



**APPENDIX A:**

**EXISTING**

**CONDITIONS REPORT**

### **Introduction**

The Existing Conditions Report is an inventory and review of the current conditions and elements in the West End of downtown Chicopee. It has been prepared to inform future analyses and recommendations that will be part of the subsequent Brownfields Area-Wide Redevelopment Plan for the West End neighborhood.

This report was produced by a multidisciplinary consultant team that includes The Cecil Group Inc., a planning and urban design firm with expertise in urban revitalization; FXM Associates, a consulting firm specializing in economic development; Tighe & Bond, an environmental engineering firm with expertise in hazardous waste issues; John Williamson, a commercial real estate agent; and Language Link Consortium, a communication company that specializes in translation services. The Project Team conducted an in-depth analysis of existing conditions through site visits, consultation with City staff and project stakeholders, reviews of previous reports, and an examination of online and City of Chicopee resources. The analysis includes evaluations of land use, buildings, historic areas, transportation systems, parking allocation, natural resources, zoning and infrastructure conditions in the West End.

The Project Team also examined the existing conditions, opportunities and reuse potential for 13 target Brownfields or underutilized properties, which are listed below. The potential redevelopment of these sites is expected to serve as a catalyst for the revitalization of the West End neighborhood.

- Cabotville Mill Complex, 165 Front Street
- Center Street Parking Lot, Center Street
- Chicopee Water Department, 27 Tremont Street
- City Property (Former Hampden Steam Plant), lower Depot Street
- Collegian Court, 85 Park Street
- Former Delta Park, lower Depot Street
- Former Freemason's Lodge, 81 Center Street
- Former Lyman Company, 60 Depot Street
- Former Mathis Oldsmobile, 67 Exchange Street
- Former Mobile Service Station, 229 Center Street
- Former Racing Oil, 181 Center Street
- Former Valley Opportunity Council (VOC) building, 152 Center Street
- Riverfront Property, Exchange Street

### **Community Context and Setting**

This Brownfields Study focuses on the West End of downtown Chicopee, Massachusetts. The study area is an urban neighborhood located in Chicopee Center in the southwestern corner the city as shown in Figures 1 and 2. Roughly 190 acres in size,

the neighborhood comprises approximately 1 percent of the city's land area. The study area is bordered by the Connecticut River to the west, the Chicopee River to the north, Chicopee Street to the northeast and Center Street to the south/southwest. It is bisected by Interstate 391, which connects the area to the broader region.

Geographically, the neighborhood lies in close proximity to Chicopee's neighbors to the west and south, West Springfield and Springfield, respectively. It is located in the Pioneer Valley in Western, Massachusetts and is among the more urban areas in the region.

Several important Chicopee institutions are located in the study area, including a Chicopee Fire Department station on Cabot Street, a US Post Office on Center Street and Cabotville Industrial Park. There are also significant public spaces and natural resources in the neighborhood. For example, Lucy Wisniewski Park sits in the heart of the study area and is a popular destination for residents of all ages. Acres of riverfront property – and associated wetlands – line the western portion of the neighborhood. There are also two historic districts in the neighborhood: Dwight Manufacturing Company Housing District and Cabotville Common Historic District.

The study area has a mix of commercial, residential and industrial properties. There are roughly 310 parcels: 53 percent residential, 12 percent commercial, 3 percent industrial, 10 percent mixed use, and 8 percent tax-exempt. Approximately 8 percent of the parcels are vacant, 6 percent are parking lots, and many more are underutilized.

Figure 1

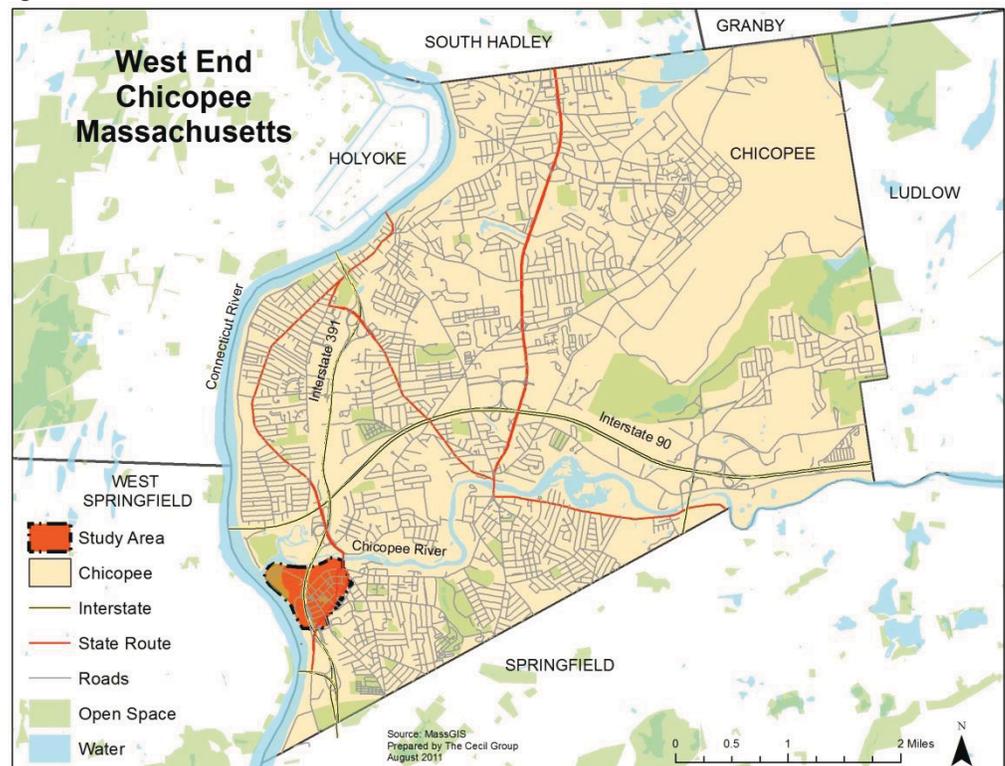
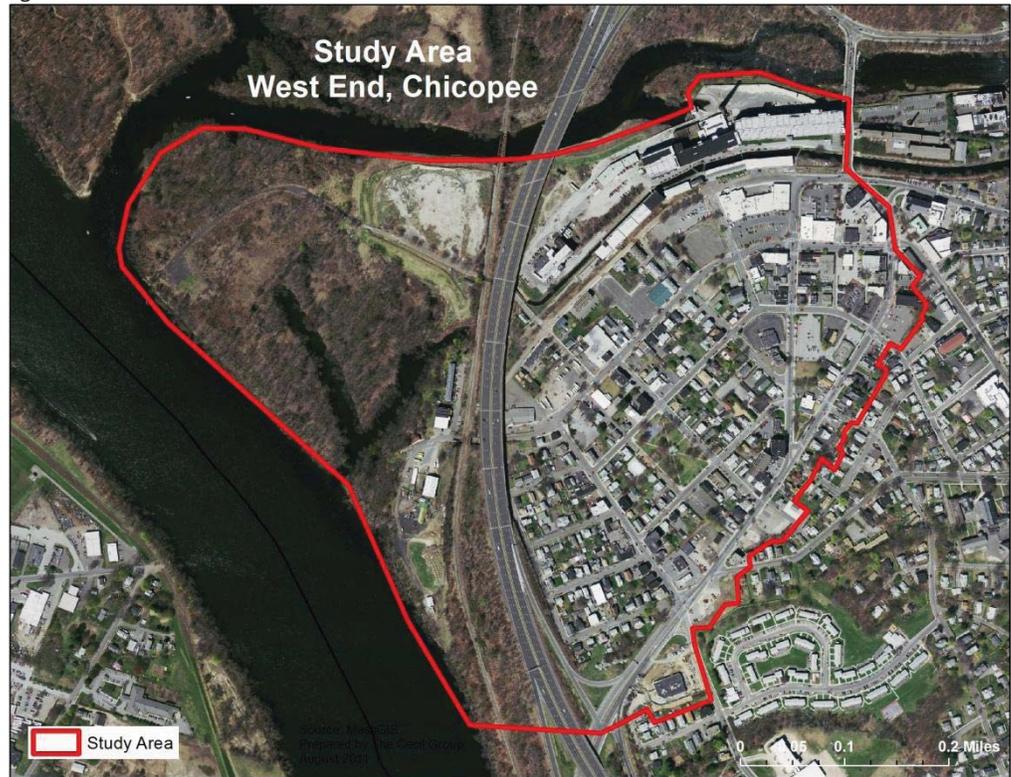


Figure 2



Encompassed by Census Tract 8109.01 Block Group 1, the neighborhood is home to an estimated 1,351 people, which is roughly 2 percent of Chicopee’s population, according to an analysis of 2010 Census data. Residents of the study area are generally younger than the citywide population. For example, the median age in the neighborhood is 34.3, which is six years younger than Chicopee’s median age, according to the 2010 Census. In addition, seniors, those 65 or older, make up only 11.3 percent of the study area’s population, compared to 16 percent citywide.

Poverty and housing affordability are problems in the neighborhood. The area’s poverty rate is roughly 27 percent, which is nearly double the city’s overall rate, based on the 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS). More than half of the renters in the study area are considered rent burdened, as they pay more than 30 percent of their income toward rent. Only 55 percent of the neighborhood’s work-age population is employed, and incomes are dramatically lower than those citywide. Specifically, median household income in the area is roughly \$26,715, based on the 2005-2009 ACS. That is about \$16,000 less than that of the city overall.

The disparity in incomes in comparison to the city could be due in part to the large number of single-person households in the study area. Specifically, 42 percent of the neighborhood’s housing units are occupied by one person. That is 8 percent more than homes citywide, according to the 2010 Census. Of the families that do live in the neighborhood, nearly a third consist of single mothers and their children.

The neighborhood itself has 997 housing units, nearly 11 percent of which are vacant, according to the 2010 Census. That is almost double the city's vacancy rate. This problem, combined with the underutilization of many other properties, is a symptom of the overall decline of the West End since the mid to late 1950s. As noted in the 2009 *Chicopee Gateway Plus Downtown Revitalization Plan*, the downtown used to be a thriving employment center, but in the last half century, it has suffered from many significant changes. These changes include the loss of manufacturing businesses, the closing of the West Springfield Bridge, and the development of the Holyoke Mall north of Downtown Chicopee. The study area has also not seen much investment in the form of new development in the last decade. Nearly 90 percent of the housing units were built before 1940.

Today, the vast majority of housing units in the study area – 80 percent – are occupied by renters, according to the 2010 Census. That means only 20 percent of the neighborhood's homes are occupied by homeowners. This owner-occupancy rate is vastly lower than the citywide rate of 59 percent. The lack of homeownership in the West End has likely contributed to instability and disinvestment in the neighborhood. Just outside the study area are two single room occupancy (SRO) facilities, including the 21-unit Chicopee Lodging House on Front Street and the 20-unit Kendall on Springfield Street. There is also a 150-unit public housing project operated by the Chicopee Housing Authority just south of the study area.

