DTSC facilitates expansion of Southern California auto dealership

Huntington Park is gaining an expanded automobile dealership thanks in large part to a $1.2 million financial boost from the California Department of Toxic Substances Control and US Environmental Protection Agency. DTSC also is overseeing the removal of up to 5,600 tons of contaminated soil from the former fertilizer manufacturing and later steel foundry site.

The city received a $200,000 grant and an $800,000 loan from DTSC, in addition to a $200,000 cleanup grant from the US EPA. The money will be used to cover most of the cost of removing toxic chemicals from the former Southland Steel property on Alameda Street.

The city's redevelopment agency bought the 5.3-acre site in 2005, razed most of the buildings in 2008 and intends to sell it to Nick Alexander Imports, which plans an expansion of its BMW dealership. Alexander currently leases the property for use as a parking lot.

"This is one of the most important projects for the City," said Fernanda Palacios, project manager in the housing and economic development department. "The ultimate goal is to facilitate the expansion of the Alexander Imports dealership, which in addition to beautifying the area will stimulate economic growth, expand the city's tax base, generate new jobs and benefit the local economy by supporting local establishments."

The toxic chemicals stem from past uses, and include metals and polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in the soil; volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in soil vapor; and VOCs and metals in groundwater. The groundwater is not used for drinking, and DTSC will oversee its cleanup.

Southland Steel operated a plant from 1972 to about 2002. DTSC is overseeing the cleanup, which is being conducted under the California Land Reuse & Revitalization Act (CLRRA). The 2004 law protects entities from certain environmental liabilities when they are willing to undertake a cleanup action before reuse. This gives a significant boost to some urban-area development efforts.

Workers prepare a monitoring well installation that will reach a depth of 130 feet.