

## Councilor: Hospital would make city land a park

By Jason Tait , Staff Writer  
Eagle-Tribune

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HAVERHILL - A tiny, littered, overgrown city lot at the corner of Savage and Groveland streets may be sold for \$20,000 to Merrimack Valley Hospital, which plans to make it into a park, said City Councilor David Hall.

Councilors last night approved selling the .165-acre property to the hospital's parent company, Essent Healthcare. The mayor still needs to finalize the deal.

The property is full of small trees and short, wild shrubs.

Hall said the lot has been littered and is an eyesore for the neighborhood, and neighbors wanted it cleaned up.

"We just want to keep it looking pretty," Hall said of why the city is selling the property.

Hall spoke to hospital officials, who told him the land would be maintained as a park, he said at last night's council meeting.

The park would look similar to a small recreation area at the hospital's entrance at the corner of Groveland Street and Katsaros Drive, Hall said.

The land is assessed at \$20,000, though the fair market value of the land was set at \$24,500 by a private assessor, Jack Ruth Appraisal Services.

Councilors approved selling the land at the lower amount with a 6-0 vote. Councilor Mary Ellen Daly O'Brien, a Merrimack Valley Hospital employee, abstained.

The lot was too small for a building, and utilities running through it prevented construction, Hall said.

Neighbors welcome the idea of the lot being maintained by the hospital, Hall said. But at least one resident, Susan Vlahos of 21 Savage St., said she does not want a park on the land.

“This is a residential area,” she said last night when contacted at home. “I would not like that on my street.”

It is up to Mayor James Fiorentini to complete the sale to the hospital.

Since 2004, Fiorentini has been selling city property to spur economic development and keep the budget afloat.

The city has sold 66 properties that fetched almost \$4 million under Fiorentini. Most were small parcels the city acquired for nonpayment of taxes and have since been returned to the tax rolls, the mayor has said, generating about \$46,000 in taxes annually

The lot being sold to the hospital would generate about \$206 in property taxes based on current rates.

Ring it up

**For sale:** Littered \$20,000 lot at the corner of Savage and Groveland streets

**Potential buyer:** Essent Healthcare, parent company of Merrimack Valley Hospital

**Plans:** Clean it up for a small park

*Source: City Councilor David Hall*

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