



Creating a community asset: Turning a Brownfield into a sports park

The newest sports park in Contra Costa County officially opened Sept. 8 – thanks in large part to the California [Department of Toxic Substances Control](#) (DTSC).

The Department oversaw the cleanup and transformation of a vacant and contaminated former railroad maintenance yard on Rumrill Boulevard in San Pablo into badly needed open space and soccer fields. Rumrill Sports Park is the newest community gathering spot in a dense urban environment.

The 4.5-acre park consists of three youth soccer fields, a practice field, a picnic area, tot lot, vendor kiosks and 62 parking spaces. The park also is a key component of an ambitious plan to revitalize the area along Rumrill Boulevard. A state grant and tax credits provided much of the funding for the park.

San Pablo Mayor Kathy Chao Rothberg said DTSC's guidance played a crucial role in completing the project. "We are so grateful," she said.

"By investing in additional park and recreational opportunities for our residents, the city increases healthy and active youth activities in San Pablo, and we also hope to spearhead transformation of the Rumrill Boulevard corridor, along with an upcoming mobility improvement plan supported by the community."

DTSC Project Manager Allan Fone, Ph.D., added, "This is a great outcome. The city views this park project as one of the first steps toward revitalizing the site vicinity. This is something for the whole community."



The same view, before (left) and after (right) the cleanup and construction of the park.



Sports park

The Santa Fe Railway Co., and its successor, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway Co. (ATSF), operated a maintenance support facility on the site until the 1980s. Subsequent uses included mattress manufacturing, forklift repair and a vegetable oil business.

By 1988, it had become vacant and was considered a public health hazard: The property had drums of hazardous waste, construction debris, sumps with waste water and areas with stained soil. In 1996, ATSF merged with Burlington Northern Railway to form Burlington Northern & Santa Fe (BSNF) Railway

In 2003, the City became the owner of the property. The City signed a voluntary cleanup agreement with DTSC in 2006. The site investigation was completed in 2012. Site cleanup consisted of excavating contaminated soil and installation of a cap consisting of clean backfill, artificial turf fields, hardscape and landscaped areas. The cap ensures that public health is protected by preventing exposure to any remaining contaminated soil.

In helping convert the property from an abandoned lot, which attracted dumping of trash and waste, into soccer fields, DTSC accomplished its primary missions: turning brownfields green, and protecting public health and the environment.



Above: Restrooms and a picnic area are some of the park's new features.



Right: Abandoned building material is strewn around the dormant site prior to cleanup.