

By Danielle Ameden/Daily News staff

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Officials say brownfields grant will help Framingham

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regional director Curt Spalding on Wednesday said a \$400,000 federal grant to assess so-called brownfields should help Framingham overcome a toxic legacy.

Framingham's industrial roots inevitably left the town and individual property owners to deal with polluted land.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regional director Curt Spalding on Wednesday said a \$400,000 federal grant to assess these so-called brownfields should help Framingham overcome that legacy.

Toting a large, ceremonial check, Spalding visited Framingham to officially announce the award, which he said will expand a program here fueled by two earlier grants in 2008 and 2009. The aim, he said, is advancing the cleanup of contamination and spurring economic development.

"When a community gets its act together and knows what it needs to do, we're very pleased to be a partner," Spalding said during a brief ceremony in the Ablondi Room of the Memorial Building.

As with the past brownfields assessment grants Framingham has received, the town plans to hire a licensed site professional to study sites that have histories around hazardous substances and petroleum.

For a town that's largely built out and has an industrial heritage, the money will go a long way, Town Manager Robert Halpin said.

"These types of resources really do play a key role in our economic development strategy moving forward," he said.

Spalding said Framingham's legacy of contaminated property is reflected across New England, where there are abandoned factories and "legacy issues that we have to address."

Of the \$70 million in brownfields grants awarded nationwide, more than \$17 million and more than half the grants are going to this region, he said.

Following the event, Gene Kennedy, the town's assistant director of Community and Economic Development, said he anticipated the town holding a public meeting in September to present an overview of the brownfields project.

Kennedy said the licensed site professional will outreach to land owners who could benefit from environmental testing of their property, focused on the downtown and Southside target area.

"These are where our most vulnerable populations are," Spalding said,

He promised that grant-funded projects will be put through a matrix. "You'll see real results."