

For immediate release

Commonwealth Invests in Lawrence with Multi-Million Dollar Gateway Initiative Grant to Fund River Revitalization

Lawrence, MA, July 7, 2010--- Groundwork Lawrence and the City of Lawrence have been awarded \$2.6M from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for its Spicket River Revitalization Project. The funds allow for the realization of a decade-long effort to build the Spicket River Greenway, which will link the new and existing parks along the River through the lowest-income areas of Lawrence.

The \$2.6 million dollar grant for work on the Spicket River Greenway will enable the City and Groundwork Lawrence to finalize the design and construct about 2.5 miles of paths along the Spicket River from Manchester Street Park to the outfall of the Spicket River into the Merrimack River. Envisioned by the community as an “emerald bracelet” the Greenway will connect neighborhoods and six existing parks – including the recently completed Manchester Street and Dr. Nina Scarito Parks. This is an exciting opportunity for the Lawrence. The Greenway was first envisioned over a decade ago as a means of providing access to this distinctive environmental feature of North Lawrence and achieving a number of other goals including river restoration, neighborhood revitalization, civic engagement, improved public health, and increased recreational opportunity.

When complete, the Greenway will afford a safe, healthy connection to schools, to the downtown and developing mill district with new jobs and housing, and to the commuter rail station. Alleyways in the neighborhood will link residential streets to the Greenway and its parks and community gardens. "This project will open the doors to community recreation and neighborhood revitalization. The river way is a true asset and, with this partnership, all will soon realize Lawrence's gem," states Mayor William Lantigua, City of Lawrence.

The Commonwealth and City of Lawrence have been key partners throughout the development of Groundwork Lawrence's Spicket River Revitalization Project, which in January was named a new Priority Project of the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Division of Ecological Restoration (DER).

“Groundwork Lawrence looks forward to completing the Spicket River Greenway in partnership with the City of Lawrence and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Restoring the Spicket River corridor and converting it into a community asset was one of our organization's founding objectives,” says Heather McMann, Executive Director of Groundwork Lawrence. “The Greenway will improve long-underserved residents' access to the river and to quality open spaces, while supporting residents' efforts to achieve environmental justice in the neighborhoods adjoining the Spicket River. We have thousands of ardent stewards who have been working with us for over a decade to clean the river banks and streambed. These same residents and youths are the best assurance for the long-term care of the Greenway and will continue to care for the Spicket River Greenway for decades to come.”



The Greenway initiative was formalized as a community goal in 1998 during the creation of Groundwork Lawrence; evolving from clean-up activities around the river to the construction in 2006 of the first brownfield-to-park development in Lawrence, Dr. Nina Scarito Park. The success of this 2.7-acre park fueled the development of four more parks along the River, including a skate park for local youth and schoolyard gardens.

In addition to the quality of life improvements, the parks are supporting broader economic benefits. Between 2000 and 2004, property values around Scarito Park more than doubled--a larger increase than in other Lawrence neighborhoods, and one of the fastest appreciating zip codes in the country. According to community police officers, crime fell drastically. When the foreclosure crisis began in 2006, the combination of parks and homeownership investments helped stabilize this very low-income area.

Groundwork Lawrence, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that has been making change happen in Lawrence, Massachusetts since 2001. Through its environmental and open space improvements, community food programs, youth education and employment initiatives, and community programming and events, Groundwork Lawrence creates the building blocks of a healthy community, and empowers Lawrence residents to improve their quality of life.

For more information on Groundwork Lawrence or Groundwork USA visit www.groundworklawrence.org or www.groundworkusa.net.

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