

# RETURN TO USE INITIATIVE

## 2009 Demonstration Project

### WELLS G&H:

#### Woburn, Massachusetts

**THE SITE:** The Wells G&H Superfund site (the Site) consists of approximately 330 acres in east Woburn, Massachusetts, including the Aberjona River and land contributing to two former municipal water wells: Well G and Well H. The wells were installed in 1964 and 1967, respectively, and once supplied approximately thirty percent of the City of Woburn's drinking water. In 1979, the discovery of abandoned industrial waste near the wells prompted testing for contamination. The testing revealed volatile organic compound (VOC) contamination, and the wells were immediately shut down. Site investigations found VOC contamination in the ground water and soils, as well as heavy metal contamination in sediments along the Aberjona River.

The wells were located on a wooded parcel of municipal land surrounded by five major source areas of contamination. Ongoing remedial activities at the Site include ground water extraction and treatment, soil vapor extraction, excavation of some contaminated soils for off-site disposal, and on-site treatment of the remaining contaminated soils.

**THE OPPORTUNITY:** In September of 2000, the City of Woburn received a \$55,000 grant under the U.S. EPA's Superfund Redevelopment Initiative Program (SRI). These funds were matched by a \$45,000 contribution from three of the identified potentially responsible parties (PRPs). The City used the funds to develop a comprehensive Land Use Plan outlining the City's goals for the eventual reuse of the land. The final Land Use Plan was completed in 2005 and identified three primary properties that were of special interest to the City and would be best suited for rapid reuse: 1) the wooded area near the Aberjona River that originally contained the municipal wells, 2) the W.R. Grace property in the Northeast corner of the Site, and 3) the Aberjona Auto Parts property in the Southwest corner of the Site. The City is anxious to return these areas to productive use.



**PICTURED:** Abandoned vehicles at the former Aberjona Auto Parts property before redevelopment (source: EPA)

**BARRIERS:** Ground water contamination and refuse preventing construction

**SOLUTION:** Land acquisition by local private developer interested in a new business venture and making a civic contribution to the community



**PICTURED:** New skating rink at the former Aberjona Auto Parts property (source: EPA)

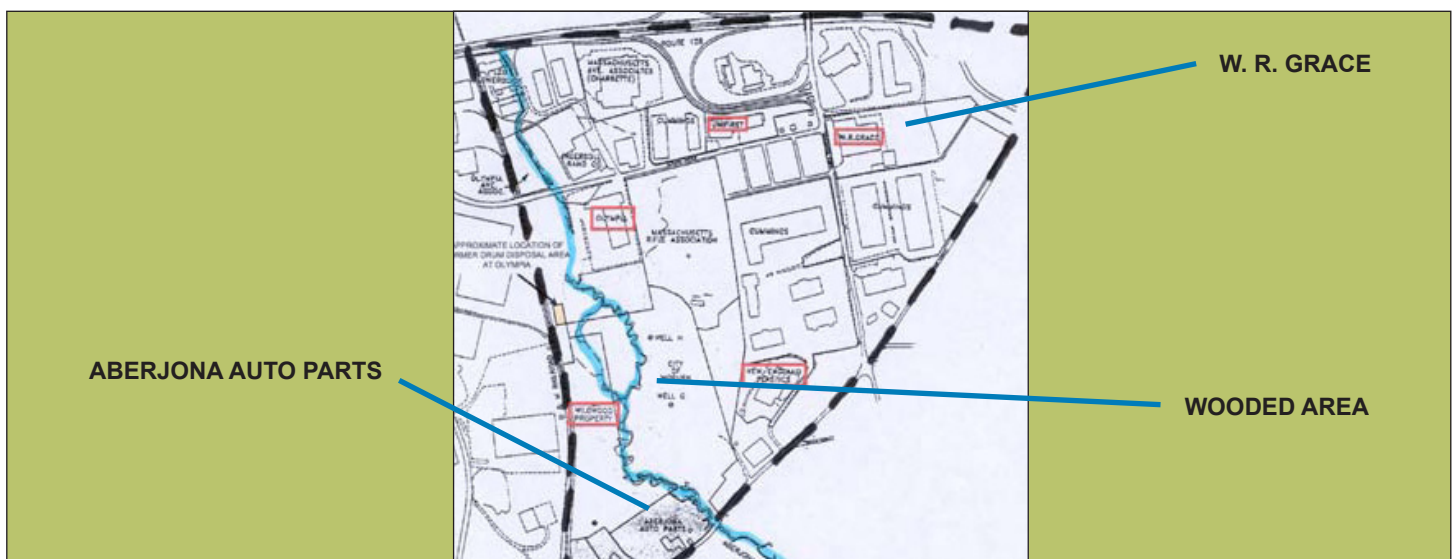
**BEFORE:** Contaminated, abandoned automobile dismantling facility and auto parts shop

**AFTER:** Community skating rink and small business hub; the rink provides a home for local sports teams and portions of the property are being leased to six small businesses

**THE BARRIERS:** The Aberjona Auto Parts property is the site of a former automobile dismantling facility with only low levels of chemical contamination in shallow ground water. EPA determined that the levels of soil and shallow ground water contamination at the Aberjona Auto Parts property were below human health risk for skin contact, but the ground water did not meet drinking water standards.

**THE SOLUTION:** In 2002, the Aberjona Auto Parts property was purchased. Instead of continuing previous site operations, the new owner approached the Woburn Advisory Committee about redeveloping the Site in a way that would directly benefit the community. The owner proposed building an ice skating rink to provide the additional ice time needed by the local youth hockey teams. Given that the rink would rely on the use of publicly-supplied water, this reuse could occur despite the presence of contaminated ground water. EPA worked with the owner and the City to provide them with the information on the environmental conditions necessary to support the planning and permitting processes. The City subsequently approved the project. According to Region 1's Superfund Redevelopment Coordinator John Podgurski, "This is a case where effective communication and cooperation between the EPA case team and the principal stakeholders in the redevelopment effort were key in allowing a worthy community project to move forward."

**THE SITE NOW:** The Holland Arena ice skating rink was completed and opened for its first ice hockey season in November of 2008. In addition to the rink, the owner has continued to lease portions of the property to six small businesses that not only employ 14 people but support local and regional needs, such as dog care, bus storage, landscaping and auto repair services. After the arsenic contaminated sediments in the area have been cleaned up, the City has proposed a recreational and ecological reuse for the wooded area by the Aberjona River downstream of the Superfund site. The plan includes wildlife viewing platforms and hiking trails. The building at the W.R. Grace property was safely demolished in 2006 with EPA oversight, and is presently being marketed by W.R. Grace for reuse. Remedial activities continue on other portions of the Site and the City remains interested in redevelopment as cleanup progresses and properties become available.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:** Joseph LeMay, Remedial Project Manager, at (617) 918-1323 or [lemay.joe@epa.gov](mailto:lemay.joe@epa.gov); or John Podgurski, Region 1 Superfund Redevelopment Coordinator, at (617) 918-1028 or [podgurski.john@epa.gov](mailto:podgurski.john@epa.gov).