

## **Federal cash boosts Astoria's Heritage Square**

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The city of Astoria has been selected as one of nine cities nationally to share \$3.8 million in brownfields redevelopment funding for the cleanup of Heritage Square. Astoria will receive more than \$400,000.

The money is part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funding to help cleanup and redevelop contaminated properties. The new pilot grants, funded by EPA's brownfields program, will help recipients conduct assessments and cleanups, eliminating delays.

Astoria was selected for a brownfields multi-purpose pilot grant. Hazardous substances grant funds will be used to assess and clean up the Heritage Square site located at 1153 Duane St.

Once the site of an auto repair shop, a dry cleaner and later a printer, the Duane Street location will be redeveloped as an outdoor community gathering place with an amphitheater, market plaza, boardwalk and covered pavilions.

"This was an opportunity that was brought to our attention by a couple of state agencies," City Manager Paul Benoit said of the Department of Environmental Quality and Business Oregon.

"When we acquired the Safeway block, we had done some environmental assessment, and there were a number of uses on the block that we knew had contributed to contamination to some extent."

The grant for the city of Astoria totals more than \$400,000 and will cover the whole block in both investigation and cleanup.

"There's nothing horrible on the block, but this will give us a clean slate," Benoit said.

He acknowledged Community Development Director Brett Estes and Public Works Director Ken Cook, and their staffs, for meeting the short timelines for the grant application.

"They really put their heart and soul into it."

A historic dimension to the Astoria redevelopment project is the Garden of Surging Waves, a Chinese Garden that will be a tribute to Astoria's Chinese heritage. Astoria has a rich and diverse social history, populated with a variety of ethnic groups, many of which are honored elsewhere in the community. But until now, Astoria's early Chinese history has remained obscure.

When fishing and fish canneries were two of Astoria's primary industries, Chinese men were a

key part of the cannery workforce.

There are an estimated 450,000 abandoned and contaminated waste sites in America. EPA's Brownfields program targets these sites to encourage redevelopment, and help provide the opportunity for productive community use of contaminated properties. Brownfields grants target underserved and low income neighborhoods – places where environmental cleanups and new jobs are most needed.

“Investment in the cleanup and reuse of contaminated property is a catalyst for improving people's lives,” said EPA Assistant Administrator Mathy Stanislaus.

“This funding will help foster local economic growth and leverage jobs in communities where they are needed most. A revitalized brownfields site reduces threats to human health and the environment, promotes community involvement and attracts investment in local neighborhoods.”

Since inception in 1995, EPA's brownfields investments have leveraged more than \$18.3 billion in cleanup and redevelopment funding from a variety of public and private sources and have resulted in approximately 75,500 jobs.

So far in 2012, EPA has awarded \$69.3 million to 245 grantees in 39 states across the country to assess and clean up abandoned industrial and commercial properties.