



Superfund  
Redevelopment  
Program

# SITE REDEVELOPMENT PROFILE

Wells G&H Superfund Site

Woburn, Massachusetts



One of the newly-developed hotels on site. (Source: EPA)

**Site Location:** Near the intersection of U.S. Highways 93 and 95, Woburn, Massachusetts 01801

**Size:** 330 acres

**Existing Site Infrastructure:** All major types of infrastructure are located on site.

**Current Site Uses:** The site includes a mix of commercial, industrial, residential, recreational and ecological reuses.

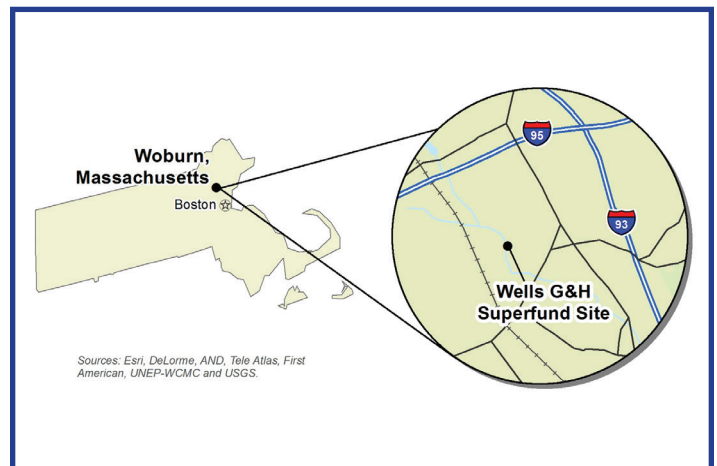
**Use Restrictions:** Groundwater treatment systems continue to operate and no institutional controls have been currently established on the site.

**Surrounding Population:** within 0.5 mile, 1,063 people; within 2.5 miles, 72,202 people; within 4 miles, 150,757 people.

The Wells G&H Superfund site includes 330 acres of land and contaminated groundwater in Woburn, Massachusetts. The cleanup and successful redevelopment of the site is a model for cooperation between EPA, state and local officials, potentially responsible parties (PRPs) and the community.

Throughout the 1900s, the site was home to a mix of residential, commercial and industrial uses. Past operations at the site included dry cleaning, truck terminals, and industrial activities including manufacturing, warehousing and distribution. The various commercial and industrial site operations contaminated soil and groundwater.

In 1979, the Woburn Police Department found 184 drums containing hazardous chemicals on a vacant lot near the site. As a result, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) sampled two nearby public water supply wells (wells G and H). MassDEP's



Location of the site in Woburn, Massachusetts.

initial investigations found contamination in both wells, which were then shut down. From 1979 to 1983, EPA and the site's property owners conducted studies to evaluate soil and groundwater conditions. EPA added the site to the National Priorities List (NPL) in 1983.

## SITE HISTORY AND REDEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

<b>1900s</b>	Industrial, commercial and residential uses occurred on site.
<b>1979</b>	MassDEP discovered contamination in two municipal supply wells (wells G and H) and wells were shut down.
<b>1979-1983</b>	EPA conducted site investigations to determine level of contamination.
<b>1983</b>	EPA added the site to the NPL.
<b>1989</b>	EPA selected cleanup activities.
<b>2000</b>	EPA's Superfund Redevelopment Program awarded the City a grant to develop a land use plan.
<b>2001</b>	Local auto parts recycler purchased the Aberjona Auto Parts property.
<b>2005</b>	The Woburn Redevelopment Authority completed the land use plan.
<b>2008</b>	Holland Arena ice hockey arena opened.
<b>2014</b>	Madison Woburn Holdings LLC purchased the W.R. Grace Property.
<b>2016-2019</b>	Commercial redevelopment of the W.R. Grace property.
<b>Ongoing</b>	Cleanup, operations and maintenance activities, and groundwater monitoring.

