Spicket River greenway plan afoot

Greenwork Lawrence is working to make the Spicket River’s banks an alluring parkway.

By Ethan Forman

Eagle-Tribune Writer

LAWRENCE — When a large Dunkin’ Donuts soda cup sailed into Spicket River, Armand Hyatt at first thought a bird had hit the water.

Then he saw three people walking down General Street diagonally across the street from the Ensell Entrance of Lawrence General Hospital. One of them had just thrown the cup into the river from the bank.

"Hey, you threw your Dunkin’ Donuts cup into the river. Don’t do it again," yelled the president of the board for Lawrence CommunityWorks Inc.

If he and others have their way, people will enjoy a stroll along the river instead of treating it like a place to chuck trash.

Both Mr. Hyatt and Marianne E. Paley, 38, executive director of Groundwork Lawrence, and the Merrimack River Watershed Council hope to create a greenway along the Spicket River. The project, now in its early stages, would link parks and open spaces in Lawrence.

The project won the backing of the nonprofit Essex County Foundation, which has awarded $50,000 to clean up the environment to groups in the area. The greenway project got the largest single grant from the foundation.

A newly formed umbrella foundation, Essex County Foundation is a collection of charitable funds endowed by local donors to support the work of Essex County nonprofits.

Last night the foundation honored nine grant recipients at Alexander "Sandy" Buck’s barn in Topsfield.

"It just really struck us as a compelling project for us to step up and deliver," said Mr. Buck, chairman of the foundation’s board of directors.

Locally, several agencies got funding from the foundation. The amounts they got and the organizations are:

-$10,000, Greenwork Lawrence, for the Spicket Greenway Project.
-$8,000, Merrimack River Watershed Council, to expand its volunteer monitoring and protection of the Merrimack River in Methuen, Haverhill and Lawrence.
-$3,000, Girl Scouts of Spar and Spindle Council Inc., for a family watershed education project, a

nine-month program in which girls and their families increase their understanding of water-sheds.

-$2,150 to the Bedford Trails Association/Bosford Open Land Trust to hire a planner to review the town’s master plan.

From the Methuen border, the Spicket River runs through North Lawrence, from Stevens Pond, behind Malden Mills, to Marston and Canal streets. It’s crossed by bridges in many spots.

It’s been tried off ever the years to prevent dumping and to prevent children from slipping down its steep banks.

"The Spicket is a tiny river and it’s known for issues of its flooding," said Ms. Paley. Flooding is acute in the Arlington District where there are many poor, disadvantaged children who could also benefit from more open space, she said.

The greenway would link different parks and open space lots along the Spicket, such as the abandoned industrial site known as the “Old Laundry” off Brook Street, Immigrant City Park on Chestnut Street and the Hayden-Chaffee Playstead to name a few.

The community would come up with the vision of how the greenway would look, she said.

Other grant recipients are The Parker River Clean Water Association, $5,300; The Ipswich River Watershed Association, $7,000; The Essex National Heritage Commission, $4,500; The Massachusetts Audubon Society North Shore Conservation Advocacy and the Great Marsh Coalition, $8,000; and Salem Sound 2000, $4,500.

Federal grant for gateway project

By Ethan Forman

Eagle-Tribune Writer

LAWRENCE — The city will get $200,000 from the federal government to revitalize its Gateway and clean up pollution at the former Oxford Paper Co. site.

The money will also go toward creating open, green areas in the North Common neighborhood.

The money from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will supplement money the city won to redevelop brownfields in 1996, area congressmen announced last week, just days before Earth Day on Sunday.

"This award represents a fitting tribute to the city of Lawrence for improving the economic and environmental quality of life around the Oxford Paper mill site, the Atlantic Powerhouse and the Everett Mills warehouse," said Congressman Marcy K. T. Meehan, D-Lowell.

Brownfields are abandoned, killer or under-used industrial areas in need of expensive environmental cleanups. The federal brownfields program is designed to prevent, assess and clean up, through loans and grants.

Of the grant money, $150,000 will be used to assess what contaminants might be in the soil of the former Oxford Paper Co. mill site at Canal and Marston streets, and four sites that will be targeted for the Spicket River Greenway Project.

Grant: Money on the way

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The long-abandoned, 3-acre Oxford Paper Co. site is undergoing a cleanup after decades of talk about redevelopment there.

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The Lawrence Community Foundation is funding an early planning of a greenway along the Spicket River, a narrow, winding river that slices through Lawrence. Some of the parks and open areas along the greenway would connect with the Lawrence Riverwalk, Immigrant City Park, and the Old Laundry site off Brook Street.