

SPRINGFIELD NEWS-SUN

City gets \$1.8 million to develop business park

By Samantha Sommer, Staff Writer
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SPRINGFIELD — The Ohio Department of Development has awarded the city of Springfield a \$1.8 million grant to redevelop the former Navistar International Corp. plant site on Lagonda Avenue.

The grant, which must still be approved by the state Controlling Board, is to install roads and utilities on the 58-acre site.

The city barely missed out on a job ready sites grant for the infrastructure work last year, so it was pleased to receive this money, said Patricia Richards, deputy economic development administrator.

“We were quite disappointed when we were not funded last year because this is a terrific project for the community,” she said.

It has been named the Champion City Business Park, reflecting a former nickname of the city and the history of the site. It once served as the world headquarters of the company that made the Champion reaper and eventually became Navistar through mergers.

The site also has been the focus of \$2.2 million Clean Ohio grant and an environmental cleanup, which should be done next month. Crews are crushing concrete and grading the site now, said Bryan Heck, executive assistant to the city manager.

The goal is to redevelop the site for light industrial use for six to eight companies, Heck said, and to provide new jobs within Springfield that support the city school district tax base.

“Usually companies have to go out to a greenfield to develop an industrial site,” he said. “But we’ve been given an opportunity to redevelop an old industrial site and use it again.”

The city will have to provide about \$709,000 in matching funds, most of which will come from the city’s utility funds, Richards said.

If the controlling board approves the grant next month, construction might start at the end of this year or in the spring of next year and wrap up by the end of 2012.

State Sen. Chris Widener, R-Springfield, praised the grant in a news release.

“A \$1.8 million grant to the city for job development will open the door for many individuals to get back to work and put food on the table for their families,” he said in the statement.

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