

Environmental Justice in Rhode Island Site Remediation & Brownfields

Policy, Lessons, Improving

Former Imperial Knife – Olneyville, Providence, RI

May 2016



54 Affordable Housing Units in Olneyville

October 2018



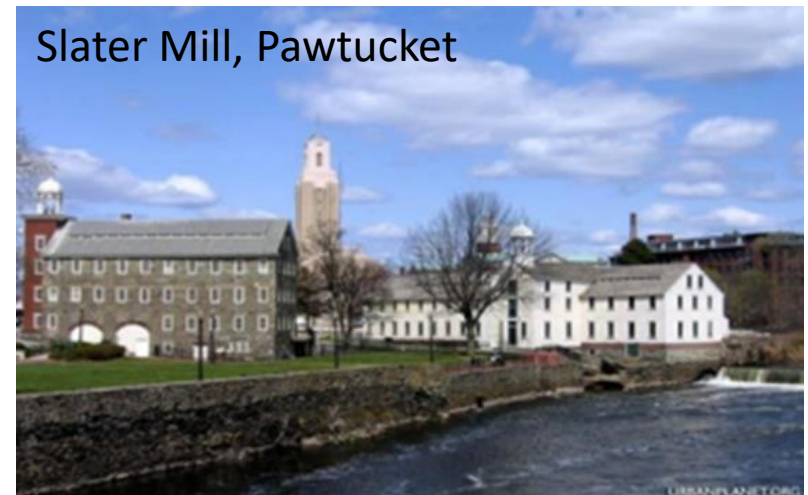
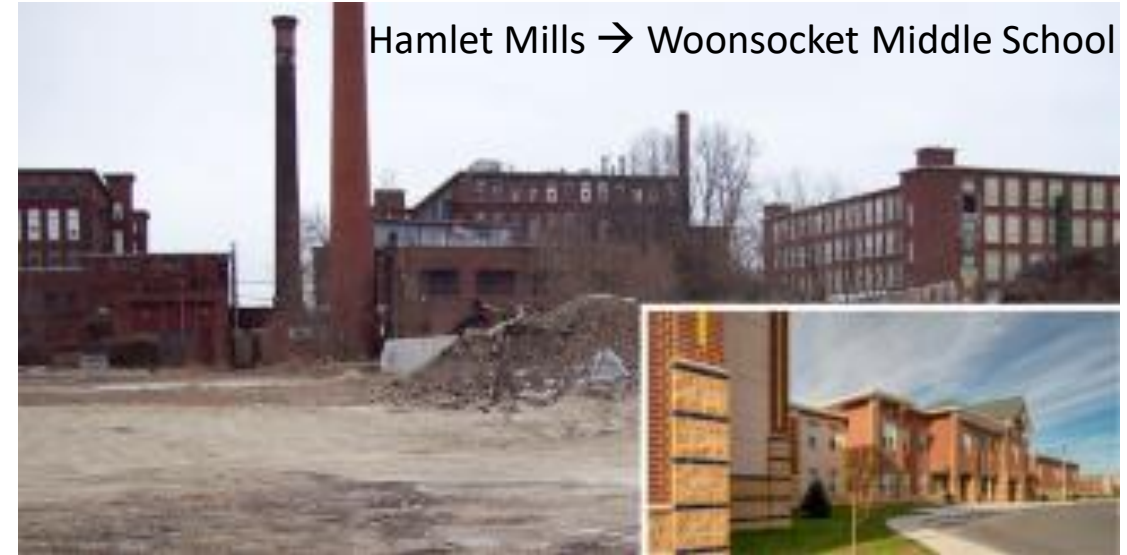


Development of EJ Policy in Rhode Island

- 2006 – Legislation -
- 2007-2009: Stakeholder process to develop Environmental Justice Policy
- Enhanced outreach and communication
 - Fact Sheets – DEM, Site Remediation, Site Specific
 - Translated into most spoken language other than English, other translations as needed
 - Most common in RI are Spanish and Portuguese
- Action items built on existing public notice framework
 - Pre-Site Investigation
 - Post-SI/Conceptual Remedial Plan w/ 14-day Public Comment Period
- Integrated into 2011 update to the Remediation Regulations
 - Environmental Justice Policy Requirements are MANDATORY for All Sites in EJ Communities
 - Public Notice Letters drafted by PRP/Consultant and reviewed by RIDEM Project Manager

