

# Community Relations Plan

Former Uniroyal Tire Complex  
Parcel #'s 124-03, 124-11, 147-09 & 147-06  
154 Grove Street  
Chicopee, MA 01020



January 2013

## Overview

The purpose of this Community Relations Plan (CRP) is to describe the City of Chicopee's strategy to address the needs and concerns of residents who will potentially be affected by the proposed cleanup and redevelopment at the former Uniroyal Tire Complex (the Site) located at 154 Grove Street in Chicopee, Massachusetts. Now part of RiverMills at Chicopee Falls, the former Uniroyal property consists of approximately 28 acres of post-industrial Brownfields situated in the Chicopee Falls neighborhood – the geographic center of the City. This Community Relations Plan outlines how the City of Chicopee has involved, and will continue to involve, affected residents, City officials and local organizations in the decision-making process regarding the assessment, cleanup and eventual redevelopment of the Site.

This project is funded in part by an EPA Brownfields cleanup grant awarded in August 2012 to the City of Chicopee. This grant provides funds for the cleanup of parcels 124-03, 124-11, 147-09 and 147-06. This CRP is designed to meet the overall community involvement requirements for the cleanup of the Uniroyal site under this grant as well as other EPA Brownfields funding the City may acquire in the future for these three parcels or other parcels at the Uniroyal site.

Active residents, local organizations and civic leaders involved in neighborhood issues are important resources for the success of this Plan as they have an understanding of the Site, its challenges and opportunities. Additionally, these individuals hold key positions of responsibility within the community. The City recognizes these citizens as points of contact and communication. The long-term success of the proposed cleanup project and redevelopment will be enhanced by ongoing citizen involvement – involvement that began when the City began planning the future of these properties in 2010. This continued conversation with invested stakeholders will ensure the proposed cleanup project is successfully executed and therefore move the property closer to the community-derived redevelopment goals as defined by the RiverMills Vision Plan.

## Spokesperson & Information Repository

Chicopee's Office of Community Development (OCD) has and will continue to oversee implementation of cleanup activities at the Site. Office and contact information are as follows:

Lee Pouliot, LEED Green Associate  
Planner & Administrator  
Office of Community Development  
38 Center Street  
Chicopee, MA 01013  
(413) 594-1488  
Email: [lpouliot@chicopeema.gov](mailto:lpouliot@chicopeema.gov)

An Information Repository for this project has been developed and is available for review in the Office of Community Development at any time during normal business hours (Monday – Friday, 9:00a.m. – 5:00p.m.). Additionally, all documents included in the Information Repository will be available digitally from OCD's webpage (<https://www.chicopeema.gov/page.php?id=74>).

## Site Description & History

### Site History

**The Former Uniroyal Tire Complex** consists of approximately 28 acres of land, originally developed during the late 1800s. In 1870, the property was used as a lumber yard by the Chicopee Manufacturing Company. From 1896 to 1898, the property was owned by the Spaulding and Pepper Company, who manufactured bicycle tires. The Fisk Rubber Company, which later changed its name to United States Rubber Company and then to Uniroyal, Inc., manufactured bicycle automobile & truck tires and adhesives from 1898 to 1981. Uniroyal Inc. closed their plant in 1980 and sold the property to Facemate Corporation in 1981. Facemate leased portions of the Uniroyal buildings to various companies for manufacturing, printing, machine shops, office, storage and health care facilities, however, most of the Uniroyal property has remained vacant since Uniroyal ceased operations. Michelin North America, Inc. (MNA) acquired the assets of Uniroyal, Inc. circa 1990 and is considered the primary responsible party (PRP) dealing with residual contamination at the Uniroyal property.

Currently, 17 vacant buildings, encompassing 1.5 million square feet, remain standing at the Site.

### Site Location

The former Uniroyal Tire Complex is located at 154 Grove Street, in the Chicopee Falls neighborhood. The Site is bound by the Chicopee River (west,) the former Facemate Property and West Main Street (north), Grove and Front Street (east) and residential and small commercial developments (south). The Complex is composed of a number of property parcels, of which Parcel #'s 124-03, 124-11, 147-09 and 147-06. Please see **Attachment I: Uniroyal Site Plan with buildings** for additional information. The following information summarizes details specific to all four parcels at the site. In addition, please see **Attachment II: Subject Uniroyal parcels (Assessor's Maps)**:

**Uniroyal Parcel #124-03** represents 4.33 acres of the total Uniroyal property with four buildings and various other structures remaining. The footprint of Buildings 7, 8, 14 & 15 cover 27.3% (1.18 acres) of the parcel and total approximately 277,250 square feet of vacant industrial space.

