

Two former industrial sites on way to becoming parks

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Two plans, both years in the making, to create parks and fields in Andover and Lawrence can now become realities.

The state has signed two agreements that would protect the two communities from lawsuits as they turn old, contaminated industrial sites into recreational land. Andover will develop the former Reichhold Chemical site in Ballardvale, installing playing fields and keeping open space along the Shawsheen River.

"It's a great success story," said Robert Douglas, the town's conservation director. "This was a dirty site, one that needed substantial cleanup."

Reichhold started cleaning up its Lowell Junction Road property after closing its plant in 1990 and sold 34 acres to the town last month for \$3.6 million. Town Meet-



The Reichhold Chemical site in Ballardvale was being cleaned up in spring 2004.

File photo

ing approved \$2 million five years ago, and the Conservation Commission committed \$1.6 million.

Lawrence is in the process of

taking ownership of a 3-acre site on Brook Street, most recently the home of Stoneham Laundry, and transforming it into a park along

the Spicket River. City officials, along with Groundwork Lawrence and Lawrence Community Works, first eyed the parcel

five years ago.

"Everyone saw the potential for it to be a real gem," said Maggie Super Church, executive director of Groundwork Lawrence.

It's the first step in a \$120 million plan to create the Spicket River Greenway, a three-quarter-mile stretch of parks between Malden Mills and the Merrimack River, Church said.

"It's a huge transformation that is underway, and this is the centerpiece of that," she said.

Cleanup of the site is already complete, and Church expects construction to begin later this month or in early April.

The projects are possible because of brownfield covenants, agreements with Attorney General Tom Reilly and the Department of Environmental Protection.

The agreements provide liability relief to property owners who, in exchange, clean up and redevelop contaminated land.

Lawrence