

# Connections

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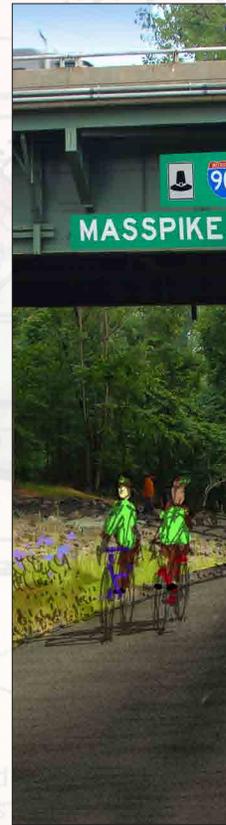
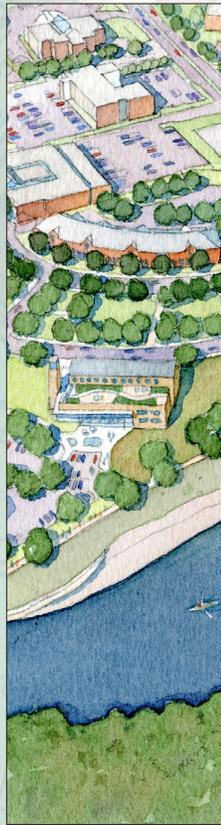
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Chicopee's

## Open Space & Recreation Plan



Mayor Richard J. Kos

Department of Planning & Development  
Department of Parks & Recreation

April 30, 2015



# Dedication

The Department of Planning & Development  
dedicates  
'Connections'  
the Open Space and Recreation Plan  
for the City of Chicopee

to

Catherine Brown,  
Director of the  
Department of Planning & Development

In honor of her 23 years of service to the City of Chicopee,  
and the Department.

*"Truly great friends are hard to find, difficult to leave,  
and impossible to forget..."*

*- Anonymous*

*"A giving heart is definitely one of the most precious things on earth. Most especially,  
when one is giving not because one has too much, but because one believes that it is the  
right and best thing to do..."*

*- Edmond Mbiaka*

# Acknowledgments

**Mayor Richard J. Kos**

**City Council**

Councilor George Moreau, President  
Councilor John Vieau, Vice President

Councilor Frank Laflamme  
Councilor James Tillotson  
Councilor Gerard (Jerry) Roy  
Councilor Robert J. Zygarowski  
Councilor Adam Lamontagne  
Councilor Shane Brooks  
Councilor William Zaskey  
Councilor Frederick Krampits  
Councilor Timothy McLellan  
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**Pioneer Valley Planning Commission**

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Chicopee Public Library  
Chicopee School Department  
Council on Aging / RiverMills Center

Chicopee Cemetery Commission  
Chicopee Conservation Commission  
Chicopee Historical Commission  
Chicopee Parks & Recreation Commission  
Chicopee Planning Board  
Chicopee Zoning Board of Appeals

Chicopee Chamber of Commerce  
Chicopee River Watershed Council  
Community Garden Citizens Group  
Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA)  
Partners for a Healthy Community, Inc.  
Pioneer Valley Local First  
Portuguese American Club  
Sunshine Village

&

**500 Residents who completed the Open Space & Recreation Community Survey**

April 30, 2015

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# Introduction

## Section II: Introduction

### Statement of Purpose

Chicopee adopted its first city park in 1845. Since then park and recreation reports appear sporadically in Chicopee town and city document collections. In the 1970s, the City initiated its first open space and recreation inventory and action plan initiative. These plans serve to:

- Invite the public into the open space and recreation planning process
- State the prevailing open space and recreation philosophy of the City
- Document recreation and open space areas
- Record progress and identify deficiencies in facilities, programs and resource management
- Establish goals, objectives and actions for the next seven-year period
- Support application for grants and other funding sources

Chicopee's goals for open space and recreation have not changed dramatically since the 2007 OSRP was completed. The current update emphasizes developing a network of parks and modern recreational facilities with connections to undeveloped open space along the Connecticut and Chicopee Rivers. Crucial to implementation of this vision is the need for residents and city officials to be engaged in the various stages of planning and informed about the opportunities a network of parks and open space offers in support of the City's other community and economic development goals.

Overall, community planning has proven effective in Chicopee. The necessity to produce plans at five-year intervals, and now seven-year intervals, provides the impetus for periodic assessment of resource management. Older documents serve as benchmarks that measure both progress and shortcomings. Furthermore, citizen participation ensures that staff keeps in touch with changing perceptions and needs of the community.

This version of the Chicopee Open Space and Recreation Plan was prepared by the Office of Planning & Development and the Parks & Recreation Department, with technical assistance provided by Conservation Works LLC. In March of 2015, the City launched an intensive public outreach campaign to gather community feedback about Chicopee's open space, recreational needs, priorities as well as to assess the types of strategies residents would support. Community input was solicited at three neighborhood meetings (detailed below), two of which were hosted by Mayor Kos and members of the City Council - each with fifteen to twenty-five residents in attendance:

- March 19th – Chicopee Center at the Portuguese American Club
- March 25th – General John J. Stefanik School
- March 31st – Chicopee Falls Branch Library

The first meeting was held at the Portuguese American Club on Exchange Street in the West End of Chicopee Center. This neighborhood is an Environmental Justice Area (EJ), with the specific census block group identified as a "low income and minority population". Spanish and Portuguese interpreters from the UMASS Translation Center were available for the March 19th meeting, however no attendees required translation services. The location for this meeting was fairly centralized within the EJ area and serviced by public transportation.

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Staff from Conservation Works facilitated a group discussion at each of the meetings where attendees were asked to identify places in Chicopee that were special to them, or that they considered unique to Chicopee. Any issues, conflicts or problems experienced by people at these places was also noted. Last, attendees were asked about any specific needs and/or priorities they had for recreation or open space that hadn't already been discussed. Notes from each of the meetings including the agenda and sign in sheets are included in the Appendices.

