BROWNFIELDS WALKING TOUR

NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

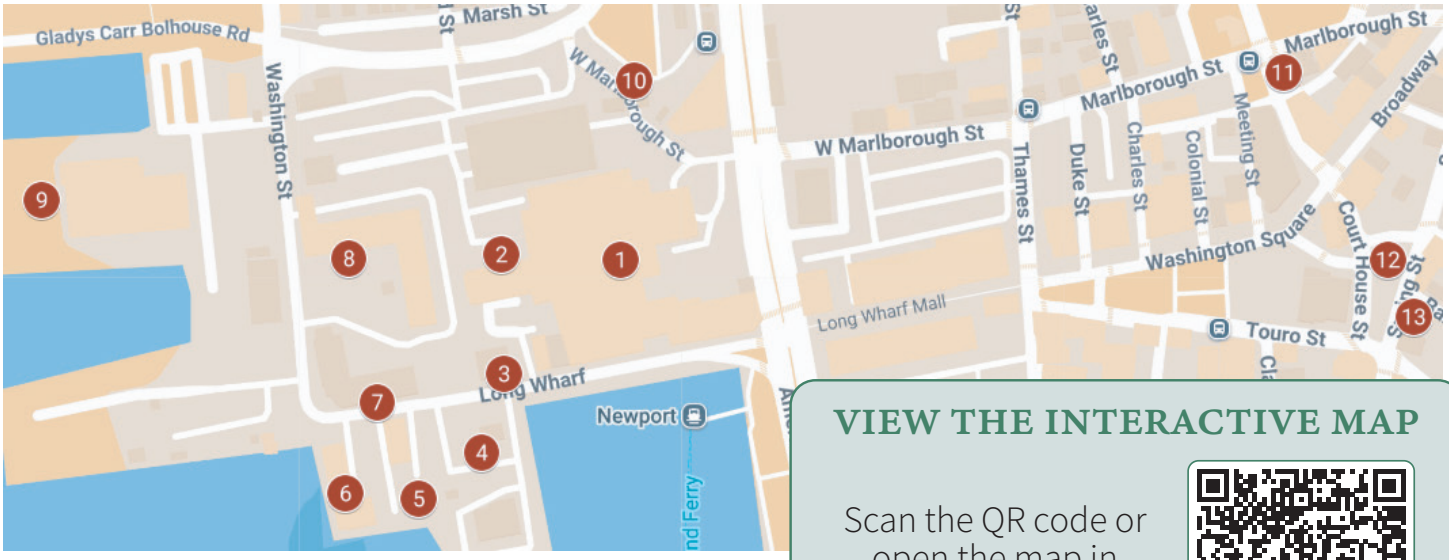
A self-guided tour of industrial history, environmental legacies, and redevelopment in downtown Newport.

Waterfront History and Revitalization

In the early 1700s, Long Wharf extended from Newport's town center toward Gravelly Point. It helped enclose the Cove, a sheltered part of the harbor where smaller vessels came for service. During this time, maritime businesses thrived along the wharf and nearby shoreline of Newport.

Over the 19th century, the Cove's stagnant, unpleasant-smelling water and the expansion of transportation infrastructure changed the waterfront. The Cove was gradually filled to make way for railroad tracks that would serve a nearby steamship terminal, and by the early 1900s, an expanded rail yard had replaced the Cove. The Newport Marriott, this year's Brownfields Summit venue, now stands on part of that former rail yard.

Properties along this tour have supported shipbuilding, fuel storage, and other commercial activities. Some now hold hotels, shops, and transportation facilities, while the shipyard remains active. This self-guided tour connects past and present land uses with the environmental conditions found at each site and the steps taken to address them.



VIEW THE INTERACTIVE MAP

Scan the QR code or open the map in your web browser to learn more.

Tip: There are additional map layers with information about other points of interest and nearby dining options!

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Sources: RIDEM site data; Rhode Island Marine Archaeology Project (rimap.org/new-page); Historical Marker Database (hmdb.org/m.asp?m=189622); Newport Historical Society, "History Bytes: River Lane" (newporthistory.org/history-bytes-river-lane/).

01 NEWPORT MARRIOTT
25 AMERICA'S CUP AVENUE
SR-22-0997 | LEAD | SOIL

Prior to the construction of the hotel in 1985, the site was used as a railroad yard since the late 1880s. Uses included a lumberyard, junk storage, and reportedly landfilling with fish remains. Sampling in 1998 identified lead in soils.

02 LONG WHARF HOLDING CO. — BRENTON HOTEL
63 & 65 LONG WHARF
SR-22-0756 D | SVOCs | SOIL

A railroad yard occupied the site from the late 1880s until 1910. Since then, the property has been used mainly for retail purposes. Investigations in the late 1980 and mid-1990s identified elevated levels of lead in soil throughout the property. In March 2019, a 24,000-square-foot building was demolished for a proposed 57-room hotel. During investigations, PAHs were identified in soil.

03 MAINBRACE RESTAURANT
LONG WHARF
SR-22-0758 | SVOCs | SOIL

Investigations in 1992 identified elevated levels of lead in soil, attributed to numerous industrial activities and contaminated fill. In November 2010, RIDEM was notified that site redevelopment was proposed and included the renovation and expansion of the existing building footprint to include almost the entire lot. Required capping was completed in December 2011 and included crushed stone and concrete pavers.

