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JAMAICA PLAIN, ROXBURY

City to use \$400k in grants to clean old industrial sites slated for redevelopment in Jackson Square

Posted by Matt Rocheleau May 29, 2012 03:16 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

The city plans to use \$400,000 in federal environmental grants to help pay for an estimated \$1.2-million cleanup of two neighboring former industrial sites slated for redevelopment in the Jackson Square area of Roxbury, officials said.

The US Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Program awarded two grants to Boston, city officials announced Tuesday. Another 16 were awarded to other communities and regional councils in Massachusetts.

The hazardous substance grants have been designated to help fund the cleanup of 1.2 acres of land across two adjacent city-owned sites, 1540 and 1542R Columbus Ave, officials said.

The money will help pay for metals and petroleum remediation at the contaminated sites that were once home to various industrial operations, including an automobile dealership, a trucking facility, and a parking garage, officials said.

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Officials said.

Evelyn Friedman, director of the city's neighborhood development department, said the city plans to transfer ownership of the two parcels by selling them for \$1 each to nonprofit developer Urban Edge to build two projects,

One project calls for the construction of a [long-awaited ice rink and turf field facility](#). The proposal calls for a 38,000 square-foot recreation center that officials have previously estimated will cost a total of \$16 million.

The second project calls for a mixed-use development that will house 37 residential units, 29 of which will be designated as affordable housing. The building, which has been named Jackson Commons, would include a community-oriented commercial space on the first floor.

In addition to the two EPA grants, those development projects are slated to receive \$1.75 million in money allocated by the city, Friedman said.

The state has allocated \$5.6 million to the recreation center development. The two projects may receive more public funding from the state, including through tax credits, Friedman said.

Remediation of the land and new construction are scheduled to begin in the spring of 2013, the city said.

"These generous grants from the EPA means that we can not only ensure the public safety of these sites in our neighborhoods, but we can also begin to revitalize these parcels to create housing, commercial space, and a community center in Jackson Square," Mayor Thomas M. Menino said in a statement thanking the EPA.

The EPA estimates that every acre of reclaimed Brownfields saves 4.5 acres of green space. In turn, that reclaimed green space has, on average, doubled the value of surrounding properties.

Jackson Square is a key crossroads between Roxbury and Jamaica Plain. The city held a [ceremonial groundbreaking](#) there earlier this month for the first component of a multi-phase, 14-building, \$250,000 million redevelopment plan.

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That master plan, the Jackson Square Redevelopment Initiative, was conceived over a 10-year process by residents and city officials one decade ago to revitalize the area surrounding the Jackson Square MBTA station.

The square, where Columbus Avenue and Centre Street intersect, was among the areas that suffered after demolitions decades ago to make room for a planned extension of Interstate 95. After a public outcry, the addition was never built.

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