### **Strategic Brownfields and Other Targeted Sites**

The Brownfields and other sites targeted in this study are shown in Figure 3. See Appendix E for descriptions and photos of each target property. Several of the properties have – or used to have – underground storage tanks as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 3

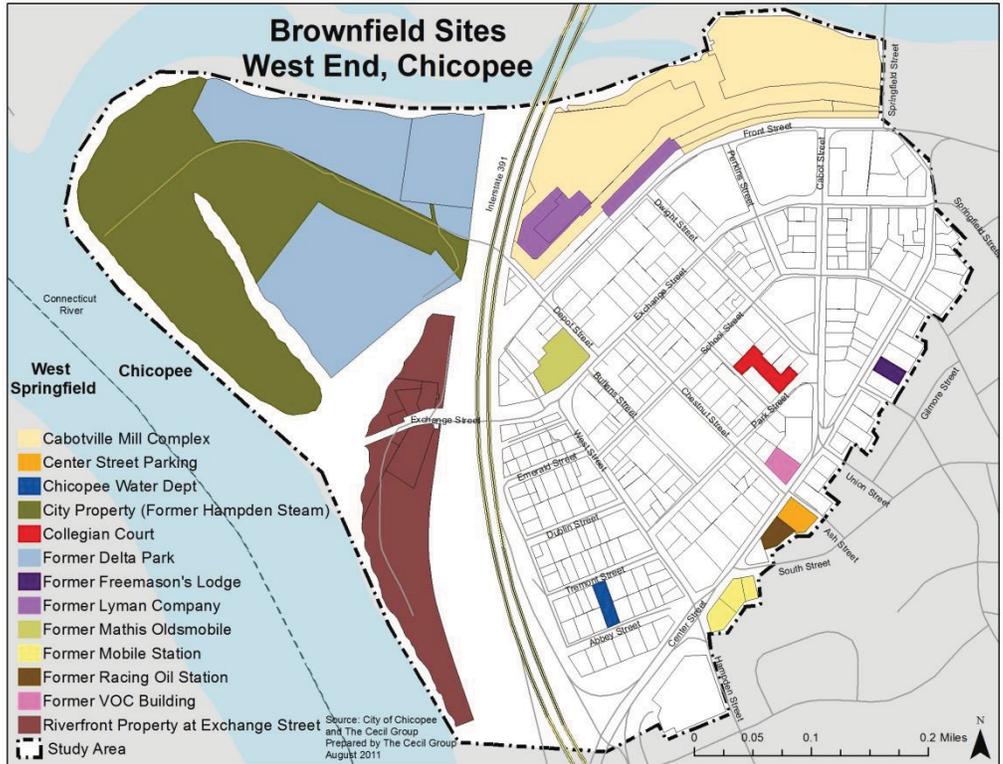


Figure 4

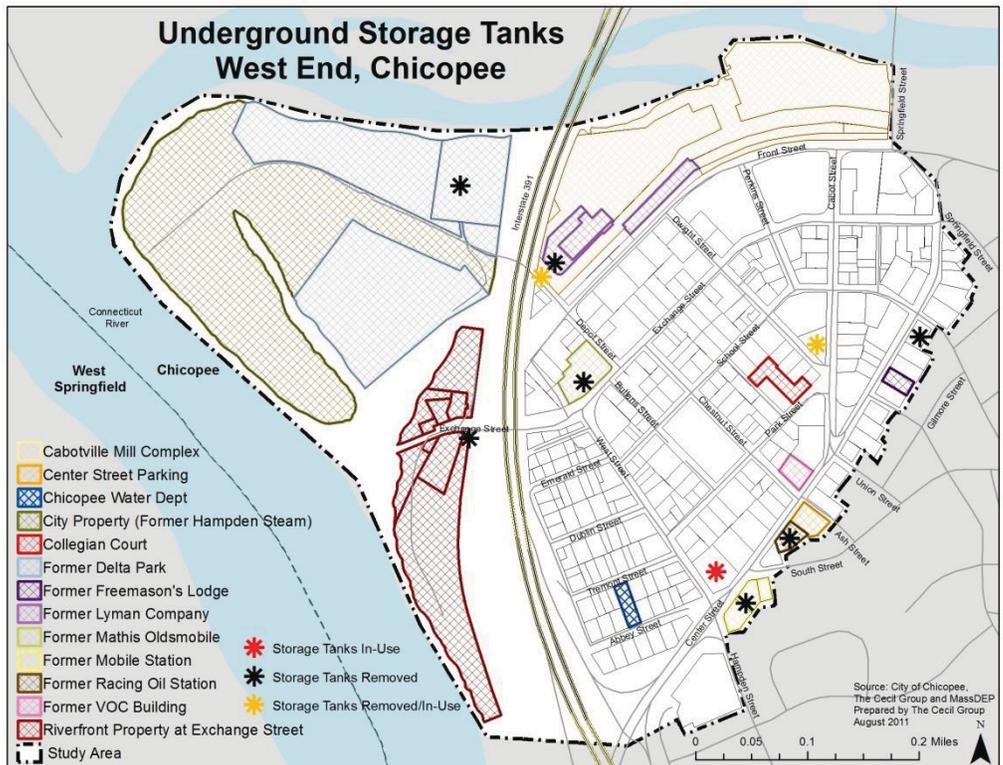




Table 1

Land Use	Estimated Acres	Percent
Residential	22.4	19%
Commercial	19.3	16%
Industrial	16.5	14%
Mixed Use	5.1	4%
Tax Exempt	28.9	24%
Vacant	20.7	17%
Parking	5.6	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>118.5</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 6



The commercial properties in the neighborhood are largely clustered in the northeast section and along Center Street, east of West Street. Figure 7 shows commercial properties along Center Street. The properties range from single-use buildings such as Chicopee Savings Bank on Center Street to multi-storied commercial buildings with several different uses. A large shopping plaza – including Family Dollar, Liberty Tax,

Rent-A-Center and other stores – is located on Exchange Street between Cabot and Perkins streets. This property includes an expansive parking lot.

The parking lot is one of many in the study area. In fact, nearly 6 acres in the neighborhood are parking lots – these will be discussed later – and another 21 acres are vacant properties. The majority of the 25 vacant properties in the study area are developable, and many are adjacent to commercial properties. In addition to these, there are many underutilized sites in the neighborhood. Thirteen of these underutilized and Brownfields sites are the focus of this study, as mentioned earlier.

Despite these issues, there are no economic development zones in the neighborhood. The entire City of Chicopee, however, has been identified as an Economically Distressed Area (EDA) by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP); this is for the purposes of receiving financial assistance from the Brownfields Redevelopment Fund for site assessment and cleanup under the Brownfields Act. The City has also been designated as an Economic Target Area (ETA) by the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council, which has benefits.

The study area is bordered by the Connecticut River to the west and the Chicopee River to the north. There is a residential neighborhood to the south around Union and Gilmore streets. As mentioned earlier, the Chicopee Housing Authority operates a 150-unit public housing project just south of the study area on Hampden Street. The commercial section of the study area extends to the east along Front Street.

Figure 7



### Average Assessed Values

Table 2 provides a breakdown of average assessed values per square foot for multifamily, commercial and industrial properties as well as the study sites. Of the three property types, commercial properties – their land, buildings and rentable space – have the highest assessed values per square foot. The Chicopee Water Department property ranks the highest of the study sites.

Table 2

<b>Average Assessed Value Per Square Foot</b>			
<b>Use</b>	<b>Land</b>	<b>Building</b>	<b>Rentable Space**</b>
<b>Multifamily</b> (4+ units)	8.09	29.50*	26.94*
<b>Commercial</b>	8.19	43.95*	55.05
<b>Industrial</b> (excluding Cabotville Mill Complex)	6.98	37.94*	44.10
<b>Study Sites</b>			
Cabotville Mill Complex	0.30	7.59	7.60
Chicopee Water Department	6.95	36.92	36.92
Collegian Court	4.13	22.31	28.91
Former Freemason’s Lodge	8.66	8.66	8.66
Former Lyman Company	2.26	6.46	7.75
Former VOC Building	6.58	11.48	14.83
Riverfront Property	1.49	16.48	23.08

\*These are based on a sample of properties.

\*\*For Commercial and Industrial properties, this equals the assessed value of buildings divided by the square feet of rentable space.

### **Parks, Trails and Open Spaces**

Parks, open space and trails contribute to a neighborhood’s livability and appeal by facilitating active and passive recreational uses. There are some significant parks and open spaces in the study area, though they are limited in number. Figure 8 shows the three prominent open space parcels in the neighborhood: Lucy Wisniowski Park, Bullens Park and the former Hampden Steam Plant property along the Connecticut River. All of the properties are owned by the City of Chicopee, and the two parks are managed by the City Parks and Recreation Department.

The properties are described in more detail below. Much of the following information is from the City’s 5 Year Open Space and Recreation Plan (2005-2010), which has been extended until 2012. Other information is from MassGIS.

### Lucy Wisniowski Park (Figure 9)

- Location: Bounded by School, Chestnut and Park streets
- Owner: City of Chicopee
- Size: 1.7 acres
- Zoning: Residence A
- Public Access: Yes
- Facilities: Basketball court, playground equipment, wading pool, spray apparatus, walk ways, benches, drinking fountain
- Last Renovated: 1997
- Level of Protection: Limited
- Comments: This is the city's first park. All accommodations have been made accessible.

### Bullens Park

- Location: Center and Cabot streets
- Owner: City of Chicopee
- Size: 0.1 acres
- Zoning: Business A
- Public Access: Yes
- Facilities: Park benches, open space
- Last Renovated: 2004
- Level of Protection: Perpetuity
- Comments: Handicapped parking available

### Former Hampden Steam Plant Property

- Location: Confluence of the Chicopee and Connecticut rivers
- Owner: City of Chicopee
- Size: 22 acres
- Zoning: Residence B
- Public Access: Yes
- Facilities: None
- Last Renovated: NA
- Level of Protection: Perpetuity
- Comments: The City acquired the property in 1985 due to failure to pay back taxes. The City and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection signed an agreement to demolish the plant and dedicate the site as permanent open space and conservation land. This is one of the targeted sites in this study.

