



Framingham applying for brownfields grants

By **Danielle Ameden/Daily News staff**
MetroWest Daily News

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FRAMINGHAM — If petroleum or other hazardous materials pollute a property, the cleanup can be costly for the owner.

The toxins - or even just the threat of contamination - can also hold back the site's development or reuse, which hurts a community.

Trying to clean up the problem, Framingham armed itself with \$200,000 in grant money from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2008 to identify some of these so-called brownfields on public and private land.

The town received another \$200,000 last year, and applied last week for an additional \$400,000 in federal funding to continue the program.

"The goal is to try to leverage this money to move redevelopment and revitalization along to the benefit of the community," said Gene Kennedy, the town's Zoning Board administrator.

Using grant money, the town, through environmental engineering consultant Fuss & O'Neil, has assessed several properties and hopes to look at more.

The grants make resources available, including researching historical records on a property's past use and conducting soil and groundwater tests.

The home of Silton Glass at 612 Waverly St., a section of the Cochituate Rail Trail and the site of a proposed community garden on Pratt Street have all been checked out, Kennedy said.

A former Southside truck storage yard, the Pratt Street property had questionable land conditions when the Parks and Recreation Department acquired it. Kennedy said tests found a few spots on the parcel may require additional sampling, but no major contamination that would derail the project.

"That helped us sort of move ahead with planning for the community garden," Kennedy said.

His office of Community and Economic Development oversees the town's brownfields program.

The first two grants Framingham received were targeted for cleaning up petroleum specifically, and for conducting environmental studies on hazardous substances in general on a parcel-by-parcel basis.

Eligible properties include sites where there was "a legacy of automotive or service station use," he said.

The first phase of a brownfields study involves digging into records.

"If we think there are some issues," Kennedy said, "we proceed to what's called a Phase II environmental assessment." That involves taking samples of soil and groundwater and confirming whether there is contamination.

The property owner would be charged with taking action on the results.

"Some people are afraid to do anything so hopefully the money that we can provide them will help move them along, provide them some information," Kennedy said.

He said having a clean property or accurate information about contamination is important when an owner wants to sell or refinance.

Kennedy applied late last week for the town's third brownfields grant, and said he expects to hear back from the EPA next spring.

The money would be geared toward creating a brownfields area district downtown, likely along Waverly Street. If the town succeeds in getting the grant, it would use it to evaluate land use in that zone, Kennedy said.

To learn more about the town's brownfields program or apply, contact the Economic and Community Development office at 508-532-5456 or visit the town website, framinghamma.gov.

(Danielle Ameden can be reached at 508-626-4416 or dameden@cnc.com.)

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