

Celebrating Success: Celotex Corporation Site Chicago, Illinois



Superfund
Redevelopment
Initiative



A truck brings in clean soil fill for La Villita Park. (Source: EPA)

“The thousands of families living in the surrounding area now have a place to come together as a community to exercise, play and be active for years to come.”

Illinois Senator Tony Munoz



Playground equipment at La Villita Park. (Source: EPA)

For more information, please contact
Melissa Friedland at
friedland.melissa@epa.gov | (703) 603-8864
or
Frank Avvisato at
avvisato.frank@epa.gov | (703) 603-8949



Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, public officials and community members at the ribbon-cutting ceremony. (Source: EPA)

This former industrial property – the Celotex Corporation site (the Site) – in Chicago’s Little Village neighborhood is now a valued community park.

For years, the Celotex Corporation and responsible parties produced, stored and sold asphalt roofing products on site, contaminating soils and materials with coal tar. Starting in 1993, EPA coordinated cleanup efforts with Celotex and responsible parties. This included removal of all buildings and visibly polluted soils and materials. In 2002, EPA worked with responsible parties to place 2 feet of gravel over 22 acres and over an additional 2 acres by 2004. This prevented rain from washing site soils onto nearby properties. Site cleanup activities concluded in 2009.

With the Site’s remedy in place, attention shifted to potential redevelopment opportunities with the Chicago Park District (CPD) and the City of Chicago prioritizing the area’s reuse as a community resource. To address potential Superfund liability issues for the City, EPA developed a Prospective Purchaser Agreement, or PPA. The agreement enabled the City to acquire the site property and pursue redevelopment plans.

Collaboration led to remarkable outcomes. The City and CPD worked closely with the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) and coordinated with EPA and Illinois EPA on plans for a park at the Site. LVEJO and area residents provided feedback on design ideas and chose “La Villita Park” as the facility’s name.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony in December 2014 celebrated the park’s opening and recognized the community-led collaborative effort that made the Site’s reuse possible. Park features include two artificial turf athletic fields, three natural grass fields, a skate park, basketball courts, gardens, a playground with water features, a picnic pavilion, a multi-use trail with fitness stations and environmentally-friendly utilities.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, LVEJO representatives, elected officials and community members attended the ceremony. Mayor Emanuel spoke about the Little Village neighborhood and the 6,000 children living within a 10-minute walk of the park, many of whom did not previously have easy access to green space. La Villita Park is now a bustling community resource, illustrating how Superfund cleanup and reuse planning can support healthy communities and advance environmental protection.