A public survey was also conducted from March 24 – April 10, 2015, and received 492 responses or just under one percent of the population. The survey was available on-line (Google Forms) and in hard copy in English, Spanish and Portuguese. No responses were received in the Spanish and Portuguese versions. There was a relatively even response rate across the eight neighborhoods, with the Fairview neighborhood responding at the highest rate. A detailed analysis of the survey results is available in the Appendices. A summary of findings is provided in Section 6: Community Vision.

**Table 2-1 Public Survey Response Rate by Neighborhood**

Neighborhood	Response Rate (% of responses)
Fairview	19.5
Chicopee Falls	18.9
Willimansett	16.1
Aldenville	15.9
Chicopee Center	12.2
Sandy Hill	7.5
Burnett Road	7.3

In addition to the public outreach conducted specific to this update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan, numerous community planning and development projects have been conducted in recent years that have gathered an immense amount of feedback from the community, some of which is directly related to open space and recreation. Information from the below projects has been reviewed and also used to inform the development of this plan. Recent projects and plans reviewed included:

- **H.E.A.L. Chicopee: A Strategic Plan for the Uniroyal/Facemate Properties**  
Cornell University Capstone Project, Spring 2010
- **Revitalizing Chicopee's West End Neighborhood: A Technical Assistance Panel Report**  
Urban Land Institute and MassDevelopment, October 23, 2014
- **Chicopee West End Brownfields Area-Wide Plan**  
The Cecil Group, Tighe & Bond, FXM Associates & Williamson Commercial Properties, June 2012
- **RiverMills: Visions for Redevelopment – A Resource Guide for Developers**  
Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. and RKG Associates, Inc., April 2011

# Introduction

- **Chicopee Gateway Plus Downtown Revitalization Plan**, August 2009
  
- **Tree Management Plan**, City of Chicopee  
Davey Resource Group, January 2014
  
- **Community Development Block Grants**
  - Sarah Jane Park, 2009-2010
  - Rivers Park Improvements, 2009-2011
  - Lincoln Grove Park, 2009-2011
  - Ike Alpert Park, 2010
  - Dana Park, 2013
  - Nash Field, 2014 (*including a Let's Play Community Construction Grant from Dr Pepper Snapple / KaBOOM!*)
  - Lucy Wisniewski Memorial Park, 2014



# Community Setting

## Section 3: Community Setting

### Regional Context

Chicopee is located within New England’s Knowledge Corridor (*Map 1-1: Knowledge Corridor*). The Knowledge Corridor is an ‘...interstate partnership of regional economic development, planning, business, tourism and educational institutions that work together to advance the region’s economic progress’ (New England Knowledge Corridor, [www.hartfordspringfield.com](http://www.hartfordspringfield.com). 2014). Just 25 miles apart, these cities share the Connecticut River, Interstate 90, the Amtrak, and Bradley International Airport. More than just infrastructure, this region is united by a highly educated workforce and has the largest population in New England outside of the Boston Metropolitan area. The name “Knowledge Corridor” reflects the region’s dense concentration of colleges and universities (41) and more than 150,000 students. (The Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts. 2008. [www.westernmassedc.com](http://www.westernmassedc.com)).

As part of a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant, the Hartford-Springfield Interstate Region preformed a federal planning project resulting in the formation of New England’s Sustainable Knowledge Corridor. This interstate planning project’s mission is to “preserve, create and maintain a sustainable, economically competitive, and equitable bi-state region” ([www.sustainableknowledgecorridor.org](http://www.sustainableknowledgecorridor.org). 2011).

**Table 3-1: General Knowledge Corridor Overview** (*The Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts - 2008*)

Characteristic	Total Population
Population	1,739,647
Labor Force	925,840
Total Employed	842,635
Businesses	50,812
Colleges	29
College Students	158,704

Located along the Connecticut River, Chicopee is confined to the section of Western Massachusetts popularly known as the Pioneer Valley (*Map 1-2: The Pioneer Valley*). Consisting of 43 cities and towns within Hampshire and Hampden Counties “The Valley” is serviced by a regional planning department, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC). The Valley is a unique region within Massachusetts serving as a center for arts, culture, dining, shopping, entertainment, tourism, and academics within The Commonwealth.

The Pioneer Valley region has a population of 692,042 distributed over 1,904 square miles with an average population density of 373 persons per square mile. However population density varies dramatically among the 43 rural and urban communities of the region, ranging from 288 persons per square mile in Hampshire County, to 731 in Hampden County (Massachusetts Office of Housing and Economic Development. 2014).

The landscape of the Valley provides a variety of natural and built attractions that have become significant destinations for both out-of-state and in-state tourists. Some of Chicopee’s local resources drawing visitors to the area include the Holyoke Mall, Eastfield Mall (Springfield), Chicopee Market Place, Heritage State Park and

# Community Setting

Wistariahurst Museum (Holyoke), Chicopee State Park, Westover Air Reserve Base (Chicopee), Chicopee’s two boat ramps on the Connecticut River at Medina Street and Berchulski Fisherman Access on Syrek Street at the South Hadley town line, Chicopee Municipal Golf Course, Springfield’s downtown convention space, the Basketball Hall of Fame (Springfield), Forest Park (Springfield), and the many attractions in the Berkshires.

**Table 3-2: Pioneer Valley Percent Population Change 2000-2010 (PVPC, 2011)**

Community (greatest increases)	% increase	Community (greatest declines)	% decrease
Belchertown	13.0	Cummington	-10.8
East Longmeadow	11.5	Hampden	-0.6
Goshen	14.4	Ludlow	-0.5
Hadley	9.5	Northampton	-1.5
Montgomery	28.0	Palmer	-2.9
Plainfield	10.0	Pelham	-5.8
Tolland	13.8	Worthington	-9.0
Westhampton	9.5		

The following are general profiles of Hampshire and Hampden counties, the two counties that make up the Pioneer Valley Region. Also included is a general profile of Franklin County, the county directly north of Hampshire County.