- Buildings 7 & 14 are six-story, masonry structures described as being in poor condition. Most of the buildings' windows have been broken, allowing water to penetrate the building. Water damage is apparent throughout most of the structure and small isolated areas of floor collapses have been documented. The structural report indicated additional collapses throughout are an imminent threat.

**Uniroyal Parcel #124-11** represents 0.349 acres of the total Uniroyal property with one remaining building. The footprint of Building 43 covers 37.2% (0.13 acres) of the parcel and totals 5,550 square feet of vacant industrial space.

- Building 43 is a one-story structure with exterior masonry walls and a structural steel frame system. Rated in fair condition, exterior brick walls exhibit efflorescence and isolated areas where brick appears to have previously failed and been repaired exhibit signs of new deterioration. Areas of soft, deteriorated brick were also documented.

**Uniroyal Parcel #147-09** represents 8.78 acres of the total Uniroyal property with eight buildings remaining. The footprint of Buildings 27, 28 North, 28 South, 28 North Extension, 29, 33, 40 & 42 cover

51.9% (4.56 acres) of the parcel and account for a total of 1,056,887 square feet of vacant industrial space. Hazardous Building Material Inspections were completed on Buildings 28, 28 North, 28 Extension & 33 in June 2011 and confirmed the presence of asbestos, lead and other hazardous materials.

- Building 33 is a two-story structure with one story partially below grade and one story above. Rated in poor to serious condition, the roof has collapsed in several locations and water penetration is clearly evident. Upper sections of masonry walls where the roof has collapsed have also collapsed into the building. The lower level concrete deck exhibits substantial cracking and spalling. Efflorescence stalactites, spalls with exposed reinforcing steel and hollow sounding areas of the concrete deck were also all apparent. Structural steel members have heavy rusting and areas of section loss.

**Uniroyal Parcel #147-06** represents 0.691 acres of the Uniroyal property with one remaining building on site. The footprint of Building 26 (the Uniroyal Administration Building) covers 30.4% of the site and totals approximately 65,000 square feet of vacant industrial office space.

- Buildings 26 is a seven-story structure constructed from a combination of masonry block and brick exterior walls with precast elements described as being in fair condition. The roof exhibits several cracks that are allowing water to penetrate the building. Early stages of exterior brick wall deterioration are present including a softening of brick and mortar on the upper levels. No structural collapses have occurred nor been deemed imminent as the main structural systems were deemed in fair condition. As part of the City's agreement with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the City must make a best effort to market this building for redevelopment, based on the above structural analysis and potential market support for reuse of this structure. By completing the abatement of this structure, the City will have improved the marketability of the building to potential private developers who may have an interest in such redevelopment projects.

### **Redevelopment Vision**

The former Uniroyal Tire Complex and neighboring former Facemate property are part of 'RiverMills at Chicopee Falls,' a redevelopment project encompassing approximately 65 acres of post-industrial Brownfields properties. Visioning efforts for RiverMills began and were completed in 2010. The Vision Plan, developed with an emphasis on community desires, proposes the creation of an active and passive recreational network that reconnects the neighborhood to the Chicopee River. This network is the armature around which a mixed-use community of residential, commercial and office developments is molded.

The redevelopment program for RiverMills is based on extensive market analysis and envisions the following elements:

- active and passive recreational network;
- 33,500 square feet of new commercial/retail space;
- 131,000 square feet of new office space;
- 131 new residential units;
- a 34,500 square foot Recreational Center; and
- a 21,000 square foot Senior Center.

The first phase of redevelopment began during fall 2011 when the remaining Facemate buildings (northern portion of RiverMills) were demolished to prepare for construction of the City's new Senior Center, known as RiverMills Center. Construction on the Center is planned to break ground in February 2013. The City anticipates the Center acting as a catalyst, spurring redevelopment efforts on both the Facemate and Uniroyal properties. Additionally, the City has moved forward with Phase II of the Chicopee River Walk, a rail-trail conversion that will link the Uniroyal property to the City's downtown (south-west of the Site).

