

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

BROWNFIELDS SUCCESS IN NEW ENGLAND

WOONSOCKET MIDDLE SCHOOL CAMPUS WOONSOCKET, RHODE ISLAND



Property Details

Property Address:	Hamlet Avenue/Florence Drive/Villa Nova Street, Woonsocket, Rhode Island, 02895
Property Size:	19 acres
Former Uses:	Textile production, including dye and tanning operations; cleaning supply and automotive part production
Contaminants Found:	Oil/petroleum from leaking USTs; VOCs, including tetrachloroethene
Current Uses:	Two middle schools, with an athletic complex and parking area
Current Owner:	City of Woonsocket

Project Partners

City of Woonsocket, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)

Motivation for Redevelopment: The sixth largest city in Rhode Island, Woonsocket is densely populated, with more than 43,000 residents within its 7.7 square-mile area. Finding a site to expand and update the city's middle school had been a priority for years, as the existing school was considered outdated and unable to meet the area's growing population. The city had looked at some of Woonsocket's few undeveloped tracts of land as a potential relocation site, but hoped to avoid using pristine land and find property with existing utility and roadway access. The 19-acre, consolidated brownfields site eventually chosen met all those needs and more, with a location only about two blocks away from the existing middle school.

Property History: Industrial activity on this property goes as far back as the 1890s, when the site was first used for textile production. Facilities on the property processed raw cotton into fabric, and performed dyeing operations as well as the tanning and processing of animal hides.

By the late 1960s, most of the property had been purchased by a single company, ACS Industries, which used the site to manufacture plastic cleaning supplies as well as metal automobile parts. While these uses had ended by the early 2000s, ACS Industries still used the property as an industrial knitting facility until its buildings (as well as other companies' neighboring textile operations) were destroyed by fire in 2003. The city acquired a large portion of the site in 2004; buildings on that parcel were destroyed by a second fire in 2006. By that point, the city had already begun to consider these assembled parcels for reuse as a new middle school complex.

Project Results: EPA Brownfields Assessment grants awarded to the city in 2003 and 2006 were used to perform detailed environmental assessments—including soil borings, groundwater monitoring wells, and the collection of 340 soil samples, 138 groundwater samples, and 69 soil gas samples. It was discovered that underground storage tanks (USTs) were leaking heating oil, contaminating the site's soil with petroleum.

Funding Details

Brownfields Assessment Grant (2003):	\$125,300 used of a \$200,000 grant
Brownfields Assessment Grant (2006):	\$190,300 used of a \$200,000 grant
Brownfields Cleanup Grant (2008):	\$600,000
Petroleum Cleanup RLF Subgrants (2008):	a total of \$295,000 from the RI Economic Development Corporation
Brownfields Cleanup Grant (2009):	\$200,000 (funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act)
Leveraged Funding:	\$3,878,887 in cleanup and \$72,000,000 in redevelopment funding from the City of Woonsocket; \$20,621 in cleanup funding from RIDEM

Project Highlights

- Safely cleaned up and restored a large, former industrial property in a prime center-city location
- Avoided having to use any of Woonsocket's remaining undeveloped land
- Replaced the city's outdated and educationally obsolete middle school
- Created a modern middle school campus that is now the largest of its kind in New England

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs), in particular, tetrachloroethene (PCE), were also found in the property's soil and groundwater. A total of \$800,000 in EPA Brownfields Cleanup grants, as well as nearly \$4 million in additional funding from the city, allowed a comprehensive cleanup of property, which was overseen by RIDEM. Cleanup included removal of contaminated soils, a two-foot cap of clean fill, and treatment of groundwater through an innovative process known as reductive dechlorination (which uses natural bacteria to break down contaminants). By 2008, the city had purchased and assembled all of the parcels needed to complete this project, and redevelopment had begun. This property is now home to two middle schools that feature an athletic complex, parking areas and bicycle path. The complex opened to students in January 2010, the same month RIDEM issued a determination that no further cleanup actions were needed. With more than 1,600 students, the new facility is the largest school in New England.

Project Timeline

1890s	Industrial use of the property begins
1960s	Primary uses change from textile to plastics/metal manufacturing
2000	Primary uses are again textile-related
2003	Fire destroys several industrial buildings on the property
2004	The city purchases the site for potential redevelopment
2006	A 2nd fire ravages the site; site-wide cleanup begins as the city selects this 20-acre site for its new middle school complex
2008	School construction begins
2010	NFA declaration issued by RIDEM; new middle school facility opens