



Land & Community Revitalization

BROWNFIELDS SUCCESS IN NEW ENGLAND

FORMER LINCOLN LACE AND BRAID FACTORY PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND



PROPERTY DETAILS	Address:	55-61 Ponagansett Avenue , Providence, RI
	Size:	6.0 acres
	Former Use:	Textile mill
	Contaminants:	Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), petroleum, metals, volatile organic compounds (VOCs)
	Current Use:	Passive open space
PARTNERS	Owner:	City of Providence
	Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), City of Providence Planning Department and Department of Parks and Recreation, The Providence Plan, Trust for Public Land	

Motivation for Redevelopment: The former Lincoln Lace and Braid property is in the Hartford neighborhood of Providence, Rhode Island. Located along the Woonasquatucket River, Hartford industrialized in the early 1800s and was soon dominated by factories and company housing. As water power became less important in the 20th century, manufacturing moved away. The factory closures created job losses and abandoned and contaminated properties, which destabilized the neighborhood and discouraged new investment. The economic and physical decline has been especially pronounced since 1980. Median household income in Hartford is consistently below the city median, and nearly half the residents live in poverty.

The 6-acre Lincoln Lace and Braid property is adjacent to residential areas and abuts Merino Park, a large recreational area. Cleaning up the site has been a priority for the city and local community given that the site is part of the Woonasquatucket River Greenway Project (WRGP), a 7-mile bike path and urban greenway that connects depressed areas like Hartford to the downtown. The WRGP, which included another brownfield cleanup at Riverside Mills, is a partnership of over 100 organizations and earned the designation of a Brownfields Showcase Community in 1998.

Property History: The Lincoln Lace and Braid factory was established in 1812 as Merino Mill. The facility produced a soft fabric called “merino cloth,” named after merino sheep. After the factory closed in the late 20th century, a 1994 fire destroyed the main building in the complex. The site’s long industrial history and the illegal dumping that occurred after the fire resulted in a host of environmental contaminants, including polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), various metals, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and petroleum.

FUNDING DETAILS	EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant:	\$61,170
	EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant:	\$200,000
HIGHLIGHTS	RIDEM Oil Spill Restoration Fund:	\$300,000
	City of Providence:	\$430,000
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turned a blighted, contaminated property into a greenspace in a distressed community. • Part of the Woonasquatucket River Greenway Project, a 7-mile bike path and urban greenway that earned the designation of a Brownfields Showcase Community. 	

Project Results: Environmental investigations and remediation have been underway since the mid-1990s. Following the fire, the city removed building debris and tons of illegally dumped solid waste, demolished the remaining buildings, and secured the site with fencing. The city later acquired the site through tax foreclosure. An EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant funded the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) in 1997. A year later the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) provided \$300,000 to remove and remediate contaminated soil, piping, and underground tanks. Subsequent remediation, funded in part by a \$200,000 EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant, involved capping contaminated soils onsite and restoring the site’s riparian buffer.

With site remediation complete, the Lincoln Lace and Braid property and the adjacent 67 Melissa Street property, which was cleaned up by the Trust for Public Land, are now a peaceful, passive greenspace located next to the more programmed Merino Park and bikepath. Cleaning up the Lincoln Lace and Braid site has removed an eyesore and public health and environmental hazard. The project also fills community requests for more open space in the neighborhood while contributing to the broader urban revitalization effort in the Hartford neighborhood.

TIMELINE	
1994	Fire destroys main building
Mid-1990s	City cleans up building debris and illegal waste, demolishes remaining buildings
1997	Phase I ESA complete
1998	Phase II ESA complete
1998	Underground storage tanks removed, petroleum-contaminated soil remediated
2008 – 2011	Neighborhood meetings and planning, design, and permitting to support site cleanup
2010 – 2011	Site remediation