



## 'Park in the Hole'

Playing fields, homes options for ex-factory site

**FLINT**

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**By Ron Fonger**

**rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317**

FLINT - The bare concrete covering the old "Chevy in the Hole" site doesn't make it look much like a recreational playground, but more park space is a key to each of two proposals for redeveloping the 130 acres.

The redevelopment plans will be unveiled in a Thursday meeting, and both focus on turning the old industrial area - a focal point in the Sit-Down Strike of 1936-37 - very green.

One plan even suggests the area could be developed into a new state park, according to one of the University of Michigan graduate students who worked on the study.

"We can't allow that current situation of an open concrete brownfield to sit there in the middle of our community," said Daniel T. Kildee, chairman of the Genesee County Land Bank, which funded the study with a federal grant.

"I don't think anyone should have any misconception about how difficult (things) would be to (redevelop) it, but the upside is incredible. You can change the community," Kildee said.

A group of UM landscape architecture and environmental policy graduate students developed the two proposals, but Rebekah VanWieren, a spokeswoman for them, said parts of each plan or substitute pieces could comprise what's eventually pursued.

The important part is to get started at building consensus, officials said.

One scenario calls for a quicker environmental cleanup on the site and development of some housing along the Flint River in the area, a Kettering University research park and a business park.

That proposal assumes Flint's population losses have stabilized and that environmental contamination is very localized.

A second option suggests a slower environmental cleanup and redevelopment of the site as a potential state park with gardens, playing fields, small beach and fishing areas, and botanic garden.

### QUICK TAKE

What's next for "Chevy in the Hole?"

The results of an 18-month study on options for re-use of the area known as "Chevy in the Hole" will be revealed at a 5:30 p.m. meeting Thursday at the Flint Children's Museum, 1602 W. Third Ave., Flint.

Two possible options for redevelopment will be discussed.

A research team from the University of Michigan has been working with the Genesee County Land Bank and the Genesee Institute since 2005 on redevelopment options for the site.

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That scenario assumes there are low levels of contamination across the site - something that still isn't known.

The study didn't estimate costs for either scenario and isn't recommending one plan over another. VanWieren said changes aren't going to happen overnight and could take decades to complete because of the scope of the job.

General Motors and Delphi control the property that makes up the site and want to see something positive developed there, Land Bank officials said.

The UM report is expected to be used by groups planning future riverfront development in Flint, including the city, Genesee County and Kettering University. The report builds off strategic plans already completed by Sasaki Associates and the Army Corps of Engineers, according to a news release.

The last operating plant on the Chevy in the Hole site shut down in 2004, ending activity at the last running Sit-Down Strike factory in Flint. Many of the buildings in the complex, including the towering Chevrolet smokestacks, were razed from 1995-99.

VanWieren said the site is important to the community for a number of reasons.

"Because of its proximity to downtown, there is a lot of potential for the site. It has a lot going for it," VanWieren said. "It is a very special site (because of) the history and the river."

Donna Gardner, who lives in Flint's Mott Park neighborhood, said she plans to be at Thursday's meeting because she's interested in the future of the riverfront.

Gardner attended a meeting in November that was called by the UM team to hear suggestions from residents for the area. Many of those were incorporated into the two proposals.

"I would think some combination of both those recommendations, including residential, business and park areas, would be best," Gardner said.

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