken on the NE corner, to identify possible contaminant migration from the former historical dry cleaners. The second sample, SB-2, was located along the SE corner in the rear of the property. RCRA metal constituents, Barium and Lead, were reported in soil sample SB-2 at a concentration exceeding their respective Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) Notification Concentrations (NCs). The source for these contaminants is unknown; however, CARDNO suggests that it may be the result of historical disposal of spent coal during the period the building was likely heated by coal. Based on the results of the Phase II ESA, the property owner reported to GA EPD regulated substances discovered in the soil above Notification Concentration within 30 days of discovery, as required by the Georgia Hazardous Site Response Act.

Cardno conducted an inspection for asbestos-containing materials (ACM) and lead-based paint (LBP) in the building at the site on 3/8/2022. The building is built primarily of brick, cement, plaster, and wood structural components. Multiple renovations have been completed throughout the interior and exterior since initial construction. Eleven paint chips were collected from various painted surfaces throughout the interior and exterior of the building. None of the collected samples were found to be LBP. In addition, 54 samples from 20 homogenous areas (HAs) were collected and analyzed for the presence of asbestos and then compared to the AHERA definition of ACM. Approximately 200 sq ft of ACM was confirmed in the roof flashing and in 3,000 sq ft of cementitious siding used for exterior siding. Cementitious siding was observed behind vinyl siding along the building's northeastern exterior. In addition, the report states that cementitious siding should be presumed present on all exterior walls beneath modern brick or vinyl façade.

## 597 Auburn Avenue SE Remediation Plan

Preliminary sampling indicates that approximately 10 to 30 yards of soil in the SE corner of the parcel is contaminated with Barium and Lead and requires excavation and off-site disposal. In addition, prior to any demolition, renovation, or other disturbance, Regulated ACM (RACM) will be removed by a qualified (Georgia licensed) asbestos abatement contractor utilizing industry standard work procedures in accordance with all Federal, State, and local regulations governing asbestos. Asbestos waste will be disposed of at an approved landfill that is duly permitted by the state and/or local municipality.

The estimated cost to remediate the contaminated soil and remove the asbestos containing materials is \$50,000. The Invest Atlanta Board approved a \$50,000 BRLF subgrant to Remerge at its November 17, 2021 meeting.

### Administrative Record

The City of Atlanta will establish an Administrative Record for 597 Auburn Avenue SE. The administrative record will include documents demonstrating the basis for the cleanup and its progress—e.g., the Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments, Report of Asbestos Containing Materials and Lead Based Paint Inspection; U.S. EPA required site-specific documents including the Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA), and Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP); responses to public comments and verification that shows that the cleanup is complete. The administrative record will be available for review at the Department of City Planning Office of Zoning and Development (OZD) at the Atlanta City Hall located at 55 Trinity Avenue, Suite 3350, Atlanta, GA 30303. Some of the documents will be posted on the City of Atlanta Brownfields website at [www.atlantaga.gov/brownfields](http://www.atlantaga.gov/brownfields).

### Community Involvement Activities

Community engagement is the foundation of planning activities undertaken by the City of Atlanta Office of Zoning and Development. It is also required by the EPA Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund grant program. The community involvement for the BRLF subgrant to Remerge Inc. includes notifying the community about the subgrant, providing 30 days for public comment and having a community meeting. The following Community Involvement activities will be implemented.

Community Notification: Information about the subgrant to Remerge will be available in several ways.

- Website: information about this project will be posted on the City of Atlanta's Brownfields Program website at <http://www.atlantaga.gov/brownfields> and on the City Planning Department social media sites. A brownfield website page for 597 Auburn Avenue SE will have information about the project including a fact sheet, the community meeting notice and the Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA) and other information as needed.

- **Community Meeting Notice:** a community meeting notice will be created and distributed by the Department of City Planning. It will be posted on the Department of City Planning social media and project website and provided to Remerge for distribution to its stakeholders.
- Information about the community meeting will be presented at the Neighborhood Planning Unit M Monday January 23, 2023 starting at 6:15 pm. The City of Atlanta OZD Project Manager will submit a request to the Fourth Ward Neighbors to add a brief presentation about the project at their January 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Community meeting:** A community meeting will be held in person on Thursday January 26<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm at Remerge's office at 340 Auburn Avenue. At this meeting, the public will have a chance to learn and ask questions about the subgrant process as well as information about the proposed remediation of the site, and schedule. Atlanta's BRLF Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) will present information about the proposed brownfield remediation and the Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA).

**Community Comment Period:** The 30 day public comment period will be from January 23 to February 22, 2023.

In addition to the City of Atlanta Brownfield staff community engagement, Remerge has conducted engagement with surrounding neighborhood groups and stakeholder on social media, and at meetings. Their 2021 Annual Report included information about the expansion of the studio to the new location at 597 Auburn Avenue SE.

**Point of Contact:** To obtain information, to schedule an appointment to review documents, to submit comments or questions about this project, please contact Jessica Lavandier at [jlavandier@atlantaga.gov](mailto:jlavandier@atlantaga.gov) and at 404-865-8522 in the Department of City Planning, Office of Zoning and Development.