Figure 8

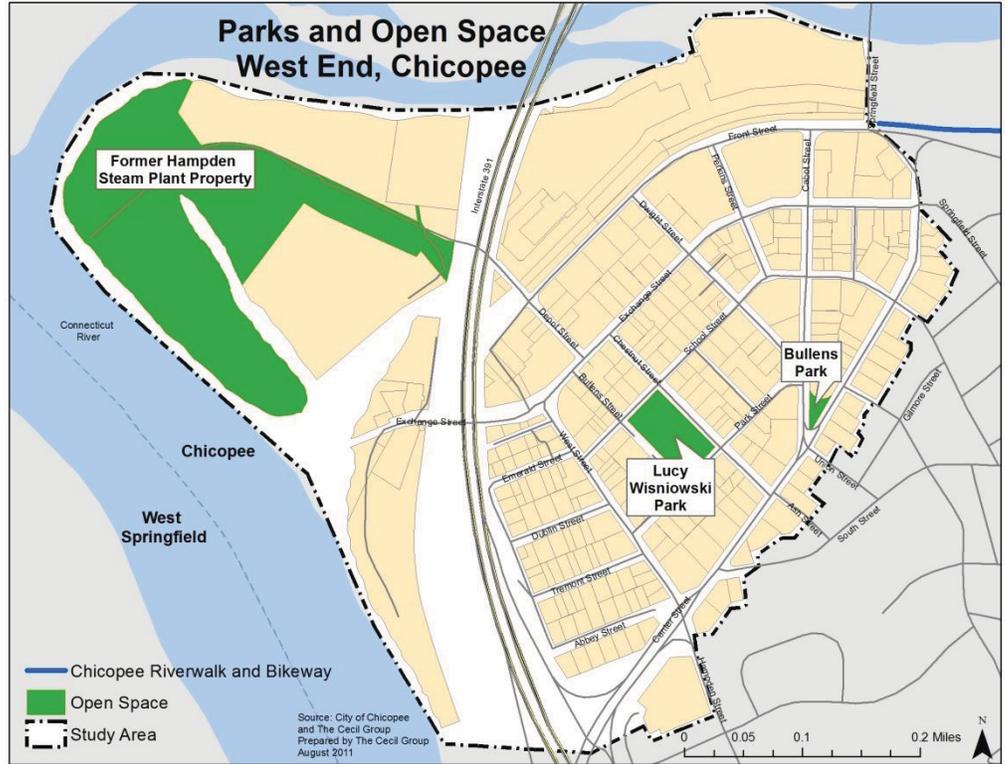


Figure 9

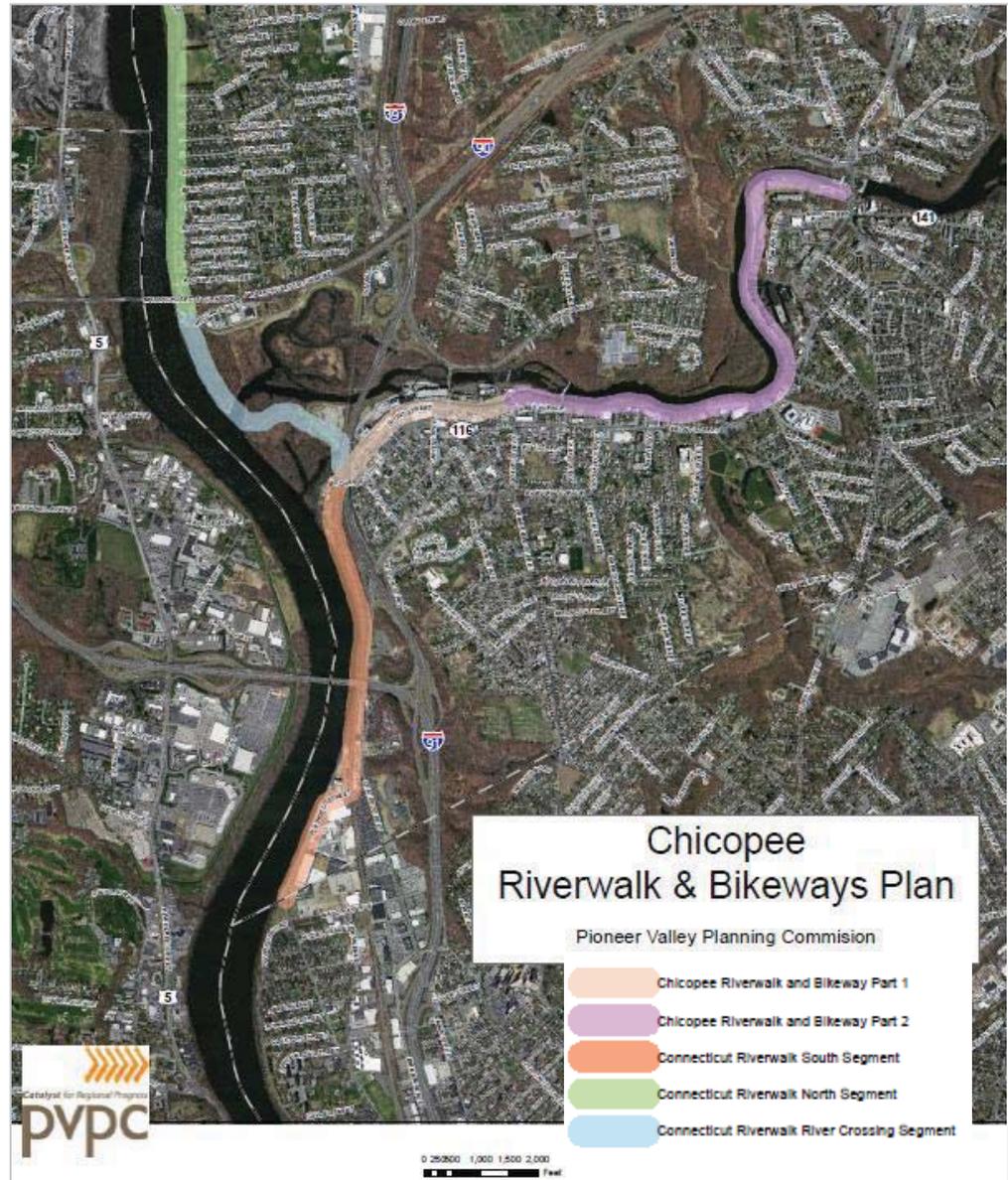


According to the City's *Open Space and Recreation Plan*, the City has largely focused its open space planning on maintaining parks and recreational areas. It is also looking to create "new open space from the remnants of its old manufacturing infrastructure" and take advantage of "railroad corridors (active and abandoned), utility easements, and river and stream basins to link places in environmentally friendly ways for people and urban wildlife," according to the plan.

The City has recently taken advantage of a former railroad right-of-way along the Chicopee River, just outside the study area. Specifically, the City developed a walking and bike path along Front Street on land controlled by the Conservation Commission. The first phase of the path, known as the Chicopee Riverwalk and Bikeway, opened in May 2010. It runs roughly 1,100 feet along the canal from Davitt Memorial Bridge to Grape Street. The next phase of the project is expected to extend the path from Grape Street to the former Uniroyal property.

There has been discussion about developing other paths in Chicopee in the future. For example, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's (PVPC) Chicopee Riverwalk and Bikeways Plan calls for a connection between the Connecticut Riverwalk and the Chicopee Riverwalk and Bikeway, as shown in Figure 10. It would include an on-road link with "share the road" signage along Front Street, according to the PVPC. The long-term plan is for the riverwalk to cross over the Chicopee River at the Former Hampden Steam Plant site using a new bridge.

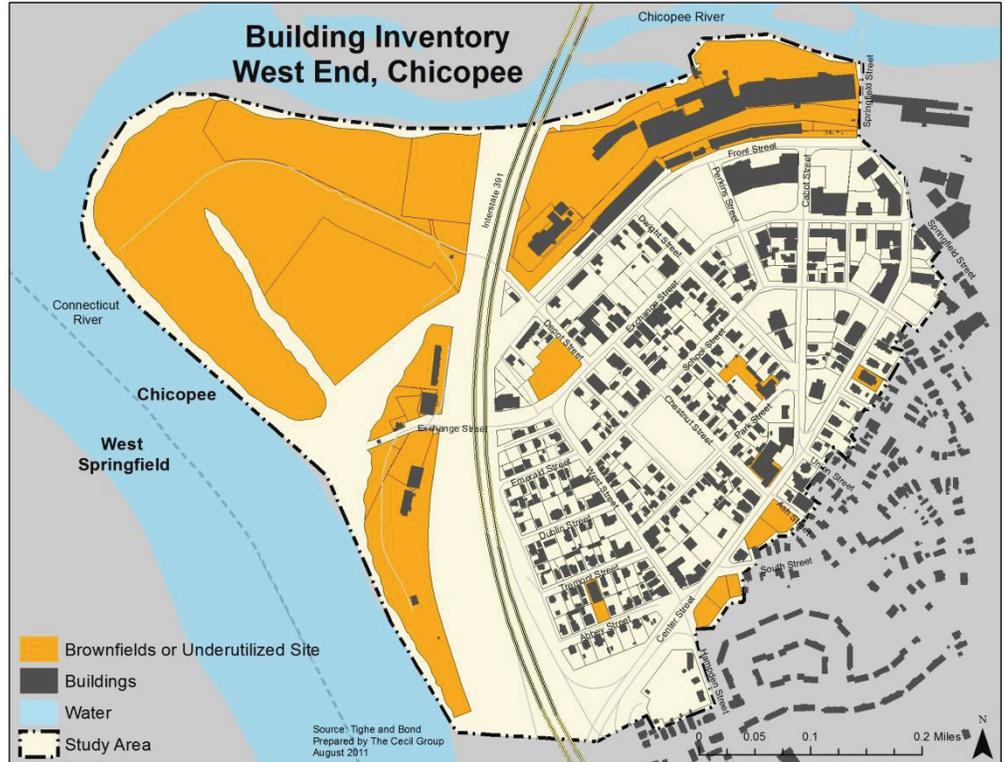
Figure 10



### Building Inventory

There are roughly 1,100 buildings within the study area. These buildings, shown in Figure 11, range from single-family homes to industrial complexes. Provided below is a description of key buildings on the sites targeted in this study, either Brownfields or underutilized properties. The information is from Chicopee’s Assessor’s office.