**Figure 3-1: Warfield House View, Charlemont (FRCOG)**

**Franklin County** is the most rural county in all of the Commonwealth and boasts a quaint atmosphere consisting of abundant farms, open space and natural resources. The bucolic nature of Franklin County’s landscape makes the historic villages and bustling towns an attractive tourist destination. Franklin County consists of 26 towns and is the largest land mass out of Hampshire, Hampden and Franklin Counties, yet has the smallest population and lowest ratio of persons per square mile. (Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. 2012)

**According to 2015 Franklin County Census results:**

- Total population approximately 70,862
  - The county has a land area of 699 square miles
  - There are 102 persons per square mile
  - From 2000 to 2010, the population growth percentage was -0.2% (71,535 people to 71,372)
- (Massachusetts Office of Housing and Economic Development. 2010) (United States Census Bureau. 2015)*

# Community Setting

**Hampshire County** is a unique region of the Pioneer Valley; it consists of a mix of rural and urban development. Hampshire County is a vibrant center for arts, entertainment and education within the



**Figure 3-2 UMass Amherst Campus Pond**

(<http://www.bercampus.com/bcs-complete-college-guide/university-massachusetts-amherst>)

- From 2000 to 2010, the population growth percentage was 3.8% (152,251 people to 158,080)  
(*Massachusetts Office of Housing and Economic Development. 2010; United States Census Bureau. 2015*)

Commonwealth; it defines as a haven for all walks of life, regardless of identity. Hampshire County consists of 20 towns and has the smallest land mass within the Pioneer Valley but has the second largest population as well as the second largest ratio of persons per square mile. (United States Census Bureau. 2015; Hampshire County Registry of Deeds. 2015).

## **According to 2015 Hampshire County Census results:**

- Total population approximately 160,939
- The county has a land area of 527.26 square miles
- There are 299.8 persons per square mile

**Hampden County** is the most urban county within the Pioneer Valley; it also consists of dense



**Figure 3-3 Market Square - Chicopee, MA**

(*Lee M. Pouliot*)

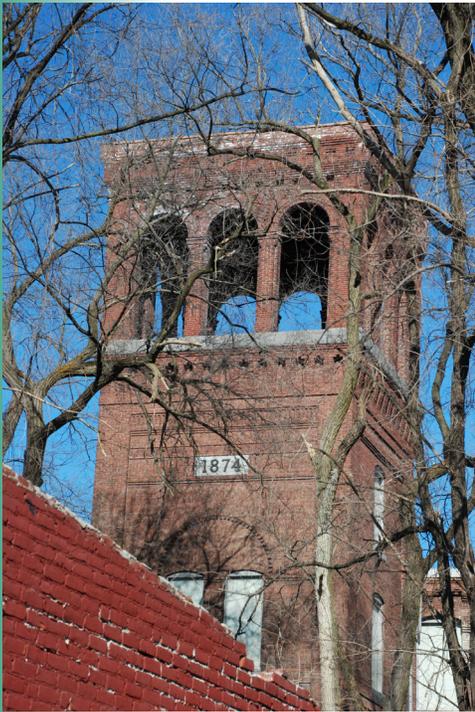
development within its towns and cities. Culturally, Hampden County is extremely diverse and has numerous historical, economic and social resources. Hampden County is made up of 23 towns and cities and has the second largest land mass within the Pioneer Valley as well as the densest development. The county also has the largest population within the Pioneer Valley along with the largest ratio of persons per square mile. Chicopee is located within Hampden County, adjacent to Springfield the County's largest City (*Map 1-3 Surrounding Communities*). (United States Census Bureau. 2015; The Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts. 2008).

## **According to the 2015 Hampshire County Census results...**

- Total population approximately 468,161
- The county has a land area of 617.14 square miles
- There are 751 persons per square mile
- From 2000 to 2010, the population growth percentage was 1.6% (456,228 people to 463,490)  
(*Massachusetts Office of Housing and Economic Development. 2010; United States Census Bureau. 2015*)

# Community Setting

## History of Chicopee .....



**Figure 3-4 Former Facemate Tower**  
*(Lee M. Pouliot)*

The area occupied by the City of Chicopee was settled by Europeans in the early 1600s. Its location on the flood plain at the confluence of the Connecticut and Chicopee Rivers was well suited for homesteading. The fertile flood plains were good for farming as well as laced with indigenous trails that facilitated early land based transportation. Scattered farmsteads became the nuclei for village development. These villages were incorporated into the Town of Chicopee in 1848 but maintained much of their original identity. Of Chicopee's current twelve neighborhoods, seven of these are the original villages settled in the 19th century: Chicopee Center, Willimansett, Chicopee Falls, Sandy Hill, Ferry Lane, Fairview and Aldenville. The Burnett Road neighborhood was a farming area rather than a village and developed after the Massachusetts Turnpike was constructed.

Chicopee development was also influenced by the two rivers which provided transportation and a source of power for the early mills. Mills like fortresses were built along the Chicopee River, covering up the modest foundations of their antecedents – the small grist and iron mills that served the agricultural community. The economic shift from agriculture to manufacturing linked Chicopee to the world economy.

During the 19th century, Chicopee was known internationally for its textiles, weapons, farm implements (many were invented here), bronze statuary, and bicycles. Population grew rapidly and in 1890 the town of Chicopee became a city. Chicopee's location between two large manufacturing centers – Springfield and Holyoke -- also influenced its development. The northern section of Willimansett was initially developed in the late 1800s as a bedroom community for Holyoke.

Chicopee's transportation advantages have also influenced development. First river, then rail, highways, and finally interstates contributed to the urbanization of Chicopee. Then in the 1930s, as the City's international reputation as an industrial force began to wane, Chicopee was chosen as the location of Westover Field (now known as Westover Air Reserve Base). Chicopee was back in the world arena. Chicopee followed a pattern of urban development shared by many mill towns. By the 1800s manufacturing supplanted agriculture and there was an elaboration of residential and commercial development. Chicopee is now classified as 100% urban and retains only remnants of its agricultural past.

Early development left Chicopee rich in historic resources including its early mills and mill housing, exemplified in the Dwight Mills and the Cabotville Commons Historic Districts. Additional housing constructed by some of Chicopee's notable families is now part of the Springfield Street and Church Street Historic Districts. Chicopee City Hall, Chicopee High School, the Spalding Library, Spalding Chapel and Saint Stanislaus Basilica are just a few of the hundreds of historic buildings scattered throughout the City.



