

NEWS,

CITY SEEKS \$600,000 TO CLEAN LAUNDRY

BY ANTHONY CAMMALLERI | October 14, 2022



Lynn has requested \$600,000 in EPA funding to clean up the former Whyte's Laundry site on Willow Street. (Spenser Hasak)

LYNN — The city is applying for \$600,000 in grant funding from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in an attempt to clear a plume of hazardous chemicals from the site of the former laundromat Whyte's Enterprise Laundry.

The downtown lot at 83 Willow St., which served as a laundry facility from the 1930s until the late 1990s, is contaminated with “perc,” short for perchloroethylene, a chlorinated solvent and hazardous chemical that sunk deep into the site’s soil.

Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (ECIC) Operations Manager Bill Bochnak, who’s managing the site cleanup effort, said that the EDIC, with the help of the planning department and the mayor’s office, aims to ensure that the site has been successfully cleared of the hazardous chemicals, while also preventing them from spreading offsite.

“We have been able to treat the chemicals that have been released on site. The objective goal of this particular submission will be to ensure that the on site work is continuing to be successful, and that we look to address off site migration [of these chemicals],” Bochnak said.

As of April, EDIC had secured nearly \$1 million in funding from MassDevelopment, the state’s development finance agency and land bank, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to investigate the amount of pollution on the site and begin cleanup.

Bochnak said that through MassDevelopment’s partnership, the planning department and mayor’s office, through community engagement, found that the space would likely best be used as a public green space.

“What was interesting, from the process we went through, was the feedback as it pertained to open space within a really dense urban environment,” Bochnak said. “Almost like a pocket park. You know, looking at that as an opportunity as well as being cognizant of the work being done by different stakeholders in the city, led primarily by the mayor, and being sensitive to include inclusionary zoning opportunities, and the opportunity to explore and create workforce housing.”

Communications Manager for the Mayor’s Office Valerie Vong is working alongside Bochnak and Associate Planning Director Lauren Drago to review the grant application, which will likely be reviewed later this fall, and accepted or denied by spring, through an environmental lens. She said that the site’s contamination can hinder the success of nearby housing development sites.

“Lynn is going through a lot of new housing and development in the downtown area. Buffum Street, which is also in the downtown, doesn’t really reap these kinds of benefits, and it’s mainly because of the perceived contamination of Whytes Enterprise Laundry,” Vong said. “We just want to provide as much remediation to these kinds of contaminated sites as we can, because we think it’s going to be a great potential for space for our community, especially in the downtown, where we have this vision of really open green space.”

In reference to some of the city’s previous successes using the EPA’s Brownfields Cleanup grants, Bochnak mentioned the former gas station at 870 Western Ave, which, through \$200,000 in EPA funding, the city was able to transform into six townhouses. He said that with the EPA’s support, the 83 Willow St. site will be able to undergo a similar transformation.

“Fingers crossed, we can be successful with this opportunity and try to, once again, breathe new life into an area that’s been just really challenging for the city based on the environmental contaminants and dynamics that were at play,” Bochnak said.



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