## **Nature of Threat to Public Health & Environment**

### **Health Concerns**

The proposed clean-up plan includes the preparation of specifications for the abatement and removal of regulated building materials and other hazardous substances in Building 7, 14, 33 and 43. The following Hazardous Building Materials, which have been confirmed as present in most of the remaining Uniroyal structures not only compound the below described health issues but have also been linked to additional health complications:

- **Asbestos** exposure has been linked to lung cancer, mesothelioma and nonmalignant lung/pleural disorders including asbestosis according to the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR);
- **Lead** exposure has been linked to kidney and nervous/reproductive system damage. The Department of Health and Human Services, the EPA and the International Agency for Research on Cancer have all determined that lead can also reasonably be considered a human carcinogen;
- **Mercury** exposure can severely impact the nervous system and permanently damage the brain, kidneys, lungs and developing fetuses according to the ATSDR;
- **PCB** exposure has been linked to cancer and immune, reproductive, neurological & endocrine effects according to the EPA;
- **Petroleum hydrocarbon** exposure typically affects the nervous system. These compounds can also affect the immune system, blood, skin, lungs and eyes. According to the ATSDR, some studies have found certain compounds may also be carcinogenic and have effects on developing fetuses; and
- **Pigeon guano & other animal droppings** exposure can lead to both fungal and bacterial infections if inhaled by humans. Histoplasmosis and cryptococcosis both cause fatigue, fever and chest pains. According to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH), neither disease is very common however; individuals with compromised immune systems are generally at higher risk for contracting either disease.

***Today, the presence of these Hazardous Building Materials places a disproportionate burden on Chicopee Falls' sensitive populations of youth, seniors and low to moderate income residents who already suffer from higher rates of asthma, other respiratory ailments, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and other disabilities.***

## Environmental Concerns

The Uniroyal Site represents 28 acres of Brownfields located at the geographic center of the City. The Site is considered blight on the neighborhood and provides no economic, social or environmental benefits to Chicopee. Most structures have deteriorated beyond economically feasible reuse and structural failures are considered imminent. This threat creates a significant environmental safety risk for the neighborhood and its residents.

Environmental dangers were identified in the Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments, various structural assessments of the buildings and Pre-Demolition Building Inspections. These reports confirm the buildings' poor structural condition and the presence of asbestos, lead, mercury and other hazardous materials. The Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA) will provide a more in depth discussion of the environmental issues at the site, cleanup alternatives considered, and the proposed cleanup plan.

## Community Background

### Target Community Profile

The Site is located in the City's Chicopee Falls neighborhood. Chicopee Falls is one of the oldest neighborhoods, of a mixed-used character, including low to moderate income residences, commercial, light industrial and public service. The neighborhood is home to the Church Street Historic District and the Edward Bellamy House; home of the Edward Bellamy Society and Chicopee Historical Society. Chicopee Falls is divided into two U.S. Census Tracts: 8107 and 8108. The Uniroyal properties are located in Tract 8108. **Table I** details basic population data and clearly shows that the populations of the Census Tracts individually and the neighborhood as a whole are composed of significant numbers of both youth and senior citizens. As noted, significant numbers of Veterans also call Chicopee Falls home. **Table II** shows that the neighborhood suffers from significantly higher unemployment and poverty rates while very high percentages of households earn below City, State and national median household income levels.

*Table I: Youth & Senior Citizen Populations*

	Census Tract 8107	Census Tract 8108	Chicopee Falls
Total Population	6,151	3,823	9,974
Population < 19 years	1,443 (23.5%)	1,008 (26.4%)	2,451 (24.6%)
Population > 65 years	946 (15.4%)	568 (14.9%)	1,514 (15.2%)
Total, Both Categories	2,389 (38.8%)	1,576 (41.2%)	3,965 (39.8%)
Veteran Status	658 (13.1%)*	375 (12.9%)*	1,033 (10.4%)*

(Population percentages based on 2010 U.S. Census data)

(\*Estimates based on American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, not accounting for margins of error)

Table II: Demographic Information

	Target Community		City of Chicopee	Hampden County	Massachusetts	United States
	Census Tract 8107	Census Tract 8108				
<b>Population</b>	6,151*	3,823*	55,298*	463,490*	6,547,629*	308,745,538*
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	25% <sup>^</sup>	38% <sup>^</sup>	8.8% <sup>†</sup>	8.9% <sup>†</sup>	7.3% <sup>†</sup>	9.6% <sup>†</sup>
<b>Poverty Rate</b>	4 - 8 % <sup>‡</sup>	9 - 21% <sup>‡</sup>	13 - 18% <sup>§</sup>	16 - 19% <sup>°</sup>	10 - 11% <sup>°</sup>	14.3% <sup>°</sup>
<b>% Minority</b>	13%*	16%*	14%*	24%*	20%*	26.7%*
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	\$24,834 ± \$2,238 <sup>‡</sup>	\$20,978 ± \$2,235 <sup>‡</sup>	\$22,481 ± \$681 <sup>§</sup>	\$24,000 ± \$591 <sup>°</sup>	\$33,437 ± \$339 <sup>°</sup>	\$26,530 <sup>°</sup>
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$55,240 ± \$7,107 <sup>‡</sup>	\$37,361 ± \$10,740 <sup>‡</sup>	\$44,018 ± \$2,259 <sup>§</sup>	\$46,809 ± \$2,225 <sup>°</sup>	\$64,081 ± \$680 <sup>°</sup>	\$50,221 ± \$74 <sup>°</sup>