# Community Setting

increase between 1980 and 1990 was offset by a modest decline between 1990 and 2000. Total population reported by the 2000 Census was 54,653. The 2010 showed an increase of 645 persons, or 1%, for a total of 55,298. As of 2013, there has been an increase of 419 persons, or 0.75%, for a total of 55,717.

**Table 3-3: Population of Surrounding Communities (PVPC, 2010)**

Community	Total Population
Chicopee	55,298
Granby	6,237
South Hadley	17,712
Longmeadow	15,807
Ludlow	21,147
West Springfield	28,354
Holyoke	39,902
Springfield	153,451

**Density** Chicopee's total area includes 22.91 square miles of land and 1.13 square miles of water. The current population density is 2,431.9 persons per square mile of land area. Higher densities than the City average are found in the older neighborhoods of Chicopee including Chicopee Center, Chicopee Falls, Willimansett and parts of Aldenville. These are places where small lots and multifamily dwellings make up the majority of residential development.

**Households and Household Size** The 2010 Census reported 23,739 households in Chicopee. Between 1980 and 2000 Chicopee experienced a decrease in household size, an increase in the numbers of households and an increase in number of non-traditional households. Single female and female-headed households form an increasingly larger proportion of total households in the City.

**Table 3-4: Household Statistics (U.S. Census, 2000 & 2010)**

Households	2010		2000		2000-2010 Changes	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Group Quarters	<i>2000-2010 trend toward increase in institutionalized &amp; decrease in non-institutionalized persons in group living conditions</i>					
In Group Quarters	1,155	2.1	1,006	1.8	+149	+14.8
Institutionalized Population	341	0.6	310	0.6	+31	+10.0
Non-institutionalized Population	416	0.8	696	1.3	-280	-40.2
<b>Households By Type</b>	<i>2000-2010 Trend (beginning 1980-1990) is toward more, but smaller and less traditional households</i>					
Total Households	23,739	100.0	23,117	100.0	+622	+2.7
Family Households	13,827	58.2	14,139	61.2	-312	-2.2
Married Couples	8,868	37.4	9,859	42.6	-991	-10.0
Female Householder	3,713	15.6	3,293	14.2	+420	+12.8
Non-Family	9,912	41.8	8,978	38.8	+934	+10.4
Householder Alone	8,136	34.3	7,560	32.7	+576	+7.6
Householder 65+	3,106	13.1	3,263	14.1	-157	-4.8
Average Household Size	2.28	(X)	2.32	(X)	-0.04	(X)

# Community Setting

**Race and Ethnicity** Chicopee has a diverse ethnic mix. Early manufacturing attracted French-Canadian, Polish, and Irish immigrants who have retained their cultural identity through generations. Chicopee is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing of the ethnic groups at 14.8% of the population in 2010. More recent immigrants are those from Portugal, Asia, Russia and Puerto Rico.

**Table 3-5: Race & Ethnicity** (*U.S. Census, 1990, 2000 & 2010*)

Race	2010		2000		1990	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
White	47,999	86.8	49,089	89.8	54,031	95.4
Black	2,053	3.7	1,244	2.8	1,038	1.8
Native (Indian or Alaskan)	204	0.4	107	0.2	70	0.1
Asian & Pacific Islander	36	0.1	531	1.0	321	0.5
Some Other Race	3,016	5.5	3,212	5.9	1,166	2.0
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
Hispanic or Latino <i>(may be of any race)</i>	8,196	14.8	4,790	8.8	2,050	3.5

**Foreign Born** As of 2000, 8.2% of the City's population was foreign born. Of those reported, 2.4% entered the City between 1990 and 2000. American Community Survey 5-Year estimates between 2007 and 2011 place the number of foreign born at 4,900. Due to the variation in data collection and analysis, it is not particularly useful to compare the Community Survey foreign born data with 2000 Census data. (*U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2007-2011*)

**Age** Chicopee's population age subgroups include a higher percentage of individuals of 65+ (17.6%) than the state (13.5%). Proportion of youth to the 25-64 age subgroups is somewhat lower. However, it is anticipated that this may change. The aging population combined with the increase in minority populations, which tend to be significantly younger on the average than the white majority, suggests that Chicopee needs to prepare for an increase in demand from either end of the age subgroups for age appropriate recreational facilities. Please see Figure 3-6.

**Labor, Employment and Wages** Like any other municipality, the City's employment data reflects local, regional, national and international trends. Please see Figure 3-7.

**Unemployment** Chicopee's average unemployment rate increased from 3.3% in 2000 to 8.7% in 2013, and is somewhat higher than the 2013 average rate for the Commonwealth of 7.2%. Please see Figure 3-8.

**Income** Household income increased between 1990 and 2000 -- the median increasing from \$28,905 in 1990 to \$35,672 in 2000. Annual personal income data from the MassStats show steady yearly increases. Between 1997 and 1998, growth in personal income of Massachusetts residents was third largest in the United States. Massachusetts had the third highest level of personal income per-capita in the U.S. -- 24% higher than the

# Community Setting

**Table 3-6: Age & Sex** (U.S. Census, 1990, 2000 & 2010)

	2010		2000		1990	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Total Population	55,298	100.0	54,653	100.0	56,632	100.0
Male	26,407	47.8	25,994	47.6	26,949	47.6
Female	28,891	52.2	28,659	52.4	29,683	52.4
Under 5 years	3,099	5.6	2,986	5.5	3,550	6.3
5-9 years	3,005	5.4	3,570	6.5	3,659	6.5
10-14 years	3,143	5.7	3,502	6.4	3,200	5.7
15-19 years	3,863	7.0	3,741	6.8	3,769	6.7
20-24 years	3,841	6.9	3,206	5.9	4,331	7.6
25-34 years	7,428	13.4	7,218	13.2	9,674	17.0
35-44 years	6,771	12.2	8,510	15.6	7,562	13.4
45-54 years	8,169	14.8	7,276	13.3	5,312	9.7
55-59 years	3,818	6.9	2,759	5.0	2,589	4.0
60-64 years	3,323	6.0	2,247	4.1	3,094	5.9
65-74 years	4,257	7.7	4,643	8.5	6,056	10.7
75-84 years	3,085	5.6	3,953	7.2	2,900	5.1
85 years and older	1,496	2.7	1,042	1.9	809	1.5
17 years and under	11,495	20.8	12,369	22.6	12,508	22.1
18 years and over	43,833	79.2	42,284	77.4	44,124	77.9
65 years and over	8,838	16.0	9,638	17.6	9,735	17.2
Male	3,558	6.4	3,752	6.9	3,730	6.6
Female	5,280	9.5	5,886	10.8	6,005	10.6
Median Age (years)	40.1	(X)	38.7	(X)	35.2	(X)

