



CHANGING PLACES  
CHANGING LIVES

Look at what is.

**Create**  
what can be.

**Dr. Nina Scarito Park**  
Lawrence, Massachusetts

# Thoughts from the Community



“In this city, the park transformation is an important thing. There was so much joy in the neighborhood when the park opened—finally the children have a safe place to play!”

—Angelita Iraola, Brook Street Resident

“Scarito Park is a story of persistence in the face of the hurdles that had to be overcome before the site and plans could be approved, permitted and constructed. Groundwork Lawrence gets most of that credit.”

—Dave Walsh, lead architect, Copley Wolff Design Group, Boston, Mass.

“Bank of America, N.A. and its subsidiary are very pleased to have played a part in the development of Scarito Park. It is very rewarding to know the City and community will have years of enjoyment of a property that was previously dormant. This transformation was a collective effort and highlights the importance of community involvement and what can be accomplished when everyone works together as a TEAM.

—Phyllis P. Nash, Senior Vice President  
Banc of America Strategic Solutions, Inc.



BEFORE



AFTER



Groundwork Lawrence, Inc. is a locally-based 501(c) 3 non-profit organization working to create sustainable environmental change through community-based partnerships. Groundwork is committed to “changing places and changing lives” through on-the-ground projects, education, and volunteer programs that help to transform local communities. To accomplish this, Groundwork leads and supports a variety of partnership-driven efforts that bring together the public, private and non-profit sectors to solve complex environmental problems and sustain a long-term vision for neighborhood change and renewal. Groundwork Lawrence is an affiliate of Groundwork USA.

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**Project Partners and Funders** for the Nina Scarito Park include: the City of Lawrence, Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General, State of Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services; Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; DBT Corporation/Bank of America; Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Lawrence CommunityWorks and Groundwork Lawrence.

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*This is a story about hope and hard work and dreams made real. It is a story about changing places and changing lives. It's a story about neighborhood revival, and about a whole community working together to transform a vacant, contaminated piece of riverfront property into a legacy for the next generation: a place to play, to relax, to garden, to explore, to rediscover the wonder of the natural world...*

What was long known as “the Brook Street site” is a 2.7 acre former brownfield located in a densely settled residential neighborhood on the banks of the Spicket River in Lawrence. The site was first developed as a small mill complex in the late 1800s. By 1949, it had been redeveloped into a commercial laundry. By the late 1980s, the laundry buildings had been demolished, leaving the site vacant.

In spring 2001, a neighborhood planning process identified the site as key to local revitalization efforts. In 2001 – 2002, Groundwork Lawrence and Lawrence Community Works (a local Community Development Corporation) led a series of community design meetings to create a conceptual proposal for the park. Based on this concept, Groundwork Lawrence commissioned a detailed park design and cost estimates from Copley Wolff Design Group, a Boston-based landscape architecture firm.



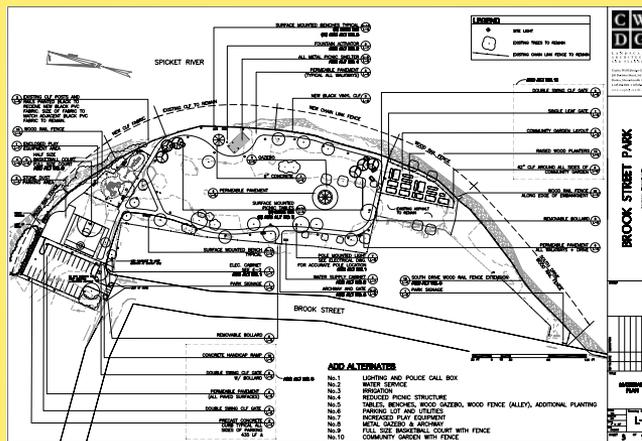
**The Brook Street site was a neglected and hazardous site in a densely populated residential neighborhood. The site, shown here in 2002, stood vacant for nearly 20 years before being redeveloped as a park.**

**Residents and other local stakeholders take part in the Scarito Park community design, or “charette” process.**



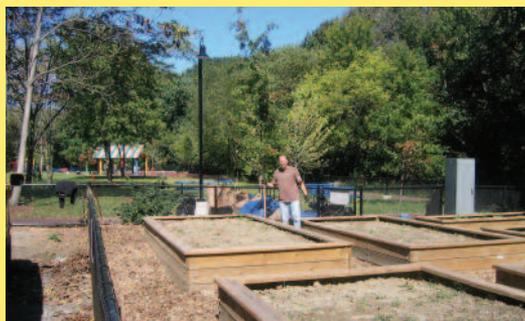
# The Nina Scarito Park

Named in honor of the accomplished Lawrence obstetrician who delivered over 20,000 babies in the city and whose practice was located just blocks from the site, this \$2.9 million park project was made possible through a combination of federal, state, city and private funds. Over 500 hours were volunteered by local residents through their participation in park planning, design and advocacy.