Site Remediation/Brownfield Site *not* located in EJ community

- Pre-SI Public Notice
 - Letter to abutters – environmental investigation activities are occurring
 - Point of Contact
- Post-SI Public Notice
 - Letter to abutters – contaminants/media
 - Solicit comments on the technical feasibility of conceptual remedy
 - 14-day (calendar) comment period
- Special Cases required public meeting & longer comment period
 - RIGL 23-19.14-5 – Schools, Childcare Facilities, Recreation for Public Use
 - RIGL 23-19.14-4 – School Siting Act (VI Specific)



Site located in EJ community

- Pre-SI Public Notice (English & 2nd Language)
 - Letter to abutters
 - Site specific Fact Sheet
 - Fact Sheet on DEM, Brownfields, EJ (DEM Provided)
- All notification docs posted in the community
- Site Signage – 4' x 6'
- Post-SI Notice
 - Updated Letter & Site-Specific Fact Sheet
 - 14-Day Comment Period

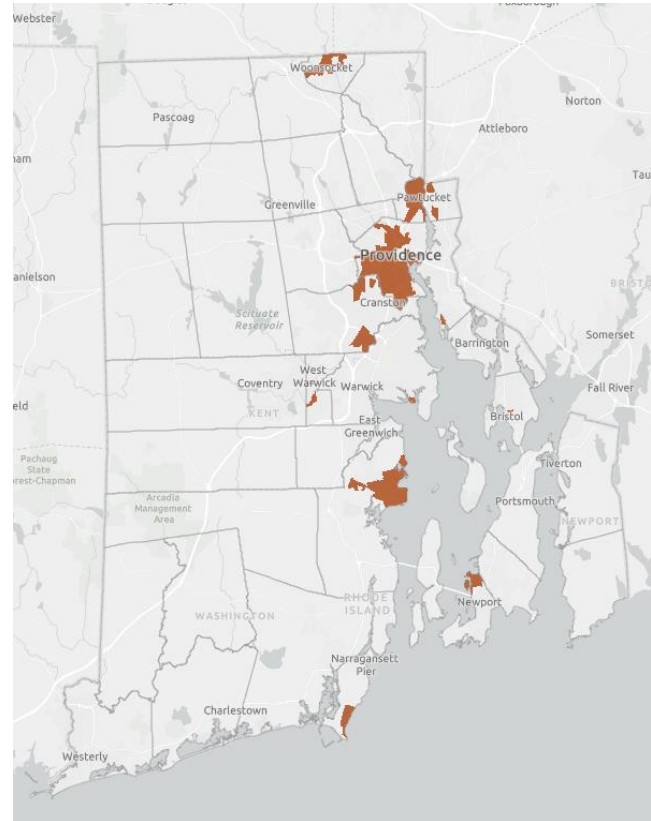
Schools can hit public notice “Trifecta”

- Environmental Justice
- RIGL 23-19.14-5 – Schools, Childcare, Recreation
- RIGL 23-19.14-4 – School Siting Act (2013)

