

Grant awarded to site in Concord Twp.

By [Dillon Davis](#)



Pictured is the former Wild Oak Market at the corner of Dublin Road (state Route 745) and Home Road in Concord Township.

A pair of local firms in Delaware County have partnered together to secure a \$1 million grant to support the environmental cleanup of a Concord Township site that dates back to the late 1800s.

The site, which is located at 7775 Dublin Road, measures approximately 0.47 acres and contains one commercial building. Most recently, the building served as the Wild Oak Market convenience store.

Phoenix Environmental, LLC, a Delaware-based environmental consulting firm currently celebrating 10 years in business, assisted Powell-based development firm Lehner Company in acquiring the funding through the Ohio Department of Development's Brownfield Remediation Program after an environmental assessment revealed underground storage tanks on the site from its days as a gas station.

"We've done a lot of grant work ... and the way this one came about is really kind of crazy," Phoenix President Jeff Paetz told The Gazette. "It was a site that was undergoing property transfer. The client then reached out to me and said, 'Hey, we need help with this and we need to find out what's going on.' We needed to do a Phase II (assessment), so we went out and did some work and discovered they likely had some underground storage tanks. So we kind of opened up this can of worms and it continued for a while. We discovered there was a tank there and there was contamination present, and it became bigger and bigger (of an issue)."

Paetz said the assessment advanced to conducting delineation work to try and find the extent of the contamination, similar to what is currently being done with the East Palestine disaster in northeast Ohio. In doing the evaluation, Paetz said a point was reached when they found it was running perpendicular to the direction it should run based on the topography of the site.

"Groundwater typically follows elevation, and we figured that was probably due to what's called a preferential pathway," Paetz said. "It's following a utility line. So it was much bigger than we expected. We had delineated to a point and then it was like, boom, this is a much bigger problem."

At that point, Phoenix reached back out to Lehner Company and suggested the pursuit of a grant free of charge to Lehner Company. Paetz admitted he didn't believe the grant would be awarded but is glad to see the work on the site continue as a result of the funding.

"Luckily it did (get awarded) because we have some significant problems out there because they have contamination in groundwater. ... There's a whole bunch of activity that needs to happen to get this site cleaned up," he said. "It would sit idle without a grant. That's just the reality. It would just be an encumbrance on the county or the township."

Paetz added, "There's nothing we like more than to find a grant. Grants are the spark that ignites redevelopment. And Brownfields are legacies and are everywhere, and they're going to continue to be everywhere. So these grants are excellent sources of funding and can help a community. They put sites back into the tax base."

Paetz noted Concord Township "really came through" to assist in the grant being awarded and said the funding ultimately allows Lehner Company to continue its plans and make the site "a gem of the area."

Matt Lehner said in a release announcing the grant, "I'm excited that we could come together with the State of Ohio and Concord Township to clean up a compromised site. This will ensure the building remains a fixture of the community, as it has since the 1880s. This could not have come to fruition without those partnerships and the guidance from Jeff Paetz and the professionals at Phoenix Environmental."

As for what his intentions are with the site once the hazards are removed, Lehner said he's working with a local realtor to identify a tenant for the market.

"It's just kind of restoring the property to honor the history of the community and find a good long-term operator that reflects the way the community is going into the future," he said.