



2026 WV Brownfields Awards

September 10, 2026



The WV Brownfield Awards recognize the hard work and achievements in brownfields redevelopment from across the state. These awards recognize individuals and communities who have made major contributions to the redevelopment of brownfields in West Virginia.

Community Engagement Award

The **2026 Community Engagement Award** recognizes partners or communities who have demonstrated an exceptional commitment to community engagement, working closely with communities to identify and implement redevelopment priorities. This year's recipient is **Liz Cook with the City of Charles Town and Charles Town Now**.

Liz Cook is the Business Development & Downtown Coordinator for the City of Charles Town, West Virginia, where she leads downtown revitalization initiatives through her role in economic development and her facilitation of the Main Street America program. She is the creator of Walks About Nothing, an initiative that has transformed the way residents experience the downtown Main Street District. She is passionate about Charles Town and building a positive, engaged, community. With the City of Charles Town and as Executive Director of Charles Town Now, she has created an event that brings people together on a regular basis. Twice a month, a Walk About Nothing meets in downtown Charles Town and, while on a stroll through town to points of interest, the group discusses issues of consideration and concern throughout the community. In an effort to combat the broader societal loneliness challenge, "Charles Town Now" has created a place for people to come and meet neighbors, developed a volunteer pipeline, and enhanced communication between citizens and the city leaders. The events have grown from a few people several years ago to a high of over 70 people for special events. Thanks to Liz's leadership and city efforts, the Walk About Nothing has really turned into something!



Economic Development Award

The **2026 WV Brownfield Award in Economic Development** recognizes a project or community partner that has demonstrated excellence in economic development on one or more brownfield sites. This year's recipient is **Mountain Shore Properties**.

Mountain Shore Properties, under the leadership of Charles Wendell, has completed redevelopment projects across the country. In recent years, the team has turned its attention to two Fayetteville school buildings that had been vacant for several years.

Utilizing historic rehabilitation tax credits, Mountain Shore rehabilitated the former Fayetteville Elementary School into market-rate housing for the local Ascend program.





The gymnasium was converted into a co-working space also used by the program. In the summer of 2026, the Hill Hall Hotel opened in the former Fayetteville High School and contains 40 boutique hotel rooms, as well as the restaurant, Patsy's, named for Mr. Wendell's mother.

The family has deep ties to the area, with (at least) three generations of the Wendell family - Mr. Wendell, his parents, and his children - attending the schools. Additionally, Mr. Wendell's mother Patsy co-wrote the National Register nomination for the town of Fayetteville in 1990.

Environmental Impact Award

The **2026 Environmental Impact Award** recognizes a project, organization, individual, or community that has made a significant impact on the cleanup of environmental hazards through single or multiple projects. This year's recipient is the **ACF Industries Project**.

ACF Industries Huntington facility operated on a 26-acre property, building railroad wheels, then wooden railroad cars, then steel railroad cars, for over 130 years. At the height of their operations, nearly 2,000 people worked at this facility. Their biggest success was their center-flow covered hopper car, which started production in the early 1960's. By the 1990's, over 100,000 cars had been built. The market for its signature hopper car diminished by the 1990's, and most operations ceased in the early 2000's. The facility closed in 2010.



Huntington Municipal Development Authority purchased the property and began the process of site redevelopment planning, environmental site assessments, and demolition of multiple buildings.



The property was placed into the WVDEP's Voluntary Remediation Program in September of 2020. Only one building remains on the property, which is nearing renovation completion for the new home of the Marshall Advanced Manufacturing Center, featuring state-of-the art welding and robotic welding training programs, along with other program offerings. This new facility will increase student capacity by up to 75%, plus provide space for micro-courses, various certification testing, and space for industry projects. This project has a budget of ~\$20M and is expected to open in October of 2026. MAMC plans to utilize additional space on this property at a later date.

In recognition of their strong partnership on this project, this award is presented to the Huntington Municipal Development Authority and the Marshall University Advanced Manufacturing Center.

Local Leadership Award

The **2026 Local Leadership Award** recognizes partners or communities that have demonstrated an exceptional commitment to community engagement by working closely with communities to identify and implement redevelopment priorities. This year's recipient is **Chris Rizer**.

Christopher Rizer is the Executive Director of Main Street Point Pleasant, where he currently manages the rehabilitation of four historic properties owned by the organization, supports upwards of \$26 million in private investment, and lobbies intensively at the state and federal levels for the historic tax credit and other preservation programs. He also serves as Director of Mason County Tourism, Chairman of the Point Pleasant Historic Landmark Commission, and on the Boards of Directors of the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia, Rivers to Ridges Scenic Byway, Mason County Farmland Protection Board, and Point Pleasant River Museum. He holds an M.S. in Historic Preservation from the University of Vermont, and in his free time, is proudly restoring his National Register-listed home built circa 1870.



Chris is an indomitable force to be reckoned with regarding everything downtown Point Pleasant. He is on and/or leading over a half of a dozen community organizations and serves as the Main Street Director. Chris goes well above and beyond in bringing projects, resources, engagement, and outcomes that enhance and further "The Point". A recent major undertaking was the sale and redevelopment of the historic Lowe Hotel, a downtown icon that had fallen into disrepair and unuse. The Centers worked with Chris to secure analysis resources that assisted in successfully repositioning the property, and the new ownership has initiated historic redevelopment of the Lowe. There are up to a dozen additional projects that are in various stages throughout downtown and if you would like to know more, Chris is a great host in pointing out and providing insight into the hard work that is bringing new life to downtown Point Pleasant.