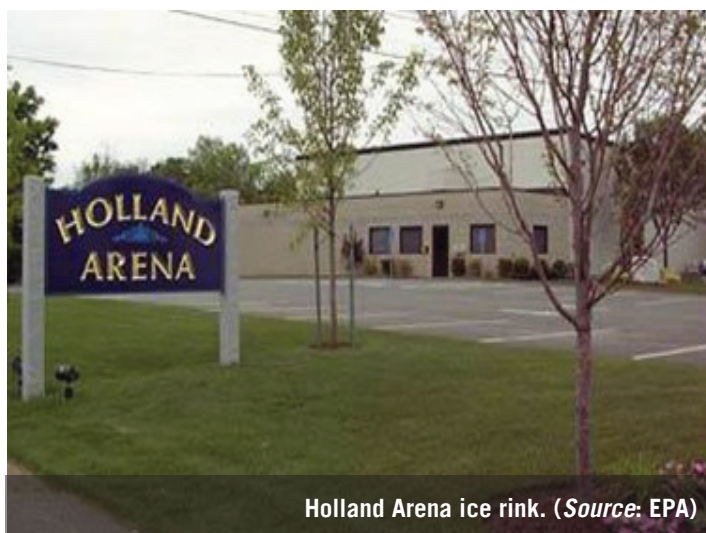
*“For the people who were directly involved [with the historic tragedy], it’s always going to be something they’ll never forget. Nothing’s ever going to change that; it was a tragic thing. Moving forward, we’re doing the right things, with responsible development and creating a solid tax base for the city so we can continue to grow and prosper.”*

– Mayor Scott Galvin, City of Woburn

EPA selected cleanup activities for the site in 1989. Cleanup activities included removing debris, sediment and contaminated soils, and on-site soil treatment. Cleanup also included groundwater removal and treatment. Cleanup, operations and maintenance activities, and groundwater monitoring are ongoing across parts of the site.

In 2000, EPA’s Superfund Redevelopment Program (SRP) awarded the city of Woburn (the City) a \$55,000 pilot grant to complete a comprehensive land use plan for the site. The pilot grant provided resources for reuse planning and facilitation services to bring people together to discuss community priorities, address concerns and develop plans for the future. Three of the site’s responsible parties contributed \$45,000 for the effort. The Woburn Redevelopment Authority (Authority) worked with community members on the land use plan. The Authority completed the final plan in 2005. The plan identified reuse scenarios for three priority areas of the site – the Aberjona Auto Parts property, the W.R. Grace property and the city of Woburn property.

The land use plan for the Aberjona Auto Parts property focused on an ice arena for local hockey



Holland Arena ice rink. (Source: EPA)





Aerial photo of the W.R. Grace property.  
(Source: W.R. Grace)



The Aberjona Nature Trail on the city of Woburn property after cleanup.  
(Source: EPA)

leagues. In 2004, EPA provided the property owner with a comfort letter, which confirmed the measures needed for the redevelopment to be consistent with cleanup. Comfort letters are intended to provide information about the cleanup status, liability issues and EPA's involvement at a site. Construction of Holland Arena finished in 2008. The facility now hosts youth hockey practices, games and clinics, as well as ice skating lessons and space for private parties. The property owner also leases parts of the property to several small businesses.

The land use plan identified commercial land uses as the main redevelopment for the W.R. Grace property. In 2014, the property was purchased by Madison Woburn Holdings LLC. Developers worked with EPA to ensure the redevelopment was protective of the site's remedy. EPA provided the developers with a comfort letter, which provided information about liability and outlined recommendations for the proposed redevelopment. As a result of the comfort letter, site developers installed vapor intrusion barriers under all property buildings, managed contaminated soils, and protected the ongoing groundwater pump and treatment system and monitoring well network. Additionally, the developers completed nearly \$2 million in traffic infrastructure improvements as outlined in the City's redevelopment permit. Since 2016, multiple restaurants and hotels have opened on the property, known as Woburn Landing.

The city of Woburn property consists of wooded upland and shallow marsh wetland, through which the Aberjona River flows. The land use plan identified public open space and passive recreation as a priority for future use. Passive recreational use was incorporated in the river sediment cleanup phase, allowing for walking trails and open space along the river to be developed at the same time. In July 2017, the City, EPA and MassDEP officially opened the Aberjona Nature Trail along the Aberjona River. The area is now a well-established natural area, wetland and recreation resource enjoyed by Woburn residents and visitors.

The cleanup of the Wells G&H Superfund site shows how meaningful participation between local stakeholders and PRPs can aid in the cleanup process. Collaboration, support from EPA's SRP and early reuse discussions have turned this formerly contaminated 330-acre site into a vibrant community hub that is protective of human health and the environment.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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