

EPA awards Lawrence \$150K to clean up former incinerator site

By Jill Harmacinski, Staff Writer

LAWRENCE — The city has received \$150,000 in federal grant money to clean up Covanta Site Park, a former trash incinerator site that's being turned into a public park.

The park is on five acres on Manchester Street, which borders the Spicket River.

Lawrence this week was one of 11 communities and organizations across Massachusetts awarded a combined \$2.2 million in Environmental Protection Agency money.

Mayor Michael Sullivan said the grant was another exciting step toward developing another "environmentally friendly" area in the city.

The EPA money is for the "revitalization" of former industrial and commercial sites so they can be transformed "from abandoned and blighted properties into community assets," according to an EPA statement.

City councilors earlier this year agreed to purchase the park for \$1 from former owner Covanta Energy, which operates an incinerator at Ward Hill Industrial Park in Haverhill.

"It was a pretty good bargain," said City Council President Patrick Blanchette, noting the purchase was in the works for "a couple of years."

Organizers from Groundwork Lawrence, a local group heavily involved with the project, envision a park with open space and grassy areas.

The EPA grants are used to redevelop abandoned parcels known as brownfields, which are sites where expansion, redevelopment or reuse are complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant.

Garbage was burned on the site for nearly 20 years to generate electricity. The plant closed in 1998 because of the costs and pressure from the government to clean the area up. The company emitted 800 pounds of mercury and 400 pounds of lead yearly.

Other local communities receiving similar grants included Lowell, \$400,000; Revere, \$200,000; and Fitchburg, \$50,500.