**Table 3-7: Labor & Employment** (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2014)

Year	Total Jobs	Manufacturing	
1985	16,992	4,880	28.7%
1990	19,019	4,999	26.2%
1995	19,811	5,031	25.4%
2001	20,560	4,907	24.9%
2004	19,738	4,171	21.1%
2008	19,727	3,801	19.3%
2009	18,803	3,302	17.6%
2010	18,700	3,199	17.1%
2011	18,861	3,141	16.7%
2012	18,730	2,888	15.4%
2013	18,764	2,806	15.0%

# Community Setting

**Table 3-8: Unemployment Rate** (*Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2014*)

Annual	Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Average	2000	27,420	26,521	899	3.3
Average	2001	27,716	26,548	1,168	4.2
Average	2002	28,007	26,398	1,609	5.7
Average	2003	28,009	26,129	1,880	6.7
Average	2004	27,828	26,078	1,750	6.3
Average	2005	27,708	26,103	1,605	5.8
Average	2006	27,802	26,160	1,642	5.9
Average	2007	27,538	25,967	1,571	5.7
Average	2008	28,062	26,244	1,818	6.5
Average	2009	28,229	25,491	2,738	9.7
Average	2010	28,089	25,309	2,780	9.9
Average	2011	27,788	25,344	2,444	8.8
Average	2012	27,540	25,321	2,219	8.1
Average	2013	27,520	25,125	2,395	8.7

**Table 3-9: Poverty Status** (*U.S. Census 2010, ACS 3-Year Estimates 2010-2013*)

Population	Estimate	Percent	Margin of Error
All Families	(X)	10.2	±1.8
With related children under 18 years	(X)	17.7	±3.6
With related children under 5 years only	(X)	30.8	±9.7
Married Couple Families	(X)	3.3	±1.4
With related children under 18 years	(X)	4.4	±2.4
With related children under 5 years only	(X)	12.0	±8.5
Families with female householder, no husband present	(X)	29.3	±6.0
With related children under 18 years	(X)	38.2	±7.9
With related children under 5 years	(X)	75.2	±17.0
All People	(X)	13.6	±1.6
Under 18 years	(X)	20.3	±4.2
Related children under 18 years	(X)	19.3	±4.6
Related children under 5 years	(X)	28.4	±8.6
Related children 5 to 17 years	(X)	15.8	±4.3
18 years and over	(X)	11.9	±1.2
18 to 64 years	(X)	12.3	±1.5
65 years and over	(X)	10.3	±2.2
People in families	(X)	10.1	±1.9
Unrelated individuals 15 years and over	(X)	24.5	±3.1

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U.S. average. Chicopee's average annual wage is also increasing but there continues to be a disparity between Chicopee's annual wage and that of the state. In 2005 Chicopee's annual wage was reported at \$32,292. It remains lower than the state average which was reported at \$50,960 for the same period. Generally the most disadvantaged in Chicopee are those individuals 17 and under and persons 65 and older. Females and minority groups are statistically more likely to live in poverty than males and whites. (American FactFinder 2008-2012 estimates, 2014)

**People with Disabilities** About 16.1% of Chicopee residents over the age of five experience some kind of disability. Of those, 9.1% are within the five to seventeen age bracket; 13.1% are between the ages of 18 and 64; and 38% are persons 65 and older. (American Fact Finder 2011-2013 Three Year Community Survey)

**Environmental Justice Populations and the OSRP** After reviewing the overall population characteristics of Chicopee it is important to note that 50.9% of the city's population resides in Environmental Justice Block Groups (MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, 2010). To fully grasp this statistic one must define Environmental Justice and what it means to be an Environmental Justice Block Group.

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. In a guide for citizens, planners, and policymakers, "Preserving and Enhancing Communities," Elisbeth Hamin states, "Environmental Justice embraces the notion that no community, regardless of race or income, should bear a disproportionate environmental burden or have more than an equitable share of noxious land uses in the neighborhood. Statistics show that low-income and non-white or "minority" neighborhoods in the United States bear a distinctively disproportionate environmental burden" (Hamin, 1999). In general, areas of lower income and minority populations suffer a disproportionate amount of environmental degradation and pollution. In recognition of this injustice, Environmental Justice (EJ) areas have been designated so municipalities can begin to provide an equitable degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, as well as equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

In Massachusetts, EJ Populations are those segments of the population that the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEA) has determined to be most at risk of being unaware of or unable to participate in environmental decision-making or to gain access to state environmental resources. They are defined as neighborhoods (U.S. Census Bureau census block groups) that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- The median annual household income is at or below 65% of the statewide median household income;
- 25% of the residents are minority;
- 25% of the residents are foreign born; or
- 25% of the residents are lacking English language proficiency.

As of the 2010 Census, the block groups identified as Environmental Justice areas in Chicopee are classified based on income, minority, minority and income, or minority, income and English isolation (lacking English language proficiency).