Figure 11



Cabotville Mill Complex

- Number of Buildings: 5
- Structure Type: Manufacturing/Warehouse (all)
- Size: 752,998 SF
- Year Built: 1910
- Building(s) Value: \$5.7 million (total)
- Condition: C-

Center Street Parking Lot

- Number of Buildings: None

Chicopee Water Department

- Number of Buildings: 1
- Structure Type: NA (Municipal)
- Size: 6,500 SF
- Year Built: NA
- Building Value: \$240,000
- Condition: NA

City Property (Former Hampden Steam Plant)

- Number of Buildings: None

Collegian Court

- Number of Buildings: 1
- Structure Type: Restaurant
- Size: 8,735 SF (including patio)
- Year Built: 1920
- Building Value: \$194,900
- Condition: C

Former Delta Park

- Number of Buildings: None

Former Freemason's Lodge

- Number of Buildings: 1
- Structure Type: Religious
- Size: 3,578 SF
- Year Built: 1900
- Building Value: \$31,000
- Condition: C-

Former Lyman Company

- Number of Buildings: 2
  - Structure Type: Manufacturing/Office
  - Size: 80,835 SF (including garage)
  - Year Built: 1890
  - Building(s) Value: \$773,700
  - Condition: C
- Structure Type: Warehouse/Support
- Size: 111,188 SF (including dock)
- Year Built: 1925
- Building(s) Value: \$466,500
- Condition: C

Former Mathis Oldsmobile

- Number of Buildings: None

Former Mobile Service Station

- Number of Buildings: None

### Former Racing Oil Service Station

- Number of Buildings: None

### Former VOC Building

- Number of Buildings: 1
- Structure Type: Retail – Single Occupancy
- Size: 20,071 SF
- Year Built: 1939
- Building Value: \$230,400
- Condition: C-

### Riverfront Property

- Number of Buildings: 5
  - Structure Type: Warehouse, Light Manufacturing, Office
  - Size: 21,373 SF (including dock)
  - Year Built: 1915
  - Building Value: \$228,600
  - Condition: C-
- Structure Type: Dwelling
- Size: 1,850 SF (including deck and enclosed porch)
- Year Built: 1855
- Building Value: \$56,500
- Condition: D
- Structure Type: Apartment
- Size: 16,352 SF (including decks)
- Year Built: 1915
- Building Value: \$401,600
- Condition: C-
- Structure Type: Maintenance Garage
- Size: 6,000 SF
- Year Built: 1959
- Building Value: \$121,400
- Condition: C
- Structure Type: Office/Warehouse
- Size: 5,326 SF (including sheds)
- Year Built: 1950
- Building Value: \$30,900
- Condition: C-

## Historic Areas

The study area has a rich history reflected by numerous significant buildings and areas. These historic resources not only provide a valuable reminder of the neighborhood's past but also help establish the area's character and identity. The former Dwight Mills, for example, is now Cabotville Industrial Park, which houses roughly 60 businesses and 600 employees.

There are two historic districts in the neighborhood, as mentioned earlier. The Dwight Manufacturing Company and Cabotville Common historic districts are both listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Shown in Figure 12, these districts are described below.

### Dwight Manufacturing Company Housing District

- Established in 1977
- Roughly covers the area bounded by Front, Depot, Dwight, Exchange and Chestnut streets
- Includes former mill housing that has been rehabilitated

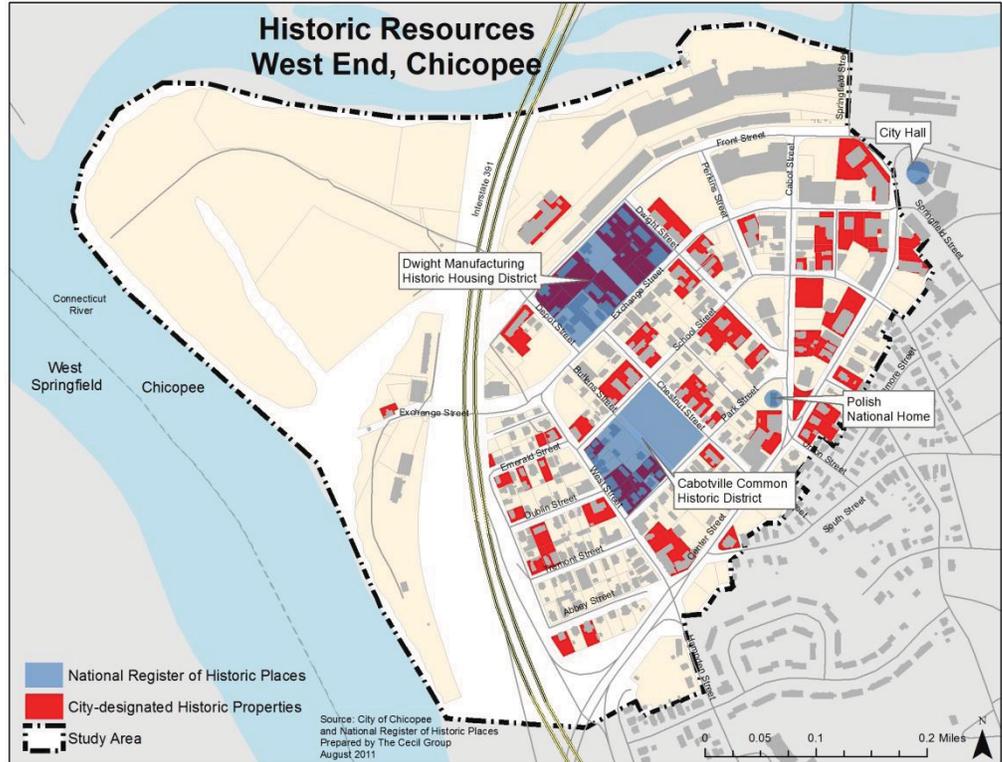
### Cabotville Common Historic District

- Established in 1999
- Bounded by School, Chestnut, Park and West streets.
- Mostly residential with mill housing and Victorian homes around Lucy Wisniowski Park

There is one additional property in the study area that is on the National Register of Historic Places: Polish National Home. This home at 136-144 Cabot Street was built in 1912 and added to the Register in 1980. Also, just outside the study area is City Hall, which was added to the National Register in 1974. Located on Market Square, the two-story City Hall was built in 1871 on land purchased from the Ames Manufacturing Company. The building has a 147-foot tower that was patterned after the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, Italy, according to the City's of Chicopee's website.

In addition to historic buildings and districts on the National Register, there are numerous properties in the study area listed on the Massachusetts Historical Commission's (MHC) Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets. The inventory, searchable on <http://mhc-macris.net/>, lists more than 450 buildings or properties in Chicopee Center; roughly 90 are in the study area. These include the Starzyk Building at 10 Center Street, the Leavitt Building at 270 Exchange Street and the Dwight Manufacturing Company buildings on Front Street. These and other buildings on the inventory have been designated by the City of Chicopee as being "historic." According to the inventory, there are no properties of archeological significance in Chicopee Center.

Figure 12



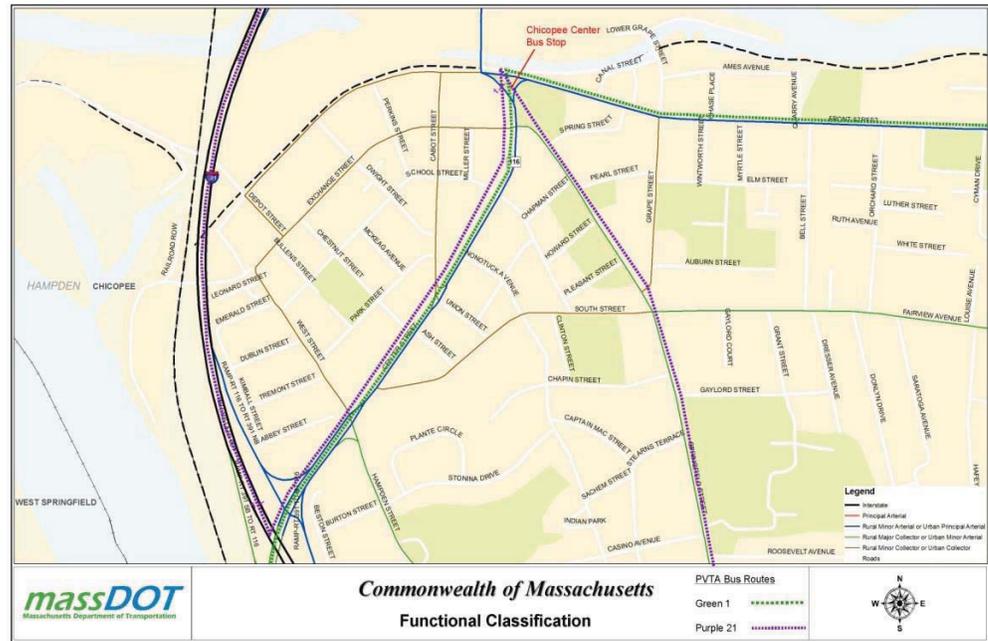
## Transportation Systems

### Roads

Roadways in the study area include Interstate 391 (I-391), a Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) roadway that runs from Holyoke through Chicopee to Interstate 91, which is the major regional north/south road. Exit 2 from I-391 connects to Center Street (Route 116), which is a local Urban Principal Arterial road that runs along the western boundary of the study area. (MassDOT controls Route 116 north of the Study Area.) Front Street, Cabot Street, Depot Street, Exchange Street and West Street are local Urban Collector Roads in the study area. The remaining roads in the Study Area are considered local roads, primarily serving adjacent development. (The roads are shown in Figure 13.) The current traffic flow into Chicopee from the south on Route 116 is limited to one-way traffic flow. Cars are prohibited from making left-hand turns onto Front Street and are directed to go through the one-way loop through the downtown area.

In general, the one-way road system in the study area efficiently handles the current traffic load. However, roadways in the study area were identified by PVPC as the second most congested corridor within the Pioneer Valley in the “Congestion Management Process for the Pioneer Valley” prepared by PVPC in July 2010. This corridor is described as “Beginning at the intersection of Chicopee Street (Route 116) and Florence Street travel southbound along Route 116 over bridge onto eastbound direction of Front Street via Cabot Street, Exchange Street and Center Street one-way trip movements.

Figure 13



End at the intersection of East Main Street and Maple Court by traveling northbound onto Groove (sic) Street eastbound onto Main Street which becomes East Main Street.” Communication with Gary Roux of PVPC indicates that congestion only occurs at one location along this route; however, the congestion causes such a delay at this one point that it has a negative impact on the entire corridor. The delay occurs at the intersection of East Main Street and Broadway Street, which is located outside of the study area. The City of Chicopee has a project on the Transportation Improvement Plan that seeks to address this problem by changing the traffic signal timing along Route 33 to the intersection east of Broadway Street.

Tighe & Bond collected traffic data along the Cabotville driveways in 2006. Based on the data collected from automatic traffic counters from July 19 to July 23, the existing peak traffic hours on the adjacent street network varies from day to day. These peaks generally occur in the late morning (between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.) and mid-afternoon (between 2:30 and 4:30 p.m.).

Road access is restricted to the former Delta Park and the former Hampden Steam Plant properties by the railroad bridge that crosses Depot Street under I-391. This bridge has a low clearance, which limits large truck traffic. Furthermore, the bridge crossing is narrow, restricting Depot Street to one-lane under the bridge.

**Bus**

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) provides bus service in Chicopee. Bus stops in the plan area are located at the CVS Plaza (near Cabotville Mill), at West and Center streets, and just outside the West End near Chicopee City Hall.

