

La Villita Park Opens at Former Celotex Site

Celotex Site
Chicago, Illinois

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For more information

For questions or comments, or for more information about the Celotex site, contact:

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You may call the U.S. EPA's Chicago regional office toll-free at 800-621-8431, weekdays, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Information repository

Site files are at:
Chicago Public Library
Toman Branch
2708 S. Pulaski Road
Chicago

Rudy Lozano Branch
1805 S. Loomis St.
Chicago

Celotex website:

www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/celotex/

Chicago Park District website:

www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks/park-553



La Villita Park opens at the former Celotex site.

During the Celotex site cleanup, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency asked Little Village residents for input on future use. Today, the vision the community expressed throughout the cleanup has become a reality with the opening of a new park for the community. U.S. EPA joins the Chicago Park District and the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization in celebrating the opening of a park on the former site.

The new La Villita Park, located at 2800 S. Sacramento Ave., is the result of a successful collaboration among federal and city agencies and neighborhood organizations. With the insistent determination of community groups like LVEJO and other dedicated members of the Little Village community, this previously contaminated property is now a beautiful green space for the community to use.



Historically, the Celotex site was used for making, storing and selling asphalt roofing products. Manufacturing operations date back to at least 1918 and continued until 1982. Since then, the site was either dormant or the subject of environmental investigations. One resident, speaking in 2006, said the site had become an “eyesore.”

U.S. EPA conducted its investigation of the site from 1993 to 2004 and completed the required cleanup in 2009 under the Superfund program. That same year the city of Chicago signed an agreement with U.S. EPA and the U.S. Department of Justice agreeing to enhance the cleanup and develop the Celotex site as a public park using certain sustainable development practices. The agreement gave the city protection from potential liability for the contamination at the property. This paved the way for the sale of the site to the city of Chicago. The Chicago Park District acquired the site in 2012 to turn it into the recreational and green space that the community had envisioned.

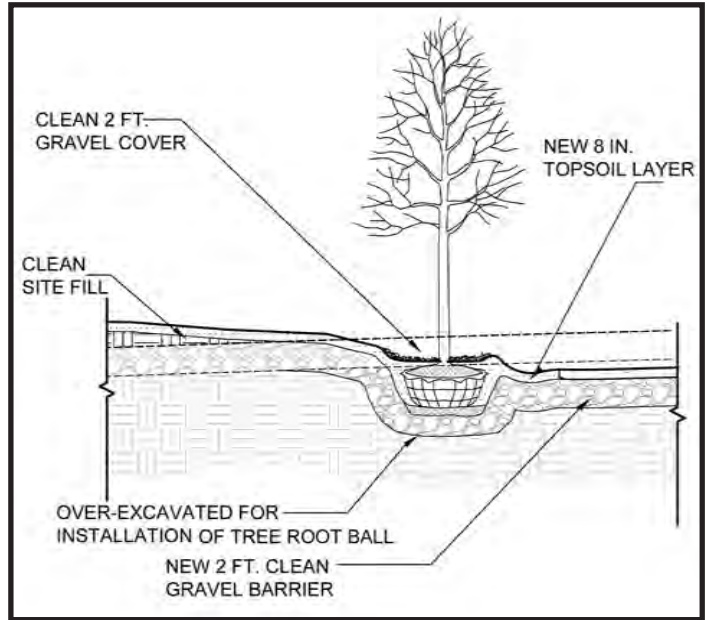
Environmental concerns

The Agency has taken measures as part of the cleanup to ensure that the park is safe for the community to enjoy now and in the future.

U.S. EPA thoroughly reviewed the Chicago Park District’s design to ensure the park would be designed and built in an environmentally safe manner. During construction, U.S. EPA required the park district to follow protective measures which included:

- Daily air monitoring for site-specific contaminants.
- Continuous dust monitoring when the cover was disturbed.
- Spraying water on the site to minimize or eliminate any dust from escaping the site.

- Proper handling of contaminated material unearthed during the installation of park features and taking it off-site for proper disposal.
- Replacing any of the disturbed soil with the 2-foot clean barrier that was part of the Superfund cleanup.



When it was necessary to dig into the contamination to plant a tree, workers dug deeper to allow for a 2-foot gravel barrier between the tree and contaminated soil. Any exposed contamination was removed and disposed of properly.

Site background

The former Celotex site had several different owners over the years, but commercial activities were basically the same – the manufacture, storage and distribution of asphalt roofing products. This took place from at least 1918 until 1982. Celotex Corp. began operations at the site in 1967 and officially closed in 1983 due to declining product sales.

In May 1989, local residents complained to the Illinois EPA, prompting an investigation. The state agency studied the site from 1989 through 1992, taking samples at the site and in the surrounding residential area.

Results showed elevated levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, in all areas. PAHs are a group of chemicals that form during burning of coal, wood, oil, gas and garbage. PAHs attach to soil particles and last a long time in the environment. Some PAHs may cause cancer in humans.

In 1993, U.S. EPA began its oversight of the investigation and subsequently required cleanup of the site and the residential neighborhood around the site by the potentially responsible party, Honeywell. That work was completed in 2009 and U.S. EPA has no further cleanup activities planned for the site.