“Rough sketches were generated by the community,” said David Walsh, lead architect on the project for Copley Wolff Design Group of Boston. “We took their main ideas of a large open green space for active recreational use and balanced it with play equipment for children, basketball courts for teenagers, a community garden and a picnic structure for community activities—all aligned around the meadow like a necklace.”

There are two picnic areas in the park for talking, playing games and eating outdoors. The bright and playful colors reflect the energy and vitality of the young, predominantly Latino community that lives nearby.



Residents use the raised garden beds to grow a variety of flowers and vegetables as well as herbs used for cooking.

The playground includes a swing set and high-quality, age-appropriate equipment for 2-5 year olds and 5-12 year olds.

# Working Together All Things are Possible

In the six years it took to make Scarito Park a reality, hundreds of people and scores of public agencies were involved in decision-making, problem-solving, and trouble-shooting to move the project forward. Throughout this time, **Groundwork Lawrence** served as the catalyst and manager of the project, helping to coordinate community outreach; environmental investigation and remedial activities; site design and planning; legal and real estate transaction work; fundraising; project permitting; construction; and volunteer involvement.

## Key accomplishments and participants include:

- In 2001, **Lawrence CommunityWorks** organized and held the first North Common Neighborhood Summit, which focused heavily on brown-fields and vacant parcels in the community. At this meeting, neighborhood residents first identified the Brook Street site as a priority for neighborhood revitalization.
- **The Massachusetts Attorney General's Office** provided critical support in site negotiations through their Brownfields Covenant program, designed to encourage the cleanup and reuse of contaminated properties for community benefit.
- In 2003, **the City of Lawrence** successfully negotiated with the site owner to resolve the back taxes owed on the property, resulting in a payment of \$835,000 to the City's general fund.
- The site owner, **DBT Corporation**, committed to cleaning up the site for reuse as a park, donating the land to the City of Lawrence, and contributing \$200,000 toward the cost of park construction.
- In 2004, the site was acquired by **Bank of America N.A.** as a result of a merger. As part of their due diligence process, the new site owner hired **Environmental Compliance Services** to conduct a peer review of the environmental assessment and site work that had been completed to date, and to conduct additional testing to determine the extent of soil and groundwater contamination.
- Based on the results from these investigations, **Bank of America** hired **AMEC**, a professional consulting firm, to conduct a Human Health and Risk Assessment to determine the level of cleanup required for safe construction and use of the park.
- The **site remediation** included the removal and off-site disposal of nearly 1,400 cubic yards of cadmium- and lead-impacted soil and 850 cubic yards of petroleum- and hydrocarbon-contaminated soil, as well as two concrete tanks from the river. The remaining building foundations were also removed to improve water percolation across the site in anticipation of park construction.
- In the spring of 2005, **the Lawrence City Council** voted to re-zone the Brook Street site from an Industrial use to an Open Space use, ensuring that it would be used exclusively as a park in the future.
- Also in the spring of 2005, **the City of Lawrence** was awarded a \$325,000 grant from the **Massachusetts Urban Self-Help program** for design and construction of the park. In addition, the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** provided \$50,000 of funding from their Brownfields Supplemental Assistance program.
- In February 2006, **the site owner** signed a Covenant Not to Sue agreement with the **Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General**, the first such agreement to be executed in the City of Lawrence. The agreement provides additional liability protection to the current and future owners of the site, conditional on the current site owner having met its environmental obligations as well as their commitment to redevelopment of the site consistent with community needs. The **Lawrence City Council** voted to take ownership of the site from the bank on February 21, 2006.
- Additional funding for the park came from the **Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant program**, administered by the **City of Lawrence Community Development Department**.