



Amid a sea of people opposed to the project, Lynn Mayor Jared Nicholson addresses the City Council and constituents and speaks in favor of the South Harbor development project. (Spenser Hasak) [Purchase this photo](#)

Lynn council green-lights South Harbor plan

James Jennings

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LYNN — The largest investment in the city’s history got the green light from the City Council Tuesday night.

The council approved the South Harbor development plan, tax incremental financing (TIF), and easements for the \$450 million project.

“This is a historic night for Lynn,” James M. Cowdell, executive director of EDIC/Lynn, said following the meeting.

The project will bring an 850-unit, mixed-income apartment complex with a first-floor commercial space to a waterfront property that has sat vacant for decades.

Mayor Jared Nicholson said that the lot is a prime waterfront location currently overgrown with weeds and blocking the mouth of the Saugus River.

He said that the plan includes market-rate housing, affordable housing, commercial space, a waterfront park, and much-needed revenues for city services.

“I think it is a really great example of the possibilities that open up when we come together,” Nicholson said. “If it weren’t for this city partnership, the site most likely would remain vacant and become market-rate housing.”

He said that the city worked with Boston-based developer Samuels & Associates to meet the Lynn Housing Production Plan requirements, which includes 85 units of affordable housing.

“These affordable units will have a preference for Lynn residents to the maximum extent allowed by law,” Nicholson said. “This project adds much-needed affordable units at 60% of the area’s median income, which is what the Lynn Housing Plan recommended was appropriate for tax incentives for private developers.”

He outlined the guidelines for the affordable housing units:

- Studio – household income of \$62,000 annually with a net rent of \$1,440.
- One bedroom – household income of \$67,000 annually with a net rent of \$1,500.
- Two bedroom – household income of \$80,000 annually with a net rent of \$1,760.
- Three bedroom – household income of \$93,000 annually with a net rent of \$2,000.

He added that the developer pledged that the project would employ 30% Lynn residents, 25% people of color, and 10% women.

“We want this project to create good jobs for Lynn residents, and we’ve received a meaningful commitment to help us do that,” Nicholson said.

There was a large contingent of affordable housing advocates from various community organizations at the meeting protesting the project, including the \$45 million in tax breaks the developer will receive.

As Nicholson spoke, they held up signs saying, “No tax breaks for a segregated neighborhood,” “This is not inclusive development,” and “Where was the public input?”

Several city councilors said that they generally oppose tax breaks but felt that this project is worth offering the \$45 million tax break.

“When I walked into the first meeting and I heard the words ‘tax breaks,’ I was like absolutely not,” Ward 6 Councilor Fred Hogan said, adding that he felt strongly that affordable housing be included in the project.

Ward 3 Councilor Coco Alinsug said that he, too, was opposed to tax breaks for big companies.

Nicholson explained that the tax breaks do not equate to the city paying out any money to the developer.

“The \$45 million represents increment financing,” Nicholson said. “It’s not money that’s leaving the city budget. It’s saying that by projecting the value of the property at the current tax rate, we would be getting a certain amount in taxes. Instead of that amount, we’re going to get \$45 million less. So, it’s still a net gain in revenue.”

Councilor-at-Large Brian LaPierre said that the lot currently generates \$60,000 a year in property taxes for the city.

“That is going to immediately skyrocket to millions as we build up to the three phases,” LaPierre said. “Over the course of 30 years, the number being tossed around is \$120 million in commercial property revenue.”

Council support for the project was not unanimous, though.

Councilor-at-Large Nicole McClain said that there was no real discussion with the community about the project.

“Grassroots organizations that deal with housing and that deal with situations like this with development need to be included in conversations that we have when they’re negotiating,” McClain said. “I believe that, before we came to this juncture of the decision being made, we should’ve made sure that these grassroots organizations were included, such as Lynn United for Change, so that we could make sure what we were doing was what was best for the community. Going forward, we really need to make sure that we are making every effort to include the community and hear the community’s voice.”





James Jennings

James Jennings is The Daily Item's Lynn reporter. A native Vermonter, his more than 20 years in newspaper journalism have brought him to Mississippi, Arkansas, Texas and Iowa before bringing him home to New England in 2023. He has covered everything from presidential debates to 4-H livestock shows and even three Super Bowls.

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