Timely planning and early communication between developers and EPA resulted in the successful transformation of former landfills into thriving business parks in Silicon Valley.

The 550-acre South Bay Asbestos Area Superfund site includes the entire community of Alviso, located in San Jose, California. Three landfills, the Santos, the Marshland and the Sainte Claire, received asbestos waste from 1953 to 1982. Residents also used piping and soil containing asbestos on their properties. In addition, investigations found asbestos in the Guadalupe River ring levee surrounding Alviso. EPA placed the site on the Superfund program’s National Priorities List in 1986.

Cleanup activities have included paving asbestos-contaminated lots, removing asbestos debris and soils, covering the landfills, and putting land use restrictions in place. Cleanup also included removal of the Guadalupe River ring levee, the largest source of asbestos at the site. Restoration of wetlands under the levee followed. Long-term maintenance and regular inspections of the landfill covers are ongoing.

The ever-growing need for office space in Silicon Valley led developers to the site in the early 2000s. They worked with EPA and signed Prospective Purchaser Agreements (PPAs). The PPAs addressed the developers’ liability concerns. In return, the developers agreed to maintain the landfill covers and inspect them annually, among other requirements. During redevelopment, EPA worked with the developers to make sure asbestos safety controls were in place to protect worker health.

Today, site reuses include two thriving business parks. The 70-acre Legacy America Center occupies the former Marshland Landfill area. Polycom Inc.’s headquarters building, one of many tenants, occupies a Gold LEED-certified building on site. The Center also dedicated 25 acres of the property as an open-space preserve. The area provides habitat for local wildlife such as the burrowing owl as well as walking trails. The second business park, Gold Street Technology Center (formerly Legacy Tech Park), is located on part of the former Santos Landfill. It provides commercial space and office space for a wide range of businesses. The site’s cleanup has supported the continued use of Alviso’s neighborhoods, schools, stores, and recreation areas.