\*Data from the 2010 Census data

<sup>^</sup> Median Percentages based on 5-year ('05-'09) American Community Survey Unemployment Estimates

<sup>†</sup> Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics

<sup>‡</sup> Based on Margins of Error in 5-year ('05-'09) American Community Survey Estimates

<sup>§</sup> Based on Margins of Error in 3-year ('07-'09) American Community Survey Estimates

<sup>°</sup> Based on Margins of Error in 1-year ('09) American Community Survey Estimates

The Massachusetts Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) lists portions of both Census Tracts 8107 and 8108 as meeting two of four Environmental Justice population criteria. The criteria met include: households earning 65% or less of statewide household income and 25% or more of residents are minority. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) has classified Chicopee as an Economically Distressed Area (EDA), defined as areas within the Commonwealth that are eligible for targeted assistance under the Brownfields Act. Further, the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI) lists Census Tract 8108 in Severely Distressed Status and Tract 8107 in Eligible Status for the New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) Program which the CDFI administers. Such classifications are based on demographic information, including income, poverty and empowerment zone status.

Chicopee is also a federally designated Empowerment Zone/Entitlement Community per the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), with all block groups in Tract 8108 and three of the five block groups of Tract 8107 defined as having 51% or greater total number of low to moderate income residents. Chicopee's median household income is \$44,018 ± \$2,259. Not factoring in the margins of error in American Community Survey 5-year data estimates, approximately 40% of Tract 8107 and 56% of Tract 8108 households live below the City's median income. Approximately 59% and 72% of households, respectively, fall below the Massachusetts median income of \$64,081 ± \$680.

***These data show that Chicopee Falls does contain significant populations of youth, seniors and low to moderate income citizens whose health, welfare and environment are highly impacted by the presence of Brownfields, like the Uniroyal Site, within their neighborhood.***

## Key Community Partners

The City of Chicopee has partnered with the following community organizations which committed to supporting the redevelopment of the Uniroyal and neighboring Facemate properties:

- **Friends of the Chicopee Senior Center;** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the construction of the City's new RiverMills Center. The group has launched an ambitious fundraising campaign to support design and construction activities as the Center will be placed on a portion of the Facemate property. With this project underway, the group has placed emphasis on supporting the clean-up and redevelopment of the Uniroyal property as the new Center will be located on a ¼ mile from the property;
- **The Chicopee Council on Aging;** has been an avid supporter of the new Older Adult Community Center, working tirelessly to identify an appropriate site for many years. The Council's mission emphasizes the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the City's older adults and has a vested interest in seeing the Uniroyal property developed in a way that enhances the activities run through the Older Adult Community Center;
- **The Edward Bellamy Society/Chicopee Historical Society;** has worked tirelessly to advertise community meetings, disperse/collect community surveys and circulate the H.E.A.L Chicopee document. The group is also working to establish a collection of images, plans, maps and memorabilia regarding the Uniroyal and Facemate properties and has played a key role in preserving Chicopee's rich industrial heritage; and
- **The H.E.A.L Chicopee Team;** Cornell Master of Landscape Architecture students. Lee Pouliot, who is proposed as the project manager of this grant, is one of the H.E.A.L Team's members. He is a lifelong Chicopee resident and currently works with the Office of Community Development.

## Chronology of Community Involvement

Community engagement regarding the Uniroyal and neighboring Facemate properties has been ongoing since the redevelopment visioning process began in February 2010. The planning team, led by VHB, Inc. held three public meetings throughout the process, at which over 50 community members participated. Information gathered from these meetings informed a 'preferred' vision, which was revealed to the community in December, 2010.

