

\$500K grant to help city move ahead with Covanta Site Park

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LAWRENCE - The site of a former trash incinerator will one day become a park where residents can walk on a path along the Spicket River or relax on the recreation area.

The project, known as Covanta Site Park, is in the planning stages thanks to a \$500,000 grant the city received through the Urban Self-Help Program of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

"Area residents want open space, grassy areas and ball courts," said Kate O'Brien, executive director of Groundwork Lawrence.

The grant will allow the city and the nonprofit urban rehabilitation program to clean up the five acres of land on Manchester Street, which burned garbage to generate electricity for 20 years. The plant closed in 1998 due to cost and pressure from the government to clean up.

The parcel is owned by Covanta - hence the name of the project - which operates the Haverhill incinerator, but O'Brien said the city is negotiating with the company to purchase the land in Lawrence.

"We're waiting for that to go through to continue," O'Brien said.

In the meantime, she said staff members at Groundwork Lawrence will work on the park's design. They hope to start construction in the summer of 2009.

So far, Groundwork Lawrence has to assess the land to find out what environmental hazards there are. O'Brien said soil may be removed or capped depending on what is discovered. The company emitted 800 pounds of mercury and 400 pounds of lead yearly.

Lawrence was one of 21 communities that received a total of \$7.8 million from the Urban Self-Help Program to create or improve parks.

"Open spaces help define the character and improve the livability of our cities and towns," Gov. Deval Patrick said in a statement. "Investing into our system of parks across the entire commonwealth will allow residents to enjoy nature and engage in recreational activities within their communities."