The Green 1 (G01) line runs from Chicopee City Hall North to Chicopee Big Y Marketplace and south and east through downtown to Sumner-Allen Street in Springfield. The G01 line runs down Center Street and Front Street in the study area. The ridership on the G01 line for 2010 was 822,221 riders, which averages to approximately 70,000 riders per month.

The Purple 21 (P21) line runs from Holyoke City Hall through Chicopee to downtown Springfield. The P21 line traverses Center Street and Springfield Street near the study area. The ridership on the P21 line for 2010 was 355,210 riders, which averages to approximately 30,000 riders per month. (The two bus lines in the study area are shown in Figure 13.)

### Rail

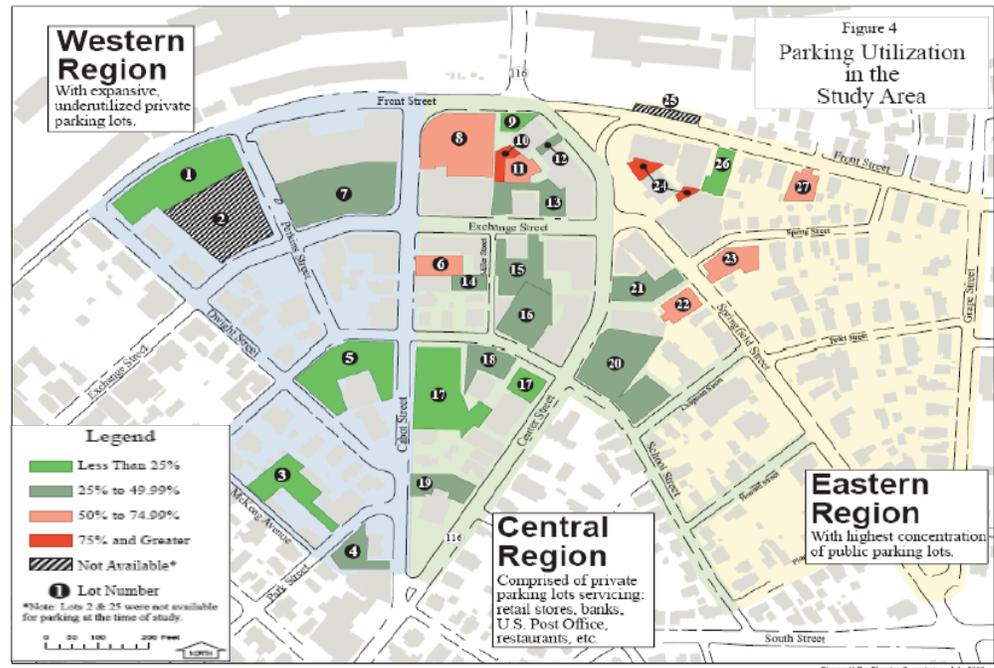
There is no commuter rail service in Chicopee. However, the Connecticut River Rail Improvement Project, which recently received federal funds, extends adjacent to I-391 in the study area. The improvement project is anticipated to be developed in phases with Phase 1 returning Amtrak service to the Connecticut River with one to two round trips per day between St. Albans, VT and New Haven, CT. Stops are proposed in Springfield, Holyoke, Northampton and Greenfield. While a potential station in Chicopee received an overall “Good” evaluation, no stops are proposed in Chicopee at this time as a feasibility study completed for the rail project determined that “...a station location [3640 Main Street, Chicopee] this close to Springfield would not be considered optimal from an operation perspective and would need to have a very high potential ridership demand in order to be justified.” In addition, there did not appear to be the opportunity for a station track at this location; therefore, level boarding (which refers to trains having interiors that are level with station platforms, so that a passenger does not have to climb steps to board the train) was a potential issue.

The Chicopee study area is located within five miles of both the Holyoke and Springfield rail stations. Daily ridership is projected to reach approximately 515 in the near term and 535 by 2030, an increase of approximately 25% over the existing service. Due to Chicopee’s close proximity to two train stations, it can safely be assumed that ridership from Chicopee will increase. Track upgrades and Amtrak service are expected to be completed in 2013.

### **Parking**

It is necessary to consider the current parking supply in downtown Chicopee when evaluating future uses of properties because redevelopment or land use changes could trigger a need for additional or reconfigured parking. According to a 2009 *Chicopee Center Parking Study*, there are 1,358 parking spaces in Chicopee Center: 679 public spaces, 598 private spaces and 81 pay-and-park spaces. That study, conducted by PVPC, found that the current parking supply sufficiently met current parking demand. It further revealed that many of the parking areas were underutilized; some did not reach a 50 percent utilization rate during a typical day. Figure 14 from the 2009 study shows utilization rates for Chicopee Center.

Figure 14



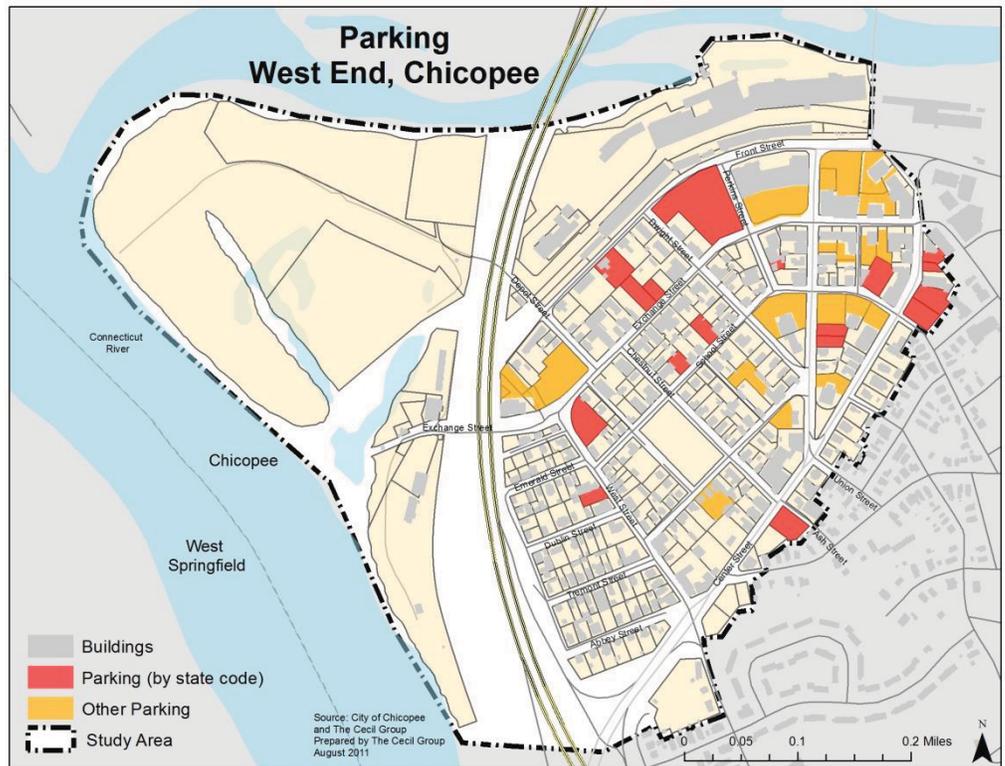
The study area for this Brownfields study consists of roughly 5.6 acres of parking. That figure is based on the state land use codes assigned to properties in the Chicopee Assessor’s database. It is conservative because it does not include municipal properties that are used as parking lots. (They are coded as tax-exempt properties.) Also excluded are private properties that contain parking with other uses such as banks or shops. (Figure 15 provides an example.) If these areas are added to the state-coded parking properties, the total amount of parking in the study area jumps to nearly 13 acres. That is enough space to fit roughly 1,680 parking spaces.

Figure 16 shows the major parking lots in the study area. Parking lots identified by the 2009 study have been included in this new map where the two study areas overlap. As this map reveals, parking lots are largely concentrated in the northeast section of the neighborhood where many businesses are located. For example, the shopping plaza on Exchange Street has a parking lot with more than 100 spaces, and the Maximum Capacity Bar and Grille on School Street has a parking lot with more than 70 spaces. Given the proximity of some of these parking lots to one another, there are potential opportunities for shared parking. This is particularly the case where businesses need parking at different times of the day. (Chicopee’s Zoning Ordinance allows for joint or shared parking under certain circumstances, which will be discussed later.) Parking lots could then be freed up for reuse or redevelopment.

Figure 15



Figure 16



The 2009 PVPC parking study made several recommendations for improving parking. They include the following.

- Strategies for Future Development: Increase enforcement of time limits on short-term on-street parking, encourage business employees to park in lots as opposed to on-street spaces, consider opportunities to expand the parking supply to meet future demand, and consider negotiating agreements with owners of underutilized parking lots to allow for public parking.
- Public Awareness Campaign: Develop additional information on public parking, including a parking map that is available online.
- Time Restrictions: Consider issuing warnings or citations to vehicles that violate parking time limits and consider installing parking meters if demand for parking increases.
- Signs: Consider installing more parking signs.

For this Brownfields Study, several parking lots in the downtown area have been identified as Brownfields or potential development sites. For example, the former VOC building's parking lot at the corner of Center and Ash streets has been targeted. The lot does not appear to be frequently used and could be redeveloped without negatively impacting the neighborhood's parking supply, depending on the needs of the eventual reuse of the former VOC building. (The utilization of the lot was not examined as part of the 2009 parking study.) The Collegian Court property on Park Street has also been identified as a potential development site, due in part to its parking layout that potentially provides two access points. Its utilization is less than 25 percent, according to the 2009 study. These and other underutilized sites were described earlier in more detail.

### **Natural Resources and Environmental Features**

The study area boasts many natural resources, particularly water resources. From rivers to wetlands, these resources help shape the landscape of the neighborhood and serve important environmental and ecological purposes. The major natural and environmental resources in the study area are described below.

#### Rivers

The study area is located along two rivers: the Connecticut and Chicopee rivers. The Connecticut River, which flows for more than 400 miles across four states, borders the neighborhood to the west. Bordering the neighborhood to the north is the Chicopee River, an 18-mile long tributary of the Connecticut River.

These two rivers offer the neighborhood scenic views as well as limited recreational opportunities such as boating and fishing. (Specific information regarding recreation opportunities on the Connecticut River is provided on the following page.) Davitt Memorial Bridge at the east end of the neighborhood, for example, provides views of the Chicopee River, though there is no formal public access to the river, according to the City's *Open Space and Recreation Plan*. Active railroad tracks, flood control dikes and

other barriers separate the Connecticut River from most of the developed sections of the study area. There is, however, river access from undeveloped land south of the Chicopee River.

Various types of water sport recreation occur on the Connecticut River south of the Holyoke Dam in Holyoke to the Enfield Dam in Enfield, CT. This 2.5 mile reach of the river exemplifies the industrial heritage of the Connecticut River, and also the river’s resilience. The river is navigable by kayaks, canoes, small powerboats and sailboats along this remarkably scenic stretch of flat water. Table 3 includes a list of the designated river access sites along this reach of the Connecticut River.