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**Table 3-10: CDBG Eligible Block Groups** (*highlighted Block Groups are CDBG eligible*) (U.S. HUD - 2014 Data Set)

Neighborhood	Tract	Block Group	Total Low-Moderate Income Persons	Total Population	Percent Low/Moderate Income
Interchange	8106.01	1	315	815	38.65
	8106.01	2	1,195	2,240	53.35
	8106.01	3	330	960	34.38
Burnett Road	8106.02	1	670	2,540	26.38
Chicopee Falls	8107.00	1	700	1,615	43.34
	8107.00	2	310	925	33.51
	8107.00	3	765	1,470	52.04
	8107.00	4	330	1,035	31.88
	8107.00	5	585	1,185	49.37
Szot Park	8108.00	1	645	1,385	46.57
	8108.00	2	950	1,410	67.38
	8108.00	3	475	845	56.21
West End	8109.01	1	1,595	1,915	83.29
Chicopee Center	8109.02	1	655	1,175	55.74
	8109.02	2	420	730	57.53
	8109.02	3	595	1,150	51.74
	8109.02	4	1,125	1,290	87.21
Sandy Hill	8110.00	1	500	815	61.35
	8110.00	2	595	1,040	57.21
	8110.00	3	290	830	34.94
	8110.00	4	655	1,050	62.38
	8110.00	5	405	905	44.75
Willimansett	8111.01	1	1,140	1,415	80.57
	8111.01	2	965	1,475	65.42
	8111.01	3	820	1,180	69.49
	8111.01	4	335	550	60.91
Ferry Lane	8111.02	1	630	1,035	60.87
	8111.02	2	1,665	2,360	70.55
	8111.02	3	525	1,240	42.34
	8111.02	4	535	1,065	50.23
Aldenville	8112.00	1	450	1,275	35.29
	8112.00	2	440	1,160	37.93
	8112.00	3	620	1,050	59.05
	8112.00	4	730	1,305	55.94
Fairview - West	8113.01	1	420	1,130	37.17
	8113.01	2	195	1,125	17.33
	8113.01	3	1,005	1,965	51.15
	8113.01	4	735	1,455	50.52

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Fairview East	8113.02	1	0	0	0.00
	8113.02	2	485	1,120	43.30
	8113.02	3	410	850	48.24
	8113.02	4	530	1,570	33.76
	8113.02	5	870	1,950	44.62



**Figure 3-6 Cabotville Mills & Canal** (Lee M. Pouliot)

Mills has been rehabilitated and is included in a downtown historic district. North Chicopee Street Industrial Park followed a similar path toward reuse. Deteriorating late Victorian mill buildings have been rehabilitated and now support a variety of industrial and businesses uses.

One of Chicopee's greatest challenges has been the former Fisk Rubber Company mill property in Chicopee Falls. This mill complex dates back to the mid-1800s. This complex once employed some 7,000 residents who worked in armaments, textiles, and tires among other industries. Through two centuries of industrial dominance, well-known entities including Savage Arms, Stevens-Duryea Automobiles, and Fisk/Uniroyal Tire called this Factory Village home. Uniroyal moved its operations south and overseas in 1980's and the factories have stood mostly vacant. The City took ownership of the property at which time the site was selected for inclusion in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Brownfield Support Team (BST) Initiative. The BST places priority emphasis on selected sites across the Commonwealth concentrating financial, technical, and other state resources to speed redevelopment. Additional emphasis was placed on the site by MassDevelopment by designating the site as part of the Brownfields Priority Project.

For the past two decades, city officials have worked on strategies to cleanup and redevelop the Uniroyal and Facemate properties known today as RiverMills at Chicopee Falls. As of 2014, the RiverMills at Chicopee Falls Project has progressed to the point where all demolition and clean up planned for Facemate has been completed. On April 8, 2013 local officials hosted federal and state officials for the groundbreaking of the new RiverMills Center, the senior center on one of three former Facemate parcels. The building is officially called RiverMills Center and is the new home for the Council on Aging. It is open for regular business including

manufacturing activity still remains. Buildings from Ames Manufacturing Company in Chicopee Center have been redeveloped and now accommodate both business and residential uses. Dwight Mills retains its manufacturing identity as Cabotville Industrial Park, providing space for approximately 60 businesses and 600 employees. In 2006, the Brooklyn-based owner of the property told city officials that he wanted to build 248 condo units spread throughout five floors of the building. This redevelopment plan was never actualized and the building is scheduled for auction in June of 2015.

Recently, mill housing associated with Dwight

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Figure 3-7 RiverMills Center (Lee M. Pouliot)

exercise classes, counseling, art classes, socializing and other community activities and events. The city spent about \$9 million tearing down the seven dilapidated buildings and cleaning up hazardous waste on the property before construction could start. At 22,500 square feet, the building is more than twice the size of the previous senior center on Valley View Drive.

RiverMills Center is the City's first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) structure, targeting Silver Certification. LEED is a voluntary, consensus-based program that

provides third-party verification of green buildings that demonstrate leadership, innovation, environmental stewardship and social responsibility. The City has experienced industrial expansion outside its managed industrial parks. Over the past 5 years more than two hundred thousand square feet of warehousing and industrial space has been added to existing sites.

**Newer Industrial Areas** Chicopee's newer industrial areas include Westover Industrial Airpark West and North, Chicopee River Business Park and Westover Business Park.

*Westover Airpark North* - In 1978, the City of Chicopee purchased 190 acres of surplus land from the U.S. Government, nearly all of which has been resold for development. Most of the land – 101 acres – was developed by Westover Metropolitan Development Corporation as Westover Industrial Airpark North. Occupants of 21 Airpark North are Avery-Dennison, Leonische of America, Dunsirn Industries Incorporated, and Newark Paperboard Corporation.

*Westover Airpark West* - In 1987 the U.S. Government sold 256 acres of Westover land in the City of Chicopee to the Westover Metropolitan Development Corporation (WMDC), along with additional acreage in the neighboring Town of Ludlow. WMDC has also completed and manages a 14,000 square foot passenger terminal with 150 seats and 2,340 parking spaces to take advantage of Westover's two-mile by 300-foot runway shared by private and military aircraft. Presently there are 29 companies located at Westover Airpark West. Some additional land is available in the original park for expansion and WMDC is in the process of acquiring additional abutting property.

*Westover Industrial Park* - Lake Hitchcock Development Corporation acquired 14 of the remaining acres of Westover surplus land and created the Westover Industrial Park -- an industrial subdivision for light industry. Sale of lots is complete with three facilities built and occupied. Build-out will total about 150,000 square feet of light industrial uses and generate more than 200 jobs. This parcel was the site of the former Westover AFB Hospital and it is another good example of Brownfields redevelopment.