New Professional Award

The **2026 New Professional Award** recognizes an impressive new professional who has worked less than five years in the field of brownfield redevelopment. This individual has demonstrated and contributed to vision and creativity in the field and made remarkable contributions to projects or programs within West Virginia. This year's recipient is **Catherine Gooding, with the Brownfields Assistance Center at Marshall University**.

Catherine Gooding is the Economic Development Specialist and Project Coordinator at the West Virginia Brownfields Assistance Center at Marshall University. In this role, she supports brownfield revitalization projects through a range of technical assistance, including site reuse planning, environmental site assessments, and grant writing support. She is a partner of the Appalachian Community Transformation (ACT) Now Coalition and Mid-Atlantic Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) program, and a 2025 Generation West Virginia Fellow. Catherine is also the team lead for the WV Abandoned Properties Coalition's Vacant Schools Team, through which she convenes statewide practitioners and stakeholders to investigate the unique challenges and



opportunities of vacant school redevelopment. While completing her education in Massachusetts, Catherine's dream was to come home to West Virginia and work to build a stronger future for her state's communities, environment, and economy. She is proud to be living that dream and holds her passion for environmental justice and community-driven solutions at the core of her work. Previously, she served two terms as an AmeriCorps VISTA in the Honors College at West Virginia University. She holds a Master of Public Policy degree from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University and a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from Wellesley College. Catherine is also a new homeowner in Huntington and can usually be found working on her house when she's not playing her flute with the Hoot & Holler Community Marching Band or watching Formula 1 with her cat Callie.

Catherine embodies all of the components of this category, having quickly built a name and network for herself in brownfields, becoming the face of work to address vacant schools, and helping to build capacity in communities at every turn. Her professionalism, knowledge, and compassion have quickly made her an invaluable part of our brownfields community, and it's hard to imagine a time when she wasn't here. So many communities and organizations have already been improved by her thoughtfulness and dedication - and she's just getting started.

Outstanding Career Service

The **2026 award for Outstanding Career Service** recognizes a professional who has made significant contributions to the field of brownfield redevelopment and to individual projects over the course of their career. This year's recipient is **Michael Gioulis**.

It is hard to imagine a redevelopment project in West Virginia for which Mike Gioulis has not played a role. Mike has been an important part of the historic preservation community in West Virginia since coming to the state in the late 1970s from New York.

Initially working in an architect's office, Mike eventually transitioned to the State Historic Preservation Office, where he held several roles, including the Certified Local Government Coordinator, Tax Credit Coordinator, and eventually the Assistant Director and Development Grant Monitor. After leaving the SHPO in 1985, Mike worked with a firm in Hagerstown on the rehabilitation of a house on the Antietam Battlefield that still serves as an active bed and breakfast.

In 1985, Mike began his consulting practice, Michael Gioulis, LLC and undertook projects throughout the region. Mike has worked to add numerous communities to the National Register of Historic Places, created design guidelines for local historic landmark commissions, and consulted on countless historic rehabilitation tax credit projects. Some highlights of his career include working on the Franklin Park Botanical Gardens in Columbus, conducting a courthouse study on all 55 West Virginia counties (which evolved into a PBS special!), working on the restoration of the West Virginia Capitol Roof, as well as the restoration of the former DMV Building in Charleston. Mike has also been instrumental in the rehabilitation of significant local buildings, including the Gaines Estate in Fayetteville, the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center in Huntington, and the Staats Hospital in Charleston. This doesn't even touch on the 36 years Mike spent as the West Virginia Main Street design consultant, where he completed over 1200 individual design visits, workshops, training, and technical assistance visits.



Superseding all of this, Mike has served as a mentor and friend to countless individuals who work in historic restoration and redevelopment. He is gracious with his time and knowledge, always willing to offer insight into individual projects as well as statewide initiatives. Throughout his nearly 50 years of service, Mike has diligently striven to make West Virginia a better place.

Redevelopment Partner Award

The **2026 Redevelopment Partner Award** recognizes an individual, organization, agency, or other institution that has demonstrated a strong commitment to brownfield redevelopment and worked closely with the Brownfields Assistance Centers to facilitate redevelopment across the state. This year's recipient is **Partner Community Capital**.

Partner Community Capital (PCAP) is a non-profit community lender that uses a triple-bottom-line framework, seeking to generate financial returns along with social and environmental good. They work with businesses and nonprofit organizations that create local jobs, address community needs, and contribute to sustainable economic development.



PCAP has been a longstanding partner in the brownfields arena, both informally on community projects and formally as a founding member of the Downtown Appalachia Working Group. For seven years, PCAP has partnered with the Brownfields Assistance Center at WVU on the Downtown Appalachia Redevelopment Initiative, which paired the BAC's technical assistance with grants for predevelopment services to a wide-ranging scope of redevelopment projects. From small towns to the bigger cities - mixed-use, commercial, community spaces - full reclamation to enhanced reuse planning, PCAP helps to bring life to historic community assets that were vacant, deteriorating, on life support, or worse. The PCAP team works hard to infuse and supply the resources that back the planning realities around challenging redevelopment and reuse propositions.