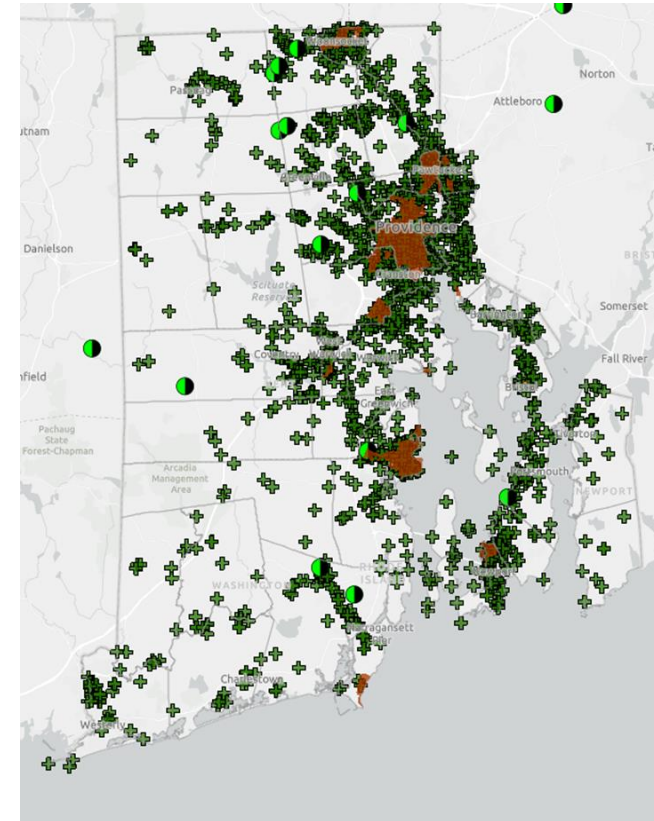


- Defined Environmental Justice Community by Census Block Group
 - Two categories: % Minority, % low-income (<2 x Federal Poverty Level) – Consistent with EPA EJ definition at the time
 - Block groups compared across Rhode Island (EPA compared regionally)
 - Ranked high % to low % for each criteria
 - Top 15% of block groups of either criteria would be defined as EJ area
- Data used to create layer on RI GIS map

2008 EJ Areas



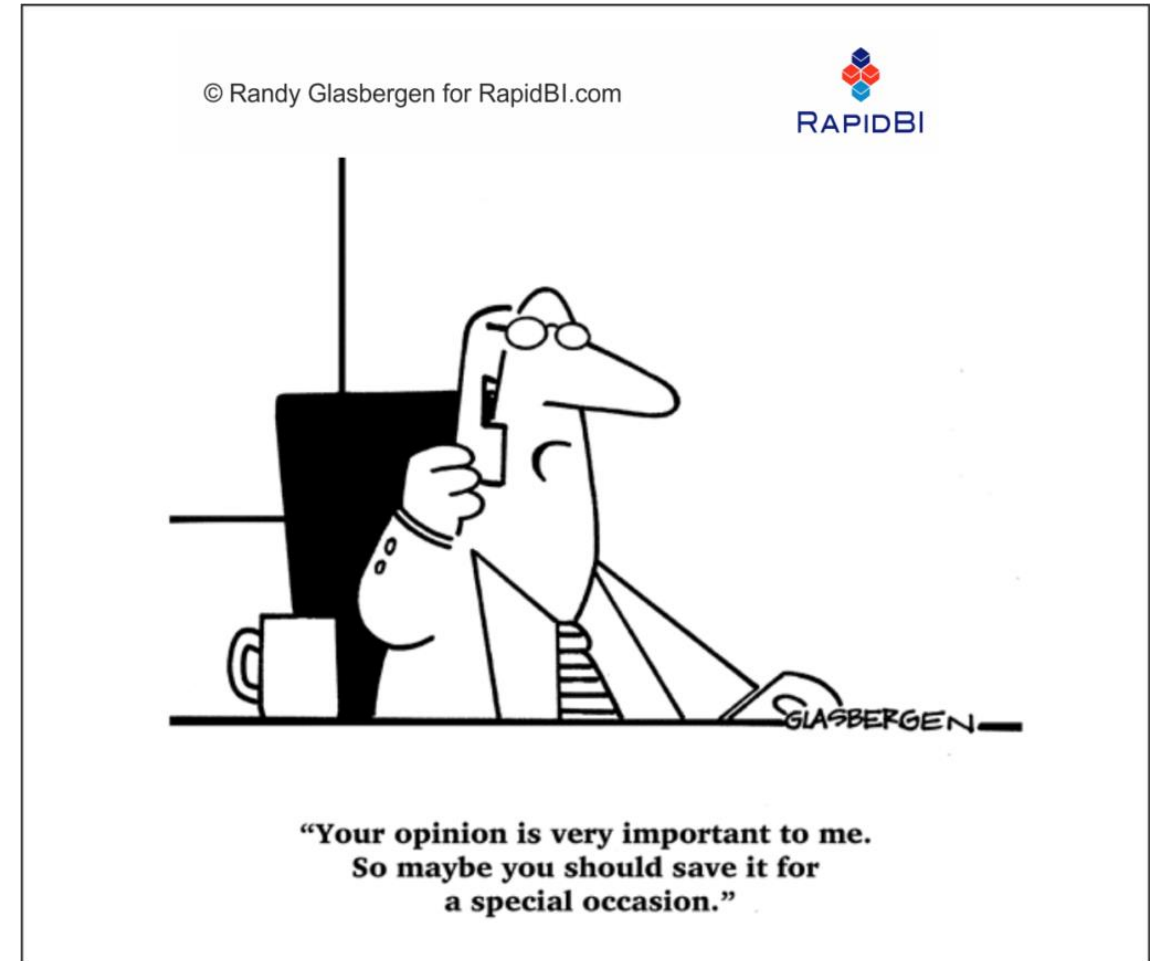
Remediation Sites in RI



External GIS Map “Environmental Resource Map”
@ <https://dem.ri.gov/online-services/data-maps>