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Chicopee River Business Park		Parcel 1-C Chicopee & Springfield, MA	
			
<b>Shovel Ready Site</b>			
<b>Parcel Size &amp; Frontage:</b>	6.7 acres with 964 ± LF of frontage, corner location.		
<b>Developable Area:</b>	6.7 acres		
<b>Suitable for Buildings:</b>	64,000 SF. on two stories.		
<b>Services:</b>	Fully served; all utilities available		
<b>Zoning:</b>	Industrial Planned Development (IPUD Type II); seeking office, R&D and BIO users. Fully permitted for a 64,000 SF office building.		
			
		 <p>Westmass Area Development Corporation 255 Padgette Street, Chicopee, MA 01022 (413) 593-6421 www.westmassdevelopment.com</p> <p><small>Information and pricing are subject to change without notice Affiliated with the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts</small></p>	

**Chicopee River Business Park** - Chicopee River Business Park provides for the development of a 173-acre parcel into approximately 826,000 square feet of general office, light industrial, and telecommunications center uses. The park occupies 130 acres in Chicopee and 43 acres in Springfield. The developer, WestMass Area Development Corporation (WestMass), a non-profit development corporation, designed the park with a campus like atmosphere taking advantage of the views afforded by its location on the Chicopee River. Construction of the park infrastructure was completed in 2000. An anticipated 3,000 jobs will be generated as the project reaches build-out in the next 10-15 years. The first tenant to occupy the park is Convergent-Prima, a high tech laser R & D and manufacturer.

**Figure 3-8 Chicopee River Business Park**  
(<http://www.westmassdevelopment.com/uploads/listWidget/1289/CRBP%20Parcel%201%20C.pdf>)

**Westover Air Reserve Base** One of Chicopee's most important economic assets is the presence of the United States Air Force at Westover Field. Westover Air Reserve Base occupies more than 2,300 acres and is an important component of the local economy. Westover is operated on a day-to-day basis by a workforce of about 1,000 civilians, including 488 air reserve technicians.



**Figure 3-9 C-5 at WARB**  
(*Citizen's Brochure for the Westover Air Reserve Base AICUZ Study*)

Westover ARB has been in operation since 1940 and served as a bomber training base and port of embarkation/debarkation during World War II. Following the war, the base was a staging point for the Berlin Airlift, a headquarters of the Military Air Transport Service system until April 1955. From that time until 1974, the base was a major Strategic Air Command installation. Since May 19, 1974 Westover has been an Air Force Reserve Command base. From that time until October, 1987 the 439th Tactical Airlift Wing operated C-130 Hercules and C-123 Provider aircraft. The wing converted to C-5As in 1987 and the unit eventually became designated as the 439th Airlift Wing.

The base's economic impact was \$221 million in 2014, down from \$225 million in 2013, and a total of \$17

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million from fiscal year 2012. The number of base employees decreased from 3,813 to 3,613 in fiscal year 2014. Military pay decreased \$16.3 million, due in a large part to decrease in reserve funding. The reduction in reserve funding was offset by an \$11.5 million increase in construction, mainly from the first phase of a three year, \$24 million project to replace the fuel hydrant system on the flight line.

There has been a \$45 million decline in the economic impact since 2010 when it was at a high of \$266 million. The economic impact is figured within a 50 mile radius of the base and includes a variety of elements including salaries, construction and contracted goods and services. It only calculates the Air Force Reserve impact although there are 29 other so-called tenant units including three U.S. Marine Reserve units and 10 Army units Westover has been facing threats of a bigger downsizing in the next few years. In 2016, the U.S. Air Force plans to reduce the number of planes at the base from the current sixteen to eight. State officials and U.S. congressmen have been trying to fight the proposals to reduce the size of the base (MassLive. Nov. 2013).

**Housing** The City provides varied and affordable housing. Of the City’s housing stock, 52% is single-family attached or detached homes. Another 28% is 2-4 family homes, the remainder being larger multifamily blocks and mobile homes. More than 60% of the City’s housing stock was built before 1960. Because Chicopee has very little land left for new development of any kind, housing development continues through small subdivisions, smaller multifamily projects – mostly condominiums, redevelopment, rehabilitation and expansion, and infill. Between the years of 200-2010, the City experienced a 2.9% increase in housing units (PVPC). Demand for new housing in Chicopee exceeds the City’s ability to provide room for it. One benefit of the unfulfilled demand is a surge in home improvements that is evident throughout the City. Housing goals and actions adopted as part of Chicopee’s EO418 Community Plan focus on promotion of infill and increasing the rate of owner occupied housing. Providing more individuals the opportunity to own homes invests residents in the community and supports property values.

**Table 3-11: Housing Occupancy & Tenure 2000-2010** (U.S. Census ACS 3-year Estimates, 2000-2013)

Housing Occupancy	Trend is toward an increase in housing units and modestly higher vacancy rates.						
	2010	Percent	2000	Percent	Change	Total Percent	+ / -
Total Housing Units	25,140	100	24,424	100	+716	2.93	Increase
Occupied Housing Units	23,739	94.4	23,117	94.6	+622	2.69	Increase
Vacant Housing Units	1,401	5.6	1,307	5.4	+94	7.19	Increase
Seasonal, recreational or occasional use	66	0.3	87	0.4	-21	-24.14	Decrease
Housing Tenure	Trend is toward an increase in owner-occupancy and smaller household sizes.						
Occupied Housing Units	23,739	100	23,117	100	+622	2.69	Increase
Owner-occupied Housing Units	13,961	58.8	13,717	59.3	+244	1.78	Increase
Renter-occupied Housing Units	9,778	41.2	9,400	40.7	+378	4.02	Increase
Average Household Size of Owner-occupied Unit	2.39	(X)	2.46	(X)	-	-	-
Average Household Size of Renter-occupied Unit	2.12	(X)	2.11	(X)	-	-	-

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**Commercial:** The retail sector has experienced growth with expansion along Memorial Drive, Chicopee's main commercial strip. The most recent and largest of the projects is the demolition and redevelopment of Fairfield Mall, now known as Chicopee Market Place. Replacing the mall is a plaza style shopping center including Home Depot, Wal-Mart, Staples, Marshalls, and a collection of smaller local and national brand stores and restaurants.