04 LONG WHARF PUMPING STATION
100 LONG WHARF
SR-22-2107 | ARSENIC + LEAD | SOIL

As early as 1953, this site was developed as a sewage pumping station. In July 2003, an underground storage tank was removed from the site and evidence of a petroleum release was noted. In August 2022, additional assessment was conducted, which identified arsenic and lead in soils. Soil excavation associated with the installation of electrical infrastructure at the site began in February 2025.

05 EASTERN RESORTS
125-135 &126-128 LONG WHARF
SR-22-0416 | LEAD | SOIL

The site spans both sides of Long Wharf. The northern parcel held homes and businesses from the late 1800s to the 1940s; the southern parcel was a shipyard until the 1920s. Newport Oil Company used both parcels for oil storage and distribution from at least the 1940s. Fuel oil tanks were removed in 1988, and lead and petroleum were identified in soil on both parcels. Redevelopment included a two-story building extension along Washington Street and Long Wharf.

06 INN ON LONG WHARF
125-135 & 126-128 LONG WHARF
SR-22-0757 | HISTORIC | SOIL + GROUNDWATER

This property is the former location of the Cove, which was filled in gradually starting in the 1800s. By the early 1900s, the Cove had been filled and was used as a railroad yard. Upon filling, the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, Old Colony System, Providence Division constructed railroad distribution spur lines which traversed the site. Freight carried by the railroad included raw materials for mills, fuel oil for mill boilers, and after World War II, mostly lumber and construction materials for the Newport Bridge. Railroad ties and large rocks/concrete blocks were observed on the lot during site investigations. Site assessments were conducted in September 1988 and July 1993. PAHs, lead, and petroleum were detected in soils.

07 LONG WHARF MALL - NORTH
THAMES STREET
SR-22-0759 | LEAD | SOIL

Since the 1960s, the site was used as retail space. Investigations in 1999 identified lead and PAHs in soil.

08 LONG WHARF
LONG WHARF & WASHINGTON STREET
SR-22-0756 A + B | LEAD | SOIL

After the Cove was filled, the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad's Old Colony System, Providence Division, built spur lines across the site. Investigations in 1988 identified PAHs, localized petroleum-contaminated soil, and an oil sheen on groundwater. Investigations in 1995 identified lead in soil.

09 AMERICAN SHIPYARD
WASHINGTON STREET
SR-22-0053 | HISTORIC LEAD FILL | SOIL + GROUNDWATER

The site has a long history of shipbuilding and vessel repair, including U.S. military use during World War II, and remains an active shipyard today. Past environmental concerns included PCBs associated with transformers, waste oil storage, and lead-contaminated soil. In November 1987, a 275-gallon waste oil tank was removed from an area beside the machine and carpenter shops. Lead-contaminated soil was also excavated, and the excavated areas were backfilled and paved with asphalt.

10 NEWPORT VISITOR CENTER
23 AMERICA'S CUP AVENUE
SR-22-0756 C | HISTORIC | SOIL

RIPTA signed a 99-year lease in 1988 to use part of the site as a bus terminal and transportation complex. Soil contaminants included petroleum, VOCs, PAHs, arsenic, and lead. In 2017 and 2018, engineered barriers were installed, including concrete and asphalt pavement, bioretention systems, landscaped areas, and permeable paver walkways. More than $6 million was spent to remake the Gateway Center transportation complex.

11 DEL NERO CLEANERS AND LAUNDRY
11 FAREWELL STREET
SR-22-1752 | PCE + VINYL CHLORIDE | GROUNDWATER

A historic canal flowed along Tanner Street (now Marcus Wheatland Boulevard) and behind this property toward the harbor. Developed by 1860, the site supported manufacturing, trades, and retail, with laundry and dry cleaning by 1900. A tank was closed in place in 1999, and 2001 investigations identified TPH and VOC exceedances in groundwater. Cleanup included excavation, soil amendment, capping, land use restrictions, and stormwater management, with groundwater sampling and a vapor intrusion assessment.

12 COFFEY'S TEXACO (FORMER)
48 TOURO STREET
SR-22-1765 | TPH, LEAD + SVOCs | SOIL

The site formerly operated as a gas station and automotive garage. Investigations in 2014 identified contamination from underground storage tanks and other sources. A spring structure discovered in 2017 was studied by archaeologists in 2020, who concluded it was likely connected to the Old Town Spring and may have been the spring itself. The site was redeveloped as a public park in 2024.

13 TOURO SYNAGOGUE VISITORS CENTER
50-52 SPRING STREET
SR-22-1566 | UNKNOWN | GROUNDWATER

The visitors center occupies a former retail site and introduces visitors to Touro Synagogue, dedicated in 1763 and the oldest surviving synagogue building in the United States.

PAHs: polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons • PCBs: polychlorinated biphenyls • PCE: tetrachloroethylene
SVOCs: semivolatile organic compounds • TPH: total petroleum hydrocarbons • VOCs: volatile organic compounds