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FIELD WIDE OPEN FOR WHYTE'S LAUNDRY SITE USE IN LYNN

BY STEVE KRAUSE | April 27, 2022

LYNN — There are many possibilities for how the city might use the parcel of land on Willow Street that used to house Whyte's Enterprise Laundry.

The city is still in the very early stages of its quest to make a decision on the use of the land, said Bill Bochnak of the Economic Development & Industrial Corporation of Lynn (EDIC), who is the project manager for the Whyte's undertaking.

A lot of what happens from here on out depends on how extensive the cleanup is, and also what the general feeling is among citizens of Lynn regarding how best to use the space.

"There seems to be a lot of feeling that there will be eyes on the pavement," said Rosa Herrero, an urban planner from the DREAM Collaborative of Boston, the firm the state assigned to work with the city on a marketing survey. "In other words, whether it's housing or green space or what it ends up being, people want to be able to see it from the street."

Ward 5 Councilor Dianna Chakoutis, in whose district the parcel sits, said she wants a dog park.

"A lot of people down in that area have pets," she said. "They need somewhere to go."

"We're not anywhere near where we are without (DREAM Collaborative)," said Bochnak. "When we applied to do this, the state gave us a list of partners to work with, and we were fortunate enough to get them."

The actual lot upon which Whyte's occupied was only one-third of an acre. There is also a second, smaller parcel included in the plan. Still, said Herrero, "you'd be surprised at how much you can do with that sized lot."

Right now, the biggest issue facing the redevelopment of the property is the cleanup. And while chemist JR Taormina, who is supervising the cleanup, said that as Brownfields sites go, the Whyte's cleanup is mild compared with some he's worked with, that doesn't mean there aren't challenges.

As with most dry-cleaning companies, Whyte's used a chemical known throughout the industry as "perc," which is short for Perchloroethylene. "Perc" is a chlorinated solvent, which is a contaminant.

Taormina's company had to dig down and inject sodium permanganate, an oxidant, into the ground so it can mix with the chlorinated solvent and neutralize it.

"It's a pretty standard practice," he said. "There's math involved, in that there are other factors, other things in the ground too, and you have to find the right formula."

The neutralized liquid is purple. And chemists can tell how clean the water is by the texture of the purple. The lighter the shade, the cleaner the water, Taormina said.

The laundry was torn down in 1999, Bochnak said, but it wasn't until 2016 or 2017 that the city was able to foreclose on the property. Prior to that, the landowner had to prove she did not have the funds to make the tax payments.

Once the city obtained possession of the land, it applied for resource partners from the state for cleanup work.

"It's taken quite a while," Bochnak said. "And it's taken the collaboration of mayoral administrations, the council, Councilor Chakoutis, and others. We wouldn't be this far without them."



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