Table 3

<b>Designated Connecticut River Recreational Access Sites Below the Holyoke Dam to the Connecticut Border</b>	
<b>Recreational Access Site</b>	<b>Boat Type</b>
Berchulski Fisherman Access and State Ramp	Unimproved ramp for car-top and small motorboats
Chicopee Riverwalk and Bikeway	N/A – paved trail only; no river access
Jones Ferry River Access Center	Improved ramp for all boat types
Medina Street Boat Ramp	Improved ramp for all boat types
Bassett Marina	Improved ramp for all boat types
West Springfield Canoe Access	Unimproved ramp, car-top only
Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway	Unimproved steps, lightweight car-top boats only
Bondi’s Island Launch Ramp	Improved ramp for car-top and small motorboats
Pynchon Point	Unimproved ramp for car-top boats only
Agawam Riverwalk	N/A - paved trail only; no river access
Pioneer Valley Yacht Club	Improved ramp for car-top and small motorboats
Longmeadow Riverfront Park	Unimproved ramp for car-top boats only

In addition to these access sites, it is well known that people access the river for swimming, fishing and non-motorized boating at many other informal locations. One such place is the Davitt Bridge/Granby Road fishing access spot on the Chicopee River, due east of Route 116 on the north side of the river. Although this location is just outside of the West End neighborhood, it is in the downtown across from the successfully redeveloped Ames Privilege complex.

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission has been monitoring E. coli bacteria levels on the Connecticut River and some tributaries since 2008 to inform the public about water quality in the area and conditions unsafe for primary and/or secondary contact. Fortunately, bacteria levels are typically low enough during dry weather to make the

Connecticut and Chicopee Rivers in the West End neighborhood safe for swimming and boating. Bacteria levels are typically elevated for 24-72 hours after significant storm events due to CSO discharges and stormwater runoff. Bacteria data and more about this project can be found at <http://www.umass.edu/tei/mwwp/ctrivermonitoring.html>.

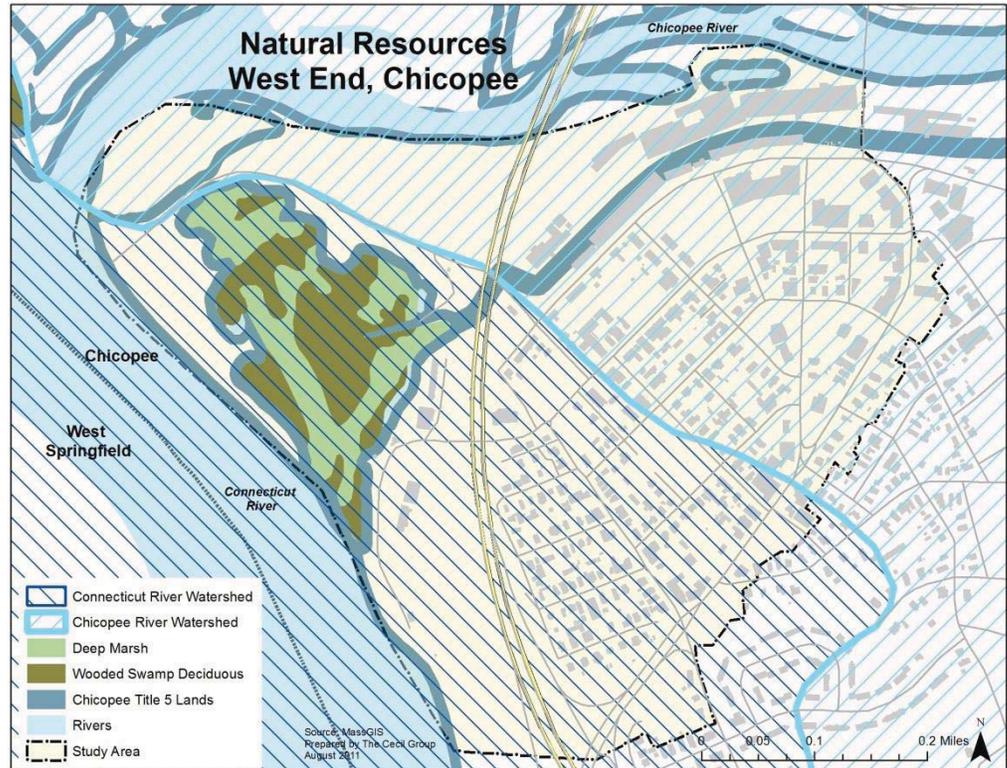
### Watershed

As shown in Figure 17, the study area is located within two watersheds: the Connecticut River and Chicopee River watersheds. The Connecticut River Watershed covers more than 11,260 square miles in New England, and the Chicopee River Watershed covers more than 720 miles in central Massachusetts. There are watershed councils that advocate for each watershed. The Chicopee Watershed Council, for example, has a water quality monitoring program and publishes a quarterly newsletter about the river basin and surrounding area.

### Wetlands

Wetlands in the study area are concentrated near the confluence of the Connecticut and Chicopee rivers. As shown in Figure 17, the former Hampden Steam Plant property is largely wetlands, specifically deep marsh and wooded swamps. The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act protects wetlands as does the City of Chicopee's local wetlands ordinance. That ordinance, Chapter 272 of the Chicopee City Code, prohibits building on or within 100 feet of a wetland resource area unless granted a permit by the Conservation Commission. Under the ordinance, removing, filling dredging or altering wetland areas are also restricted.

Figure 17



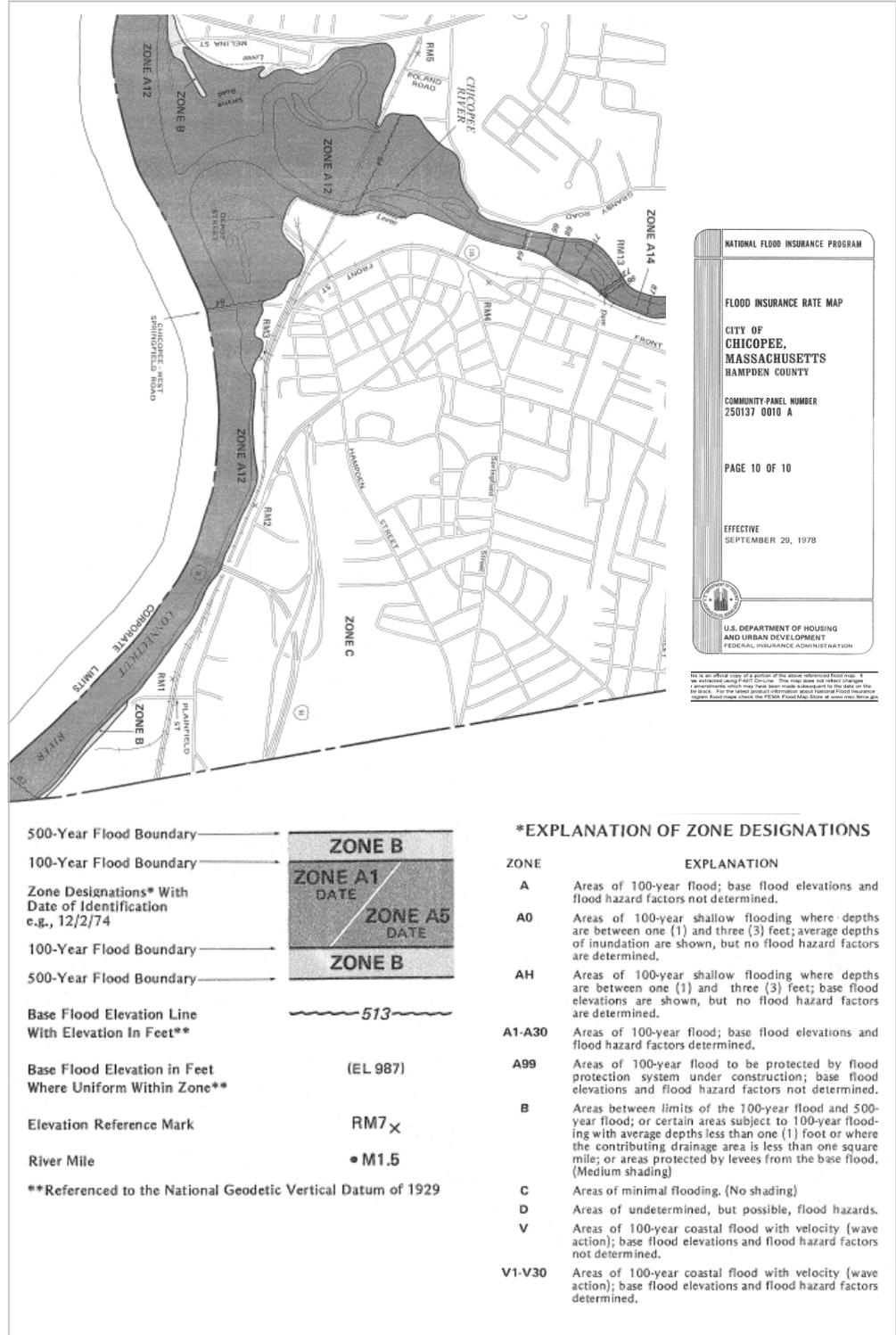
According to Chicopee’s Zoning Ordinance, wetland resource areas include the following:

- Any freshwater wetland, riverine wetland, marsh, wet meadow, bog or swamp
- Any bank or beach
- Any lake, river, pond or stream, whether intermittent or continuous, ephemeral, natural or man-made
- Any land under the aforesaid waters
- Any land subject to flooding by groundwater, surface water or storm flowage
- Isolated wetlands, including kettle holes
- Seasonal wetlands
- Upstream drainage that has the potential of altering a resource area

### Floodplains

The study area includes flood zones along the Chicopee and Connecticut Rivers, as shown in Figure 18. The Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) by the Federal Emergency Management Agency shows that the City Property (former Hampden Steam Plant) and the northwestern portion of the Riverfront Property are in Zone A12, which represents areas of 100-year flood. The flood protection dike that runs along part of the Chicopee

Figure 18



River protects the former Delta Park site as well as the former Lyman Company and Cabotville Mill complex. The dike has minimized major flooding in Chicopee, according to the City's *5 Year Open Space and Recreation Plan*.

### Soils

There are two primary soil associations in the study area, according to U.S. National Resource Conservation Service Web Soil Survey. They are the Urban land-Hadley-Winooski association and Urban land-Hinckley-Windsor association; their soil types are described below. Generally, the soils are well-drained and deep, and they could likely support on-site retention of stormwater.

- Hadley: This soil type is located in floodplains. It is well-drained, deep, sandy and frequently floods.
- Winooski: This soil type is also located in floodplains. It is moderately well-drained, contains silt and commonly floods.
- Hinckley and Windsor: These soil types are located in terraces. They are excessively-drained, deep, sandy and rarely flood.

