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\$2 million HUD grant to help Nashua Millyard cleanup

The federal government is contributing \$2 million to help clean up a contaminated chunk of Nashua's Millyard complex, a site that has long been eyed for redevelopment.

A grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development will finance work at the city-owned Boiler House, which was once the engine for the former site of a textile mill that now houses a slate of small businesses and an art gallery.

The Boiler House itself lies in the path of one of the proposed routes of the Broad Street Parkway. The potential environmental impact of contamination in parts of the Millyard is one of the issues in the parkway proposal.

"The timing allows the city to consider this impact as we review the latest plans for the Broad Street Parkway project," said Kathy Hersh, the city's economic development director.

Mayor Donnalee Lozeau announced May 2 that the city had received the grant through HUD's Brownfields Economic Development Initiative.

Brownfields are federally designated contaminated sites. Nashua's Brownfields Program, led by coordinator Deb Chisholm, provides the city with the technical expertise on environmental issues related to Brownfield sites, Hersh said.

Lozeau said U.S. Sens. Judd Gregg and John Sununu helped secure the money, which will be used to remove contaminated soils, asbestos and underground storage tanks.

Three-quarters of the money will be used for removing the asbestos, Chisholm said. The asbestos is contained within the building and doesn't pose a danger outside of the structure, she said.

However, the ceiling is 30 to 40 feet high, and it will be difficult to access areas where asbestos is wrapped around pipes, she said.

Brownfields remain roadblock to further redevelopment

"The asbestos has to be cleaned up whether the building is rehabbed or gets demolished," Chisholm said.

The contaminated soil is typical of what's found in urban fill areas and isn't a huge problem, she said.

"It was somewhat surprising that the groundwater was as clean as it was," Chisholm said.

The city received a \$200,000 grant last year from the federal Environmental Protection Agency for the cleanup. The HUD grant should handle the entire cost of the work, she said.

Now, the city must work closely with HUD to develop a specific plan on how the work will proceed and how the money will be spent, Chisholm said. — **THE TELEGRAPH**