Some Lessons Learned

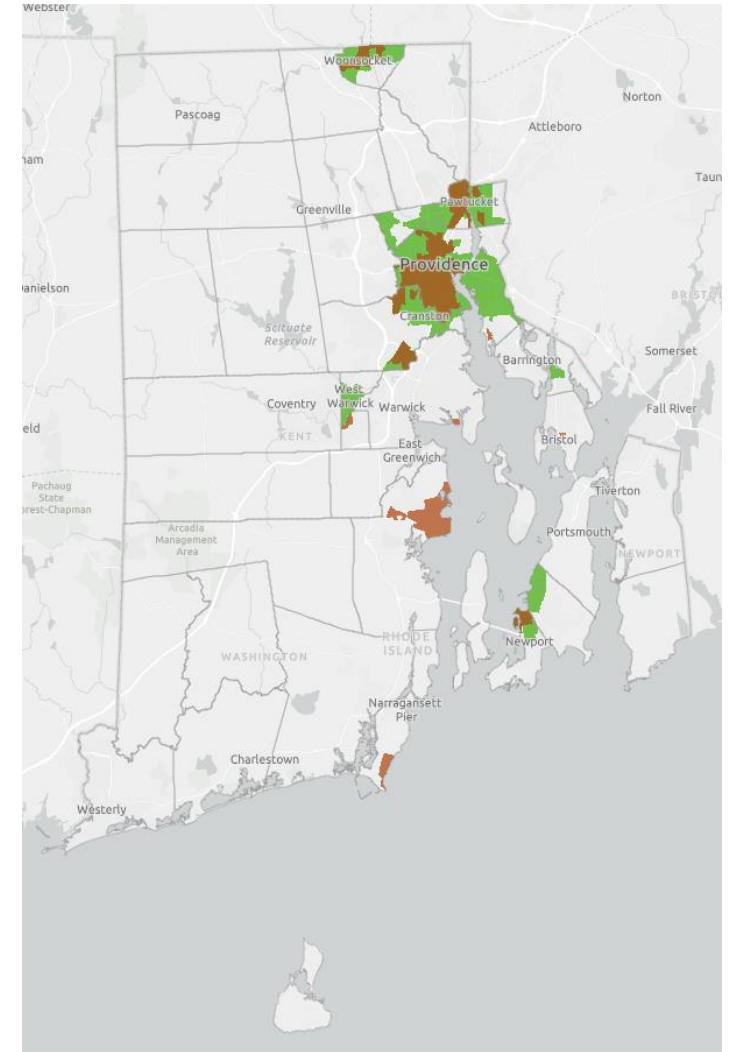
- LISTEN – You may not have an answer, Concerns may not exactly be about environmental – Listen anyway
- Transparency!!
- Know your audience – Avoid Industry Jargon
- Provide Contact Info
- Select Public Meeting Locations Wisely
- Checklists
 - For PRPs & Consultants
 - For Project Managers
- Use the Internet (because 2022)
 - Provide optional templates for public letters
 - Site Files
- Newspaper Notices
 - Pay walls
 - Use the Town/Regional/Local Paper
- Use Competitive Grant Funding to Focus on Brownfields in Environmental Justice Communities



2022 Draft Updates

- “Environmental Justice Focus Area” is a census **tract** that meets one of more of the following:
 - Annual Median Household Income < 65% of Statewide Avg.
 - Minority Population ≥ 40%
 - Population Lacking English Proficiency ≥ 25%
 - Minority Population ≥ 25% **AND** Annual Median Household Income of the Municipality where the census tract is located is ≤ 150% of Statewide Avg.
- Incorporates newer guidance and best practices
- Proactive Outreach, Identify Community Leaders & Groups
- To be applicable to all RIDEM Permitting Programs

- 2008 Policy (2000 census)
- 2022 Draft (2020 Census)





Ashley Blauvelt, P.E.
Environmental Engineer IV
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Office of Land Revitalization & Sustainable Materials Management
Site Remediation & Brownfields
ashley.Blauvelt@dem.ri.gov
(401) 222-2797 x277-7026

JUNE 2020



SEPTEMBER 2019



Drone photos by All Events Video and Photography