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## News Release

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### **DEQ Provides Funding to Spur Economic Development in Rural Communities**

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is providing grants to three rural communities for the asbestos cleanup of historic buildings. The Hotel Franklin in Mangum, the Old Pawnee Municipal Hospital in Pawnee, and the Oaks Rehabilitation Facility in McAlester were selected as recipients of this year's grant money.

The Greer County Economic Development Authority will use the funds to remove asbestos from the historic Hotel Franklin, which was built in 1929. Plans call for renovation of the hotel for use as senior housing, apartments, restaurants, businesses, and a banquet hall.

The City of Pawnee will use the grant to remove asbestos from the former Pawnee Municipal Hospital. Once the building is ready for reuse, the City plans to make the property available for low-income housing for senior citizens and disabled individuals.

Ki Bois Community Action Foundation, Inc. will use the grant to remove asbestos from The Oaks Rehabilitation Facility. The building was originally St. Mary's Hospital. Since 1974, the facility has operated as a substance abuse treatment center. Ki Bois plans to abate asbestos in an unused wing of the facility to allow for expansion of the facility.

The competitive grants are made available through DEQ's Brownfields Program. The Program helps resolve environmental problems created by past property uses so the property can be safely and economically reused.

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