Council Communication

Department: Community Development	Ordinance No.: N/A Resolution No.: 25-	Set Public Hearing: January 13, 2025 Public Hearing: January 27, 2025 Award Contract: March 10, 2025

Subject/Title

Set Public hearing to approve the plans, specifications and form of contract for the cleanup of the former Reliance Battery Factory site.

Background/Discussion

Background

The former Reliance Battery Factory site encompasses 0.93 acres within the 800 block of 22nd Avenue. Constructed in 1925, the building was located in an open area without any adjacent property owners. As the city expanded, the area surrounding the property became residential and the battery factory became a legal, nonconforming use within the neighborhood. The site was used for manufacturing, repairing and reconditioning lead acid batteries and remained in operation until Spring 2020. During its operation, the factory was cited several times for lead contamination, which resulted in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) completing a soil removal project in 1991 to reduce the lead exposure in the neighborhood.

In May 2020, Staff began working with the owner to acquire the property. After extensive testing, it was determined the site was again contaminated with lead in areas up to as much as 30 times standard levels of lead in the soil. Staff determined the best solution for the safety of residents would be to acquire the property, demolish the existing structures and work with EPA to clean up the lead contamination on the site. In October 2020, the City closed on the property and by January 2022, the structures on the property were demolished, prepping the site for cleanup.

In December of 2021, an application for an EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant was prepared and submitted. The application requested $500,000 with an additional $100,000 in cost share utilizing Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to assist the City in the overall planning and coordination of cleanup activities on the former Reliance Battery Factory site. In the summer of 2022, the City was awarded a $500,000 EPA Cleanup Grant.

The City conducted several neighborhood meetings where most of the neighbors voiced their desire for residential uses on the property. Once the site is clean to the levels acceptable by the State and EPA, the City will then look to select a developer for the site. If the site can not be cleaned to residential standards, a different use will be required.

In 2023, the DRN required the City to enroll into the Land Recycling Program (LRP), which required additional testing on the site as well as on adjacent properties. The City in partnership with their Environmental Consultant has been completing the required testing and submitting the results to EPA for review. The next step would be to bid the project out for cleanup.

The cleanup work includes the following:

- Over-excavation of lead-contaminated soil, backfill and grading, restoration, and seeding of the site located at 813 22nd Avenue, Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501 (the former Reliance Battery Factory site).
- Approximately 4615 cubic yards will be removed from the site. All lead-contaminated soil areas identified within the demolition limits will be removed and disposed of in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations to the strictest standard.
- Associated work shall include placement of clean compacted fill on excavation areas, site security, traffic control and erosion control in accordance with the NPDES General Permit No. 2 “Storm Water Discharge Associated with Industrial Activity for Construction Activities” for the over-excavation and restoration project at the site. Stabilized construction entrances will be required and silt fences shall be constructed to stop any sediment from leaving the site.
- After the site is stabilized, the Contractor shall remove the silt fences. Existing inlets shall be protected. Any track out from the site on the City streets shall be removed on a daily basis.
- Upon completion of all fill activities the site will be graded, seeded and mulched in accordance to City standards.

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Discussion

The City is ready to bid the cleanup phase of the site. The timeline shall be as follows:

January 28, 2025	Bid opening on IonWave
March 10, 2025	City Council award contract
March 2025	Soil cleanup
July 2025	Receive No Further Action from DNR/EPA

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the resolution setting the public hearing for the plans, specifications and form of contract for the cleanup of the former Reliance Battery Factory site.

Attachment

Resolution