

# Ampco Foundry

PUB-RR-885

February 2011

**Ampco Foundry**  
1745 S. 38th Street  
Milwaukee, WI  
Milwaukee County

**17 acres**

**Location: The Milwaukee site is surrounded by commercial/industrial development on three sites, with a residential neighborhood on one edge.**

**An abandoned foundry is turned into a major jobs creator in southwest Milwaukee, thanks to a boost from the DNR and city officials.**

## History

Ampco Metal Inc., has a long history of foundry production in Milwaukee that pre-dates World War II. For years the company was considered the largest producer of bronze metals in the country.

However, in 2003, the company filed for bankruptcy. Foundry operations were closed down and the building began to deteriorate. Vandals quickly found their way inside buildings that contained barrels of chemicals, oil slicks and electrical hazards. For neighbors across the street, the property was a blighted eyesore.

However, a new life for the site was in store, once a private redeveloper and the city of

Milwaukee began to map out possibilities for a future business park.

## Investigation and Cleanup

The history of foundry work at the property indicated a high likelihood the site could be very contaminated. Environmental investigations dating back to 1988 showed the property was contaminated, with impacts to the soil and groundwater. High levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were discovered.

Many factors contributed to the contamination. At least 11 underground storage tanks were located on-site, which had stored fuel oil, gasoline and chlorinated solvents. Industrial waste management practices dating back 50-80 years had likely been used to dispose of petroleum, metals, and chlorinated solvents.

Equipment containing PCBs was used extensively around the foundry. Also,



*The former Ampco Metal Inc., site is now part of Milwaukee's revitalized industrial and commercial section (photo courtesy DNR).*



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Remediation and Redevelopment Program

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dumping on-site may have included contaminated foundry sand and solid waste.

To begin the bulk of the remediation work, an environmental consultant completed asbestos characterization on all buildings at the property. Once clean, the buildings and their concrete footings were demolished. Sections of highly contaminated soil were excavated and deposited at hazardous-waste landfills. Other areas of contaminated spoil were covered by the foundation of the new development and surrounding pavement to prevent people from coming in contact with the soil.

Finally, a venting system was installed below future structures, to prevent migration of VOC vapors into the buildings.

### **Redevelopment**

From the beginning, developers had sights on turning the former Ampco Foundry into a light-industrial use business park. In 2008, the Stadium Business Park opened with ten companies leasing space in the facility, employing 450 people.

Instead of a blighted, empty foundry, today the business park is adding significant value to the neighborhood, in the form of good jobs and tax revenue.

### **Financial, Liability, Technical Assistance**

The turnaround of the Ampco Foundry site was made possible by the cooperation of many parties.

Technical assistance on the remediation project was provided through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Remediation and Redevelopment (RR) Program. The RR Program also awarded the city a \$30,000 Brownfields Site Assessment Grant to pay for some of the costs associated with building demolition. An exemption to build on a historic fill site was also granted.

The city of Milwaukee used a variety of funding sources to support the project. By using a tax incremental financing district (TIF), the city granted the redevelopment project \$2.6 million. Additionally, the project was given \$420,000 in brownfields grants through the city's revolving loan fund.

Finally, the Wisconsin Department of Commerce added a \$500,000 brownfields grant to help foster the jobs-producing project.

Developer Real Estate Recycling created a vision for the Stadium Business Park and built the \$10 million industrial space. The company partnered with the DNR to enter the Voluntary Party Liability Exemption (VPLE) process, which helps landowners complete a remediation project and receive a VPLE Certificate of Completion. Upon completion of the cleanup, the certificate exempts the landowner from future liability for known contamination at the site.

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