Also in February 2010, a team of Cornell Master of Landscape Architecture students initiated a parallel master planning project known as 'H.E.A.L Chicopee: A Strategic Plan for the Uniroyal/Facemate Properties.' The team's extensive community outreach efforts resulted in the participation of over 1,000 community members. The students documented seven oral history interviews, 404 community survey responses and 682 student visioning responses. The students partnered with the Chicopee Public School System, the Chicopee Historical Society/Edward Bellamy Society, the Chicopee Public Library, the Chicopee Senior Center, local businesses as well as the professional team. The data gathered was used to define strategies addressing historic preservation, stormwater/flood management and Brownfields remediation. A redevelopment framework plan was developed that addresses varying market conditions plausible by 2030.

The H.E.A.L team held two community meetings; the first on March 1, 2010 at the Edward Bellamy House; the second on May 26, 2010 at Chicopee High School. Approximately 30 residents attended the first meeting and 40 attended the second. The May 26<sup>th</sup> presentation was recorded and broadcast on a local cable community access channel.

Efforts to keep the community informed have occurred through numerous avenues. Copies of all presentations and reports have been made available at the Chicopee Public Library and for download from the City's website. Local newspaper and news stations have also covered most activities with reports and articles. The final H.E.A.L presentation was recorded and aired numerous times on the local community access channel. Additionally, the City has created a page off its main website specifically for the Uniroyal/Facemate Site; while VHB has created a similar page with documents related to the master planning process. The H.E.A.L team also utilized the social networking site Facebook to connect with City residents and the online tool Survey Monkey to develop/distribute survey materials.

### **Key Community Concerns**

The community has been a key stakeholder and participant in the planning process for RiverMills. Through a variety of communications, meetings and other outreach venues, the community has been generally supportive of the required assessment and cleanup activities that must be completed to allow for redevelopment. To date, no major concerns regarding the cleanup activities planned for the Uniroyal parcels have been raised by the community.

The City will continue to communicate with and involve the community in the redevelopment process while addressing any concerns that are raised as these cleanup activities are planned and implemented.

### **Continued Community Involvement**

The City plans to continue communicating with residents through the above mentioned avenues.

In addition, the following efforts will be utilized during the proposed project to keep the community informed of project progress and outcomes:

- **Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA) 30-Day Public Comment Period:** The City will prepare and release the ABCA for this proposed project for the required 30-day public comment period. The ABCA will ensure the most appropriate cleanup alternative is selected and communicated to the community. At the close of the 30-day public comment period, the City will respond to significant comments received and then finalize the ABCA;
- **Public notice:** The City will post a public notice in the local newspaper, The Republican, announcing the start of the public comment period, the details about the public meeting, and the availability of the ABCA & information repository for public review;
- **Public Meetings:** The City estimates holding two public meetings: one during the ABCA Public Comment Period and one prior to the start of abatement activities;
- **Mailings to Abutters and Media Outlets:** Informational mailings and public meeting notices will be sent to Site abutters, both residences and businesses (within a ¼ mile radius of the subject parcels) and all local media outlets (including The Republican, the Chicopee Herald, the

Chicopee Register, News 22 (WWLP) and News 40 (WGGB)). The City anticipates these mailings to coincide with each of the planned public meetings;

- **Project Sign Posting:** A project sign will be posted and will remain posted at the Site (gates at the corner of Oak & Grove Streets) which briefly describes the project, including contact information;
- **Partner Presentations:** The Office of Community Development will continue to provide annual presentations to the Edward Bellamy Association/Chicopee Historical Society as means of communicating progress on the overall RiverMills project and on this proposed cleanup project. The Edward Bellamy Association meets monthly and typically draws approximately 50-60 attendees;
- **Social Media:** As part of the City's overall Brownfields Program, (in association with a Fiscal Year 2012 U.S. EPA Community-wide Brownfields Assessment Grant for the West End Neighborhood, the Office of Community Development will begin utilizing social media outlets to distribute project information and solicit feedback from the community. To date, OCD envisions utilizing Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. Other venues will be considered as appropriate;
- **Information Repository:** An Information Repository for this project has been developed and is available for review in the Office of Community Development at any time during normal business hours (Monday – Friday, 9:00a.m. – 5:00p.m.); and
- **Office of Community Development Webpage:** All documents included in the Information Repository will be available digitally from the OCD's webpage (<https://www.chicopeema.gov/page.php?id=74>). Additionally, all the OCD will post all public notices and other meeting advertisements on the webpage and associate these events with the City's event calendar.

Should a language barrier be identified, the City will make every effort to procure appropriate interpreters. The City is also prepared to accommodate those with special needs such as the blind and the deaf.

## Attachments

- I. Uniroyal Site plan with buildings
- II. Subject Uniroyal parcels (Assessor's Maps)

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