

Brownfields Success Story

Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine

Portland, Maine

Thompson's Point is a 25-acre peninsula located along the Fore River in Portland, Maine that was originally developed as a railroad yard. The area is now a focal point of growing commercial and entertainment development, including a new home for a historic children's museum and theater.

In the late 1880s, Thompson's Point was developed as a railyard for the Maine Central Railroad. At that time, the yard was an important transfer point and a state-of-the-art hub for the repair of locomotive engines. After the decline of rail and shipping led to the demolition of many railyard buildings on the peninsula, Thompson's Point was primarily used for the storage and distribution of various industrial materials. A large, coordinated multi-brownfield redevelopment effort began in 2013.

Founded in 1923, the Children's Museum and Theatre of Maine had been located on Free Street in Portland's Art District. As the 10th largest visitor attraction in the state, the museum was quickly outgrowing its space. The organization launched a fundraising campaign in 2016 that raised over \$15 million and allowed the museum to buy a 1.12-acre property on Thompson's Point in 2017 and eventually build their new museum.

Priming the Property for Redevelopment

Site assessments conducted with EPA and private funding between 2012 and 2018 identified contaminants in the soil and helped to develop a cleanup plan for the Site, thanks to the support and guidance of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. Due to decades of industrial use at the Site, contaminants such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), arsenic and petroleum were found in soils at the Site and threatened to significantly increase the cost of the project. Luckily in 2019, the Children's Museum and Theatre of Maine was awarded a Brownfields cleanup grant for \$500,000 on their first attempt at applying for this sort of federal funding. In addition, both the City of Portland and the Greater Portland Council of Governments contributed funds to the cleanup from their EPA-funded Brownfields revolving loan fund programs.



The Children's Museum and Theatre of Maine.

(Photo credit: Children's Museum and Theatre of Maine)

EPA Grant Recipient:

Greater Portland Council of Governments, The City of Portland, The Children's Museum and Theatre of Maine

Grant Types:

Assessment, Cleanup

Current Use:

Children's Museum and Theatre

Former Uses:

Railroad yard, storage for industrial materials



Museum entrance.

(Photo credit: Children's Museum and Theatre of Maine)

“We are grateful to the EPA for designing the Brownfields remediation program so that beautiful sites, such as this one on the banks of the Fore River, can be reclaimed for reuse and enjoyment by the public. Once this was a state-of-the-art hub for the repair of locomotive engines, and now it is a state-of-the-art hub for building community and celebrating family in the state of Maine through education, discovery, and play.”

Julie Butcher
Executive Director

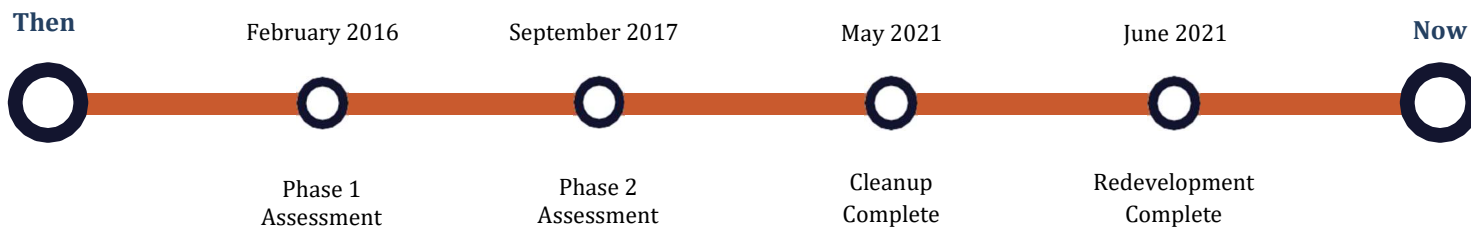
Children's Museum and Theatre of
Maine

Sustainable building strategies were an important aspect of the redevelopment. For example, the building was pre-loaded with a barrier to compact the area and minimize the amount of soil that had to be removed from the Site. In addition, stormwater storage tanks were installed to protect the groundwater by directing stormwater away from the remaining contaminated soil below the barrier. This also reduced the damage that could occur from storms that have become stronger due to climate change.

| Funding History |
|---|
| Brownfields Assessment Funding: Greater Portland COG: \$40,267 |
| Brownfields Cleanup Grant: Children's Museum: \$500,000 |
| Brownfields RLF Funds: City of Portland: \$170,000 |
| Brownfields RLF Funds: Greater Portland COG: \$25,000 |
| Redevelopment Funding Raised by the Children's Museum: \$15,000,000 |
| Total \$15,735,267 |

Today

The Children's Museum and Theatre of Maine officially re-opened on June 24, 2021. The new 300,000 square foot location is now home to the oldest continuously operating children's theatre in the country, which will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2023. The museum's interactive exhibits reflect the culture and natural environment of Maine, while also highlighting diversity and exploration. Some of the attractions include a lobster boat with knots to tie and a seven-tank aquarium exhibit. Sitting close the Portland International Jetport and the Downeaster train station, the museum is projected to draw as many as 200,000 visitors a year.



For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact Jessica Dominguez at 617 918 1627 or Dominguez.Jessica@epa.gov