



## The TOWN OF NORWOOD

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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May 13th, 2024- The Town of Norwood is breaking ground on the Bernie Cooper Riverfront Park this spring. The contractor, Argus Construction, is working on surveying and establishing site access now, and will complete the park by the end of September.

The Bernie Cooper Riverfront Park is dedicated to Norwood's beloved former Assistant Town Manager. Bernie Cooper passed away in January 2021 following 49 years of devoted service to the town. General Manager Tony Mazzucco wrote, "Bernie is the heart and soul of Norwood". The Town is pleased to honor Bernie's memory with a vibrant riverside park for all of Norwood.

The park property is held by the Conservation Commission, and was purchased by the town using funds from the Community Preservation Act in 2019, after a significant organizing effort from the community to stop the conversion of the wooded riverfront parcel into an auto storage lot. The park will be accessible from the ends of Saint John, Saint Joseph, and Saint Paul Avenues, as well as from Eliot Field behind the Balch School.

The park has already mobilized the community and helped bring people together. The Norwood Trails Committee, Progress Norwood, the Neponset River Watershed Association, and many volunteers have helped steward the property with litter cleanup efforts and invasive plant management workdays. The Wildlands Trust land trust holds a Conservation Restriction on the property, as required by the Community Preservation Act, and they have documented the current conditions on the property. They will continue to inspect the park annually to ensure that it remains fully dedicated to conservation and passive recreation. The Community Development Department and design firm Horsley Witten led a public outreach effort to complete a conceptual design for the park that dozens of residents took part in, which found that most residents wanted a park that prioritized accessibility and the feeling of being immersed in nature. The park will be Norwood's first to have all trails navigable by wheelchair.

After completing a concept design, the town received a MassTrails grant for \$50,000 and a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant for \$717,650 and Town Meeting voted to allocate enough additional funds to fully design and build the park. A mix of general funds and CPA funding was approved. The contractor will be utilizing the paved right-of-way between Saint Joseph Ave and Saint Paul Ave, which is within the park boundaries, for staging throughout the summer. Questions about the park construction should be directed to Assistant Community Development Director Holly Jones, who can be reached at [hjones@norwoodma.gov](mailto:hjones@norwoodma.gov)