



## MIDDLESEX COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

101 INTERCHANGE PLAZA • CRANBURY, NEW JERSEY 08512

Telephone: (609) 655-5141 • Fax: (609) 655-4748

Website: [www.mciauth.com](http://www.mciauth.com) • E-mail: [mciaadmin@mciauth.com](mailto:mciaadmin@mciauth.com)

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 24, 2013**

## **MCIA Endorses Lautenberg's Plan for Amended Brownfields Funding Program**

**MIDDLESEX COUNTY** – The Middlesex County Improvement Authority is sending a letter of support to the U.S. Senate this week, endorsing the Brownfields Utilization, Investment and Local Development Act.

At a June 12 meeting, board members unanimously passed a resolution lauding the BUILD Act, legislation that the late Sen. Frank Lautenberg, who died on June 3, introduced in March. If adopted, the bill would overhaul a major funding mechanism for Brownfields Redevelopment projects nationwide, including here in Central Jersey.

“I think there’s a universal understanding that we need to prioritize these environmental clean-ups,” said Freeholder and MCIA liaison Carol Barrett Bellante. “It could be said that people’s livelihoods and lives depend on the sustainability of this program and the redevelopment projects that it generates.”

As currently written, Lautenberg’s legislation would raise the ceiling amount on Brownfields Program grants, while also allowing entities to include administrative costs within their applications.

“As it stands, the federal government’s cap on most Brownfields grants is \$200,000,” said MCIA Economic Development Senior Project Manager Denise Nickel. “This amount is rarely sufficient enough to complete the investigation or clean-up on a typical contaminated site in New Jersey. I think Lautenberg and some of his fellow sponsors recognized this when they decided to draft this legislation.”

Today’s process becomes even more cumbersome when administrators must apply for grant funding during each phase of a remediation project – initially for an assessment, again if further investigation is needed and once more for the actual clean-up, Nickel said.

“Furthermore, a one-year-to-18-month gap between grant awards delays our efforts to transition these sites back to productive properties within their respective communities,” Nickel said. “This current stop-and-go process undermines our continued emphasis on time management and cost effectiveness.”

If adopted, the BUILD Act would award multi-purpose grants that include multiple phases of a project.

Additionally, this new legislation allows local governments to apply for site assessment grants for parcels acquired prior to the creation of the Brownfields Program in 1995 – properties that do not presently meet the criteria.

Lastly, this legislation reauthorizes the Brownfields Program’s current funding levels through 2016 and expands nonprofits’ eligibility for funding. These organizations are limited to site remediation funding but under the former Senator’s proposed changes, would qualify for funding toward site assessments as well – a potential benefit to declining local government budgets, Nickel said.

Many of the bill’s proposed changes originated from recommendations made by the National Brownfields Coalition, a group that includes a broad set of stakeholders, such as local governments, developers and community redevelopment organizations.

The legislation was referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works in March. It is now up to the discretion of the Committee’s Chairwoman, California Sen. Barbara Boxer, to grant the BUILD Act a hearing. If that occurs, the body would then have the option to send the bill on to another committee or to the U.S. Senate for a full vote.

A 2012 audit of the Environmental Protection Agency concluded that every dollar spent by the federal government on the Brownfields Program yields approximately \$3-\$6 in private investment.

“There are any number of communities in Middlesex County that have a vested interest in seeing these measures come to pass,” said MCIA Chairman Leonard J. Roseman. “The MCIA’s resolution is encouraging our federal legislators to see this through on our behalf.”

Since the inception of the local Brownfields Program in late 90s, the Middlesex County Improvement Authority’s Economic Development Department has secured more than \$2 million in state and federal funds for such projects.

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Jane Leal, 609-655-5141, [jl@mciauth.com](mailto:jl@mciauth.com)