## **Land Use Policies and Zoning Regulations**

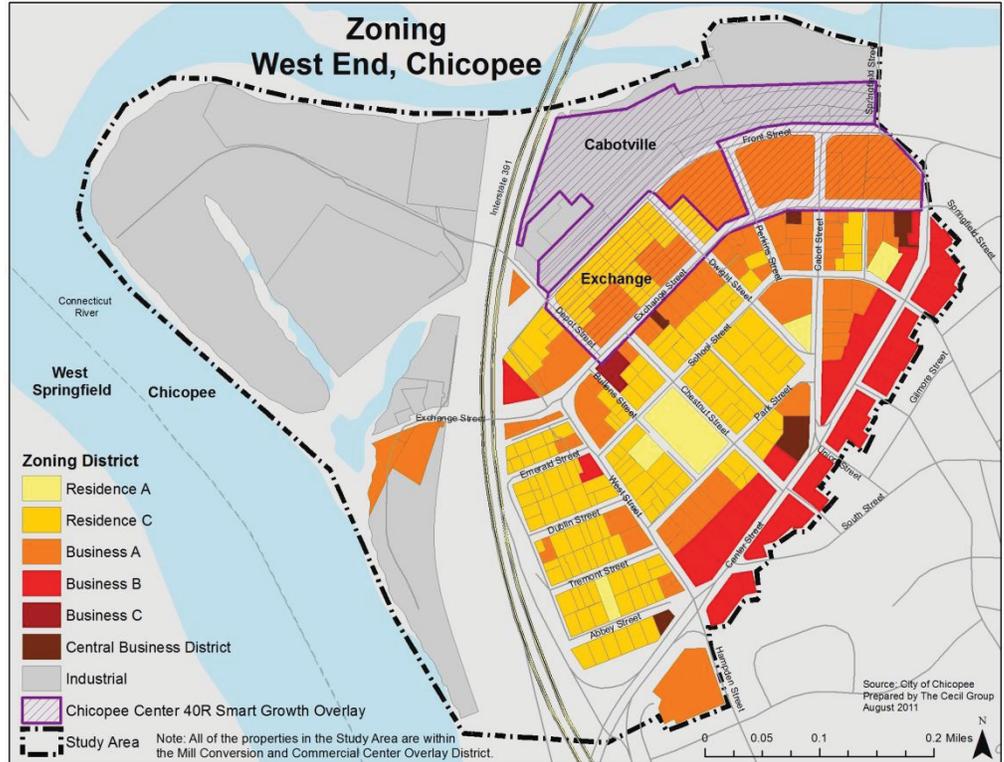
### Zoning

Land use policies and zoning regulations play an important role in guiding future development and growth within the community. There are seven zoning districts and two overlay districts in the study area, as shown in Figure 19. The zoning districts are described below.

*Residence A:* Only a few properties in the study area are in this district. They include Lucy Wisniowski Park, a fire station and the Chicopee Water Department property. The district allows single-family homes, churches, government services, private schools and colleges, farms, cemeteries and golf courses. Allowed by special permit (SP) by the City Council are numerous other uses such as charitable institutions, hospitals, clinics and animal kennels.

*Residence C:* This district covers a large swath of the study area, including the residential area west of West Street. A diversity of housing types – from single-family to multifamily – is allowed by right. Other uses are allowed by special permit, including membership clubs, charitable institutions and certain commercial uses that are secondary to multifamily dwellings. (The floor area of these commercial uses cannot exceed 30 percent of the total floor area of the multifamily use.) The Zoning Ordinance allows the City Council to waive dimensional requirements for developments that preserve natural areas or historical buildings or are compatible with the neighborhood.

Figure 19



Collegian Court, a target property, is in the Residence C zone. The same goes for the majority of the properties around the site. (Across the street on Cabot Street is a bank, which is zoned Business A.)

*Business A:* Many of the commercial properties in the study area – particularly those in the northeast section of the neighborhood and along Exchange Street – are located in this district. The district is intended for general businesses in high-traffic areas, according to the Zoning Ordinance. Dozens of uses are allowed, including everything from retail services to restaurants to automobile service stations. Up to four residential uses are allowed in business buildings by special permit. Adult uses, towing services and drive-in restaurants are among the other uses allowed by special permit.

The Former Mathis Oldsmobile site on Exchange Street, a target property in this study, is in the Business A zone. Many other properties on Exchange Street are in the same zoning district. The northwest section of the Riverfront Property is also zoned Business A.

*Business B:* The vast majority of properties along Center Street in the study area are zoned Business B. This district is designed for “heavy businesses that generate high volumes of traffic and are incompatible with residential and many general business uses,” according to the Zoning Ordinance. While many of the uses allowed in Business A are allowed in this district, several additional uses are permitted, such as construction services and warehousing.

Five of the target sites – Center Street Parking Lot, Former Freemason’s Lodge, Former Mobile Service Station, Former Racing Service Station and Former VOC Building – are zoned Business B. All of the properties are located on Center Street.

*Business C:* There is only one property zoned Business C in the study area, a machine shop on Exchange Street. The district is meant for business development near highway interchanges, according to the Zoning Ordinance. The uses allowed in the district are largely auto-oriented, such as motor vehicle repair services and drive-in restaurants. Industrial uses, billboards, wholesale trade, restaurants, parking facilities and adult uses are allowed by special permit.

*Central Business District:* There are only a few properties in the study area in the Central Business District. The district is designed for the mixing of commercial uses in well-established neighborhoods. Fewer uses are allowed in this district than in the Business A district. For example, funeral services, lodging houses and animal kennels are not permitted. Automobile service stations, restaurants, multifamily homes, small production facilities and adult uses are allowed by special permit.

*Industrial:* This district covers the north and northwest portions of the study area. This includes the former Delta Park property and Cabotville Industrial Park. Allowed uses include industrial uses and any permitted uses in the Business A or B districts. Numerous uses are allowed by special permit, including manufacturing facilities, junkyards and sports assemblies.

Four of the target sites – Cabotville Mill complex, City Property (former Hampden Steam Plant), Former Delta Park and Former Lyman Company – and part of the Riverfront Property are zoned industrial.

#### Dimensional Requirements

Table 4 provides dimensional requirements for the zoning districts in the study area. Unlike in many communities across Massachusetts, Chicopee’s requirements do not chiefly promote large-lot development. For example, there is no minimum lot size in the Business A or B districts. In addition, minimum lot sizes of 7,500 to 10,000 square feet have allowed for dense residential development in the downtown area. This has made the study area more pedestrian-friendly.

Table 4

Zoning District	Minimum Lot Size	Minimum Setback	Minimum Frontage	Lot Coverage
<b>Residence A</b>	10,000 sf	25 ft to foundation 15 ft to porch*	100 ft	Not required except for accessory and garages (40% of rear yard)
<b>Residence C</b>	7,500 sf single-family 10,000 sf two or three-family 30,000 sf multifamily, government or use by SP	10 to 35 ft (depends on use)	75 ft single-family 100 ft two or three-family 150 ft multifamily, government or use by SP	NA
<b>Business A</b>	None	25 ft*	NA	60% for permitted uses excluding service stations (Not required for signs, service stations or accessory uses)
<b>Business B</b>	None	25 ft*	NA	NA
<b>Business C</b>	NA	25 ft*	NA	NA
<b>Central Business District</b>	NA	Average alignment of buildings in block	NA	80%
<b>Industrial</b>	NA	25 ft*	NA	NA

NA: Not applicable

\*There are exceptions.

### Mill Conversion and Commercial Center Overlay District

All of the properties in the study area are within the Mill Conversion and Commercial Center Overlay District. The goal of the district is to “promote the economic health and vitality of the City by encouraging the preservation, reuse and renovation of underutilized or abandoned industrial properties and commercial centers through mixed-use development,” according to the Zoning Ordinance.

The overlay district provides great leeway in how properties can be redeveloped. In fact, any combination of uses is allowed within a building unless prohibited by state or federal regulations. Also permitted are residential units with studios or multifamily units with any use allowed by right in the underlying district. The City Council approves the number of dwelling units allowed; no more than 10 percent of the units can have three or more bedrooms, according to the Zoning Ordinance.

Parking requirements in the overlay district are also very flexible. For projects with multiple types of uses, the number of required spaces is reduced. A reduction of up to 50 percent for mixed-use projects can be granted by the City Council if the different uses can share parking spaces. (Those spaces can be on or off site.)

Developers that want to take advantage of this overlay district must receive a special permit from the City Council. There is also an Overlay District Review Committee that meets with developers before an application is submitted.

#### Chicopee Center 40R Smart Growth Overlay District

The other overlay district in the study area is the Chicopee Center 40R Smart Growth Overlay District. As shown in Figure 19, this overlay district covers Cabotville Industrial Park as well as properties bounded by Dwight, Exchange, Front and Springfield streets. According to the Zoning Ordinance, it aims to encourage residential and mixed-use development, support the revitalization and redevelopment of Chicopee Center, promote housing diversity and generate tax revenue, among other intentions. Roughly 26 acres in size, the overlay district – which has two subdistricts, Cabotville and Exchange – allows residential and mixed-use developments by right with site plan approval.

The overlay district specifically promotes affordable housing by requiring 20 percent of all units in residential or mixed-use developments to be affordable to households earning up to 80 percent of area median income. The affordable housing requirement is 25 percent for projects restricted to seniors or disabled residents. The overlay district also encourages dense projects by allowing 60 units per acre in either multifamily projects in Cabotville or mixed-use projects in Cabotville. Detailed design standards and guidelines serve to promote high-quality design in pedestrian-friendly, sustainable developments.

#### Open Space

Chicopee's Zoning Ordinance requires open space in at least two of the zoning districts in the study area, Residential C and the Central Business District. They encourage active and passive recreational use, which promotes livability in the neighborhood. In the Residential C district, multifamily projects must provide at least 500 square feet of open space per unit, according to the Zoning Ordinance. These areas have to include landscaping as well as areas for outdoor recreation. In the Central Business District, at least 100 square feet of open or recreational space must be provided for each new residential unit.

#### Screening

In a diverse, mixed-use neighborhood, it is important to have appropriate screens between incompatible uses. This allows residents, for example, to live near commercial uses without enduring significant negative impacts, such as unsightly views. Chicopee's Zoning Ordinance helps buffer residential areas from potential nuisances by requiring the installation of fences or hedges in the Business A, B or C districts if a building abuts residentially-zoned land. Side and rear yards are also required between buildings in the Business C or Industrial district and a residence.

