

Site Redevelopment Profile

Conway Park

550 Somerville Avenue
Somerville, Massachusetts 02143

Property Overview

Size

2.8 acres

Current Site Uses

- Recreation complex

Use Restrictions

- None

Surrounding Population

75,884
1 MILE

425,775
3 MILES

976,108
5 MILES

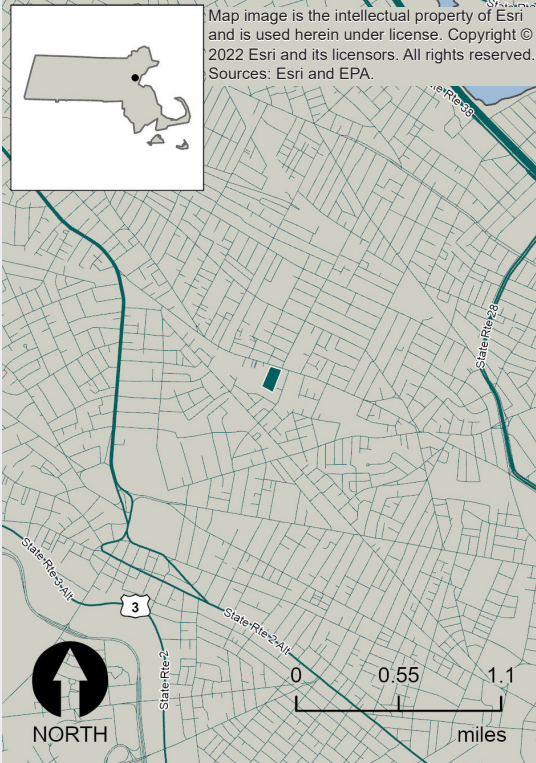


Figure 1. The location of the Conway Park site in Massachusetts

Site History and Redevelopment Timeline

Early 1800s-1930s

The site was used for industrial purposes, principally a bleachery and dye-works factory.

1937

The city of Somerville started the process of taking ownership of the property.

1970s, 1990s, early 2000s

The city of Somerville conducted various park renovations.

2017

A city contractor began sampling site soils as part of an environmental assessment. Site assessment work continued through 2019.

2018

The city closed access to the park. Part of the playground opened later that year after consultation with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and EPA.

2019

MassDEP requested cleanup assistance from EPA.

2020

EPA and the city of Somerville signed an Administrative Order on Consent to address cleanup and agreed to a mixed-work approach (see highlight box on page 2).

2021

The city of Somerville, in coordination with EPA and its contractors, prepared the site and excavated about 9,000 tons of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)-contaminated soil and shipped it off site for proper disposal. Construction began on park renovations, including upgrades to the playground and construction of an artificial-turf athletic field. The city held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate completion of the Conway Park athletic field in December 2021.

Present

The city completed playground and other facility updates in 2022.

History and Cleanup

The 2.8-acre Conway Park Superfund site is in Somerville, Massachusetts. The site's industrial past stretches to the beginning of the 19th century. From the early 1800s to the 1930s, the site was used primarily as a bleachery and dye-works factory. The city acquired the property in 1937. Since the early to mid-20th century, the site has been a park. The park was renovated in the 1970s, 1990s and early 2000s. Subsequent sampling found widespread PCB contamination in soil, which led the city to restrict access to the site.

In 2019, MassDEP asked EPA for help cleaning up site soils. In 2020, EPA and the city of Somerville worked closely together to coordinate a mixed-work approach to cleanup. The phased plan divided the costs and work of cleanup, which aimed to eliminate source contamination and the threat of direct contact by removing and disposing of site soils. Preparation for cleanup started in 2021, which included removing trees and installing fencing and erosion controls. Between July and September 2021, the city and EPA disposed of about 9,000 tons of contaminated soil.

Redevelopment

Conway Park is in a densely populated residential and commercial neighborhood. The park has long featured ball fields and playground amenities that saw significant use by urban youth and the community. This underscores the importance of restoring the site as a clean, safe recreational space accessible to community members of all ages. Before the start of cleanup activities, the city drafted a public involvement plan and held a series of community meetings to share information about the project and provide opportunities for public comment.

In addition to eliminating the threat of contact with contaminated soils, the cleanup presented an opportunity to carry out beneficial park renovations and upgrades, leading to the final construction of a new athletic field for the recreation complex. Cleanup and restoration work included laying drainage and water lines, installing drainage and surface layers, grading the field, and installing utility wiring. Other amenities for the athletic field included add-ons such as light poles, scoreboards and sports netting.



9,000
tons of contaminated
soil removed

A Mixed-Work Approach

EPA worked closely with the city of Somerville on a mixed-work approach. The phased plan divided cleanup costs and work between EPA and the city in order to efficiently eliminate the direct contact threat and source contamination in the highly used public recreation space.



Figure 2. Artificial-turf field at Conway Park

The project reached an important milestone in December 2021, when the city held a ribbon-cutting event celebrating the successful cleanup and subsequent completion of the new artificial-turf field. Alongside the completion of the field, the city highlighted the repair of a retaining wall, the use of plant-based infill in cleanup and the planting of trees around the field.

Today, the project is complete; Conway Park grand reopening for the new field and upgraded playground took place on May 27, 2022. This project highlights the importance of close collaboration between EPA and local partners, like the state and city. Together, they set a path forward for cleanup and restoration that effectively and efficiently returned the park to safe and beneficial use by the community. The mixed-work plan allowed EPA and the city to divide duties and costs along this path. Now the community in this densely populated area and its urban youth can once again enjoy the direct and indirect benefits that their improved Conway Park has to offer.

“Conway Park is a vital amenity for so many in our community, and I am thrilled to invite everyone back to enjoy this space ... Rehabilitating the park has been a huge undertaking, and I am grateful to our dedicated staff and our partners at the state and EPA for supporting this expansive remediation. Federal participation made this project possible, and I thank the EPA for restoring this valuable community asset to Somerville.”

Katjana Ballantyne
Somerville Mayor



Figure 3. Soil excavation at Conway Park

Contacts

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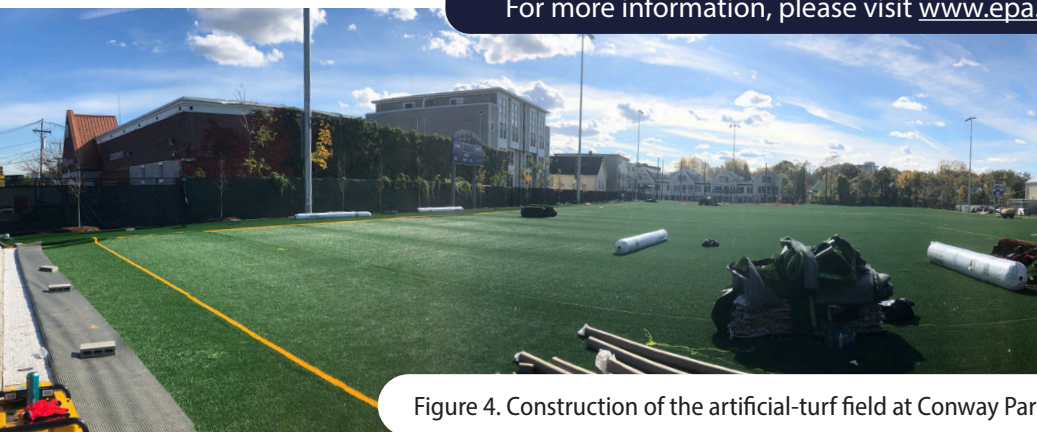


Figure 4. Construction of the artificial-turf field at Conway Park

