

SOMERVILLE COMMUNITY PATH PARK SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS



Property Details	
Property Address:	112A Central Street, Somerville, MA, 02143
Property Size:	1.5 acres
Former Uses:	Railroad right-of-way
Contaminants Found:	Nickel, beryllium, chromium, lead
Current Use:	Park, greenspace
Current Owner:	City of Somerville
Project Partners	
City of Somerville, Somerville Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, Cambridge Health Alliance, Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Urban Parks Self-Help Program, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Groundwork Somerville, TRC Environmental, Shape-Up Somerville, Friends of the Community Path	

Drivers for Redevelopment: The Park at Somerville Junction exemplifies the City of Somerville's commitment to providing long-term quality of life improvements to its residents. Improvements to the property continue to the process of extending Somerville's Community Path from Cedar Street (its current terminus) to Central Street. The path and the park make use of a former railroad right-of-way to bring a long-term health benefit to the community, by increasing the amount of parkland and trails available to residents. The park's name references the railroad heritage of Somerville and honors the land's past role as the location of the Somerville Junction Station. With plans in the works to extend the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA)'s Green Line route through Somerville, the city hopes the park will resume some of its historic function, serving as a key neighborhood pedestrian link to a new subway station at Lowell Street.

Property History: In addition to strictly industrial/commercial areas, the community of Somerville originally was developed in a pattern in which industrial enterprises were surrounded by worker residences. As these enterprises closed, they left blighted neighborhoods as well as abandoned commercial areas. Located along a railroad right-of-way, the area had long been neglected and overgrown. The 1.5-acre parcel includes the site of the former Somerville rail depot of the Boston and Lowell Railroad, the main line of which is now the MBTA Lowell Line. The depot closed in the 1930s, and the property has since been used as a convenient dumping ground for concrete, brick, asphalt and other materials. At the time of the project, the parcel consisted of 0.5 acre of overgrown weeds, trees and shrubs, 0.5 acre of wooded slope and a 0.5 acre parking lot. Phase I and II assessments of the property in December 2006 showed levels of beryllium, chromium, lead, and nickel above reportable concentrations. Tests showed that the entire site was covered in anywhere from six inches to more than four feet of urban fill—primarily debris removed from road construction projects. The city was concerned about the long-term exposure to these contaminants of children and neighbors, who used the parcel as a shortcut and dog walking area. In 2005, the city's Neighborhood Improvement Team took steps to encourage the land's then-owner, Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA), to make long-term improvements to the parcel. The city received an EPA cleanup grant in September 2007 and contracted with TRC Environmental to oversee cleanup

Funding Details	
Cambridge Health Alliance:	(land donation, approximate) \$1,000,000
EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant:	\$10,000
EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant:	\$200,000
Commonwealth of Massachusetts Urban (Parks) Self-Help Funds:	\$192,000
Community Development Block Grant Funding:	\$113,000
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation—Active Living by Design: "Shape-up Somerville" Grant:	\$10,000
Groundwork Somerville/Friends of the Community Path:	\$8,000
Project Highlights	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removed trees, debris and up to four feet of soil from petroleum-contaminated "hot spots" Constructed 1-foot soil/geotextile barrier over less contaminated soil Installed paths, benches, new trees and landscaping to make the area more open and accessible to residents 	

activities. In October 2007, the city and its project partners held a meeting to present the preliminary park design and plans for cleanup to the community.

Project Results: Removal and containment of contaminated soil at the site began on May 12, 2008 and the Park at Somerville Junction was opened in late September 2008. The transformation of the area into a modern greenspace could not have happened without the dedication and collaboration of several public groups. The city's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, along with community organizations Shape-Up Somerville, Groundwork Somerville, and Friends of the Community Path, took on the challenge of advocating for the donation of the land from CHA, raising necessary funds for cleanup, park design and construction, and beginning the process for extending the community path. The creation of a linked network of paths in the Boston area creates tremendous recreational and commuting opportunities. The Park at Somerville Junction fills a key gap in this trail network.

Project Timeline	
July 2005:	EPA selects the City of Somerville for a Brownfields Assessment Grant
July 2006:	Cambridge Health Alliance agrees to donate the 1.5 acre parcel, worth approximately \$1 million, to the City of Somerville, pending the results of the environmental assessment
December 2006:	Phase I and II site assessments completed City develops remedial alternatives and cost estimates on parcels identified by the site selection program
October 2007:	City receives EPA Cleanup Grant. City and project partners present cleanup and park plans to the community
March 2008:	City puts cleanup and park construction out to bid
May 2008:	Cleanup begins
September 2008:	Park at Somerville Junction opens to the public