## Parking

Chicopee's Zoning Ordinance requires off-street parking for new projects as well as significant additions. Like many communities across Massachusetts, the parking requirement for single- or two-family homes is two spaces per unit. The requirement ranges from one to two spaces for multifamily projects, depending on the number of bedrooms per unit and whether the building is restricted to seniors. For commercial or industrial uses, the parking requirement widely varies depending on the specific use. Retail stores, for example, must provide one space per 250 square feet in public use in addition to one space per 500 square feet of other gross area. (The Mill Conversion and Commercial Center Overlay District provides more flexible parking requirements as described earlier.)

Whatever the use, the off-street parking must be located on the same lot as the project or on an associated lot within 400 feet, according to the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), however, can waive or change the parking requirements if a proposed project is within 400 feet of a municipal parking lot. The board can also do so to grant a permit for joint use, which is defined in the Zoning Ordinance as a "parking space counted as fulfilling the requirements for more than one business unit." An applicant must show that the peak parking demand for the uses occur at different times during the day. This allowance of shared parking can help facilitate development in the study area where large, undeveloped lots are unavailable.

The Zoning Ordinance does not appear to include bike parking requirements. Some communities in Massachusetts have started adopting such requirements to encourage alternative modes of transportation, particularly in urban neighborhoods. The study area does not seem to provide bicycle facilities such as bike lanes or shared-lane markings known as sharrows. Investing in bike infrastructure and parking could help take cars off the road if desired by the City of Chicopee.

## Development Review

The permitting process in Chicopee involves several different boards and committees. The City Council, for example, grants special permits. In many other communities across the state, planning boards or ZBAs have the authority to review and approve special permit applications; this kind of permitting process tends to be more expeditious than when a municipality's legislative body is the special permit granting authority. In Chicopee, the Planning Board reviews site plans for larger projects and approves zone changes, and the ZBA grants variances.

The City of Chicopee provides a *Permitting Guidebook* to help facilitate development in the community. Available on the City's website, the guidebook makes the development process more discernable by summarizing the different boards, departments and staff members involved as well as any associated fees.

## **Infrastructure**

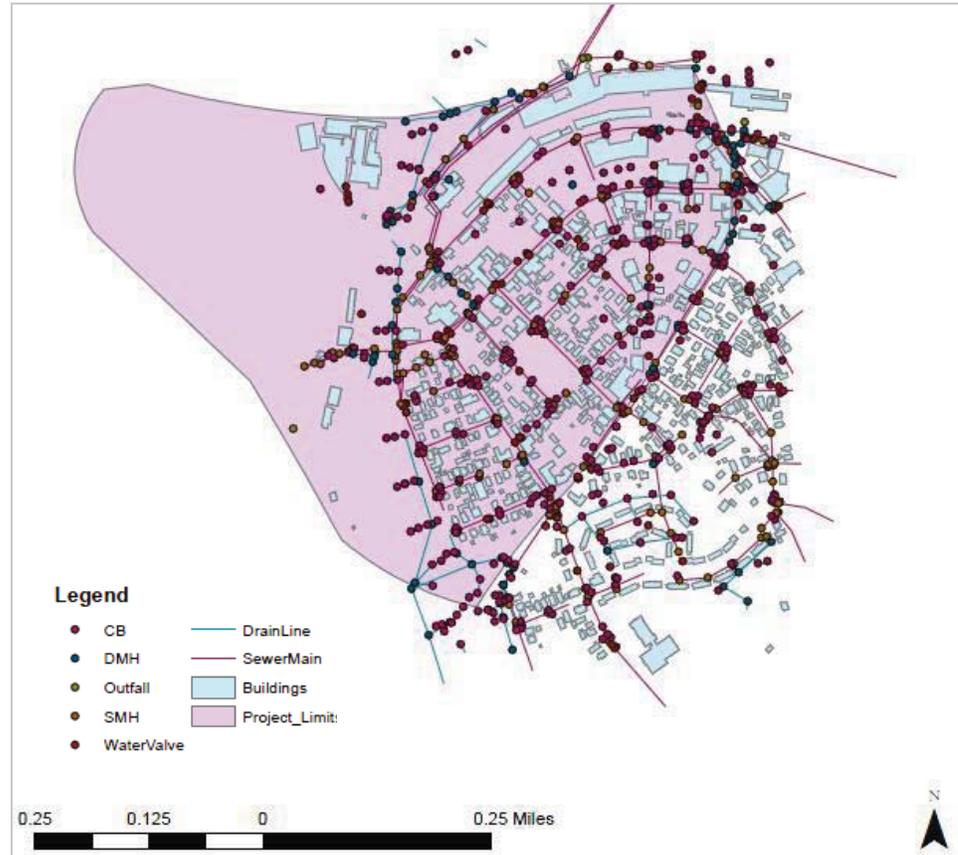
### Sanitary Wastewater and Stormwater

This West End area of Chicopee is served by a combined sewer system designed to carry both sanitary wastewater and stormwater runoff in a single pipe. The city is currently working to separate the system to minimize system overflow during wet periods when large amounts of rainwater overwhelm the system. The study area is Phase 5 in Chicopee's sewer separation project and is slated to be separated in 2017-2019. Overall, the existing combined sewer infrastructure in the Chicopee center has extra capacity and could accommodate additional connections. However, any future development in the study area would require a separated connection (separate pipes for sanitary waste and stormwater runoff) to the existing system to assist in future separation of the system.

There is currently adequate sewer infrastructure that serves the Cabotville area. There are two sewer lines (10-inch and 16-inch) that parallel the Chicopee River immediately behind the Cabotville Mill Complex and run the length of the building, and there are additional sewer lines along Front Street. (Sewer lines and other infrastructure are shown in Figure 20, a map by Tighe & Bond.) The 10-inch and 16-inch lines are part of an inverted siphon sewer system that collects waste from the surrounding area and transports it below the Chicopee River to the Chicopee River Interceptor.

There are also two existing sewer easements in the immediate area. One easement parallels the mill complex and runs between the buildings and the Chicopee River. This easement contains the previously referenced 10-inch and 16-inch lines and runs from the City of Chicopee's pumping station on the banks of the Chicopee River westward to the former Lyman Company Building. At the Lyman Building the easement forks, with one branch continuing west under Interstate 391 and the other branch (and sewer lines) heads southwest toward the intersection of Depot Street and Front Street. The second easement is approximately 20-feet wide. It is located to the east of the former Lyman building and runs southerly from the previously-mentioned easement toward the canal. It is unclear whether there are sewer lines within this easement as these lines are privately maintained. Future redevelopment in the Cabotville area is limited by the size of the pumps at the pump station. Redevelopment may require the addition of a second pump station or an upgrade to the existing pump station to ensure that the pressure remains high enough to transport wastewater through the inverted siphon to the Chicopee River Interceptor.

Figure 20



The former Delta Park area is currently served by a sewer connection that parallels Depot Street and connects to the Cabotville area. This sewer connection is reaching capacity serving the remediation activities at Delta Park. Stormwater infrastructure in the area is limited to a few storm drains along Depot Street and storm drains associated with the dike. In the event of a flood event, the dike has been designed to release stormwater through an existing drain system. The dike is maintained by the City on behalf of the Army Corps of Engineers. Any residential or commercial/manufacturing redevelopment in this area will require the installation of additional infrastructure to address sanitary wastewater and stormwater runoff.

#### Drinking Water

The Cabotville Industrial Park is currently served by a 10-inch looped water line with multiple connections from City main lines along Front Street. This system currently supplies both domestic and fire flows to the existing buildings. One of these connections goes from Front Street across the bottom of the Canal to the looped system. This conduit and the canal are both privately owned. The canal is also drained periodically, leaving the water pipe exposed to the elements, which increases its risk of breaking. Upgrades may be required for future industrial or commercial use in the Cabotville area to ensure a reliable water supply. There is also an 8-inch conduit from the property near the former Lyman Company that connects to the City's water system under Route 391. If this region is redeveloped as a residential area, it is likely that upgrades will be required

to address reliability and fire flow concerns. However, access to City water is readily available via water mains located in Front Street and Springfield Street. There is also an existing 8-inch water line that runs to and terminates just beyond a fire hydrant at the Former Delta Park. Any redevelopment in this area will require the installation of additional infrastructure to adequately meet reliability and fire flow needs for either residential or commercial/industrial use.

In Chicopee Center, the existing water infrastructure is generally in fair condition. Portions of the pipe in the downtown area have recently been replaced with ductile iron pipes. The sections of the pipe that have not been replaced consist of pre-1950's lead jointed cast iron pipeline. Additionally, the existing 4-inch and 6-inch cast iron pipes in the area need to be upgraded to 8-inch for the water pressure to meet fire flow requirements. The existing 8-inch and 12-inch cast iron pipes may also need to be replaced with pipes of the same diameter, depending on their condition. It is likely that any future redevelopment in the Chicopee area will require upgrades to the system to ensure adequate fire flow capacity for fire suppression.

### Electric

#### *Chicopee Electric Light Development*

According to Chicopee Electric Light Department (CELD), the transmission system in the downtown area was completely upgraded within the past few years with increased voltage and new poles in order to accommodate future redevelopment. This recent upgrade also included widening and relocating selected manholes. With the recently-upgraded electrical system, there is no capacity limitations to future development related to the downtown Chicopee area.

Currently, CELD is servicing remediation activities at the former Delta Park. However adequate infrastructure (overhead lines and electrical manholes) is currently in place and has additional capacity to handle an increased future load.

In the former Cabotville Mill Complex, CELD currently powers the buildings south of the canal, and Northeast Utilities powers the larger industrial/manufacturing buildings north of the canal. This can be attributed to the fact that CELD did not initially have the capacity to handle such large electric loads when these industrial/manufacturing buildings were originally built. The existing CELD conduits in Chicopee currently have enough capacity to power any redevelopment, assuming it is in an area powered by CELD and not Northeast Utilities. Other than jurisdictional issues, there are no limits to powering future development.

#### *Northeast Utilities*

Northeast Utilities serves isolated areas of Chicopee, as noted above. An inquiry has been made to Northeast Utilities regarding the extent of their service area and capacity of existing infrastructure; however no response has been provided to date.

#### Gas - Columbia Gas of Massachusetts

According to drawings provided by Columbia Gas of Massachusetts, the downtown area of Chicopee is serviced by gas. Gas lines also run to the Former Hampden Steam Plant, the Former Delta Park Area and the Cabotville Mill Complex. Gas is supplied to the study area via four-, six-, eight-, and ten-inch diameter pipes.

#### Verizon

Verizon provides the majority of phone and internet service in the study area. Generally, the availability of DSL is determined by the length of the cable from the central office. An inquiry has been made to Verizon to try to identify areas in the West End where DSL service is available. Verizon is currently compiling this information and will be providing it shortly. According to Verizon's website, FiOS is not currently available in Chicopee.

#### Charter Communications

According to MassGIS mapping, Charter Communications is the cable provider for this area of Chicopee. An inquiry has been made to Charter Communications regarding the availability of broadband and the status of their existing infrastructure; however no response has been provided.