

City optimistic about future of old post office site

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - The demolition of the former **Alton Post Office**, located at **727 Belle Street**, has been completed.

Ameren Illinois conducted the demolition of the building, which began just before Christmas 2016, after doing asbestos abatement. The former post office was built atop a

former gas plant, which served the heating, lighting and cooking needs of both the **City of Alton** and its citizens from 1855-1940s. **Ameren Illinois Communications Executive Brian Bretsch** told Riverbender.com the next step would be testing the soil and groundwater for any residual coal tar left by the former plant.

When that testing has been completed in a few months, Ameren will begin remediation of that ground. Bretsch said that cleanup is completely voluntary and is being done in conjunction with the **Illinois Environmental Protection Agency** for public safety. While the coal tar is currently well below ground and is not directly harmful to human health, Bretsch said Ameren Illinois is doing the work proactively to prevent any possible future incident.

After the site has been properly remediated and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency clears it with Ameren Illinois for possible commercial or residential use, **Alton Mayor Brant Walker** said he is optimistic about the possible uses of that site in the future.

"We're hoping it will attract new businesses to the area," Walker said.

Alton Building and Zoning Director Greg Caffey said he would love to see the area redeveloped as soon as possible, and said he trusts Ameren Illinois with that process.

"I am sure they will do their due diligence to see that building and area have new potential," he said.

In previous interviews with Riverbender.com, Bretsch said the process of remediation may take between 12-16 months to complete in full.