Chicopee Crossing also located on Memorial Drive has experienced development over the last few years and is continuing to expand. Currently, Chicopee Crossing is home to Buffalo Wild Wings, Chipotle, Yogurt City, and soon Pet Smart, with additional retail space still available for development. Other recent new business along Memorial Drive includes Starbucks, Hampton Inn, four branch bank offices, two retail pharmacies, an animal clinic, transmission repair shop, car wash, car dealerships, assisted living, daycare and summer day camp, and the reuse of the Charles River West hospital for a MassMutual training and conference center.

## Infrastructure

**Transportation Systems** Transportation systems provide the most important of the built resources shared by Chicopee, ("The Crossroads of New England") and its neighbors (Map 1-1 & 1-2). The region is a short distance from some of the Northeast's largest cities. Chicopee is 29 miles from Hartford, 92 miles from Boston, 90 miles from Albany and 140 miles from New York City. Excellent conventional modes of travel are available including interstate highways, trains, buses and air. Interstate 91 and the Massachusetts Turnpike (I90) are both within a few miles from Chicopee. High speed passenger rail (Amtrak) was recently constructed along the I-91 corridor between Hartford, Connecticut and Burlington, Vermont, with new service stops in Springfield, Holyoke, and Northampton, and a fourth in Greenfield at the John W. Olver Transportation Center completed in 2012. There are recent considerations to construct an East to West Rail that would service that would further link Chicopee to the greater region. Chicopee is serviced by the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTa), which provides bus service to the community, giving opportunity to those without personal transportation. Although the PVTa services Chicopee, there is a need for a map of bus stops within the City to provide easy access to all community members. Map 5: Transportation Systems illustrates Chicopee's relation to major regional transportation networks.

## Non- Vehicular Transportation

Chicopee is dedicated to providing its citizens with a regionally-connected bike and pedestrian network (*Map 5-1: Sidewalk Network*). This network will serve as sustainable transportation system as well as a public recreational and educational asset. In reviewing the public's input, a bike and pedestrian system is a high priority amongst open space.

**Bicycle and Pedestrian Networks** Chicopee has a well-developed network of sidewalks throughout the most neighborhoods. There are also two significant public riverwalk projects in various stages of design and construction: Chicopee Riverwalk Phase I & II and the Connecticut Riverwalk & Bikeway.

*Chicopee Riverwalk – Phase I and II* - Phase I is a short strip of former railroad right-of-way extends from the eastern side of the Davitt Bridge to Grape Street and is owned by the Conservation Commission. Set on the bank of the Chicopee River, users enjoy fantastic views of the river set against historic mill buildings in the city center that once fueled Chicopee's economic engine. Phase II is a planned to begin at Grape Street and

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terminate at RiverMills (former Uniroyal site), including a connection to Szot Park. The terminus shall include amenities including security from the industrial area. The connection to Szot Park will include improved parking facilities at the Park's Department offices and an at-grade crossing to the park entrance including walkways. Additional connections will include a path to the Chicopee Public Library.

*Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway* - Communities are rediscovering nearby rivers and improving the environment by instilling an appreciation of them through improved access to rivers and education about them. As part of a regional effort in Hampden County, the communities of Agawam, Chicopee, Holyoke, Springfield and West Springfield, together with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, have developed a plan for a 21 mile pedestrian and bicycle path along the banks of the Connecticut River. With the goals of revitalizing the riverfront and improving the quality of life for residents, this plan promotes numerous user types (strolling, jogging, biking, roller blading, etc.), provides overlooks and rest stops, and connects each community to the river and each other. Chicopee has approximately seven miles of Riverwalk in design phases.

The Connecticut Riverwalk North is located between the Connecticut River and the City-owned Connecticut River flood control levee extending from the Medina Street boat ramp to Nash Field, an overall distance of approximately 2.4 miles. The proposed alignment begins at the Medina Street boat ramp and parking lot, passes under the Massachusetts Turnpike, over a storm drain discharge channel associated with Paderewski Street pumping stations, then passes by or under two service bridges that provide access to the Jones Ferry Pumping Station discharge gates before terminating at Nash Field. The Riverwalk is designed as a multi-use trail including two parallel paths: a paved path for bikes at the base of the flood dike on the westerly (river) side, and a gravel path at the top of the dike. Final design plans include overlooks to the river, way finding signs, parking locations, pathways over the levee to connect neighborhoods to the trails without erosion, root barriers, fishing access areas, benches at scenic vistas, bike racks, landscaping for privacy screening for abutters where needed, handicap accessibility, police access, and compensatory flood storage areas. Design was funded by a 2013 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant.

**Water Supply Systems** The Chicopee Water Department was established in 1892 as a public water supply. Chicopee once supported its own reservoir. The former reservoir is now part of Chicopee Memorial State Park and is used for recreational purposes only. Since the completion of the Chicopee Valley Aqueduct in 1950, Chicopee has received all of its water from the Quabbin Reservoir, part of the Metropolitan Water Resources Authority (MWRA) water supply system. MWRA supplies wholesale water to local water departments in 48 communities: 42 in greater Boston and the MetroWest areas and three in Central Massachusetts. MWRA also provides a back-up water supply in three other communities.

Construction on the Quabbin Reservoir began in 1936. Filling commenced on August 14, 1939 and was completed in 1946 when water first flowed over the spillway. The Quabbin Reservoir was filled with water from the Swift River and flood skimming from the Ware River during eight months of the year. At the time, the 412 billion-gallon reservoir was the largest man-made reservoir in the world that was devoted solely to water supply.

Starting at the Quabbin Reservoir, water supplied to Chicopee travels approximately 11 miles through the Chicopee Valley Aqueduct to Nash Hill Reservoir, an intermediate holding reservoir containing 24 million gallons of water. From the Nash Hill facility the water travels another 1.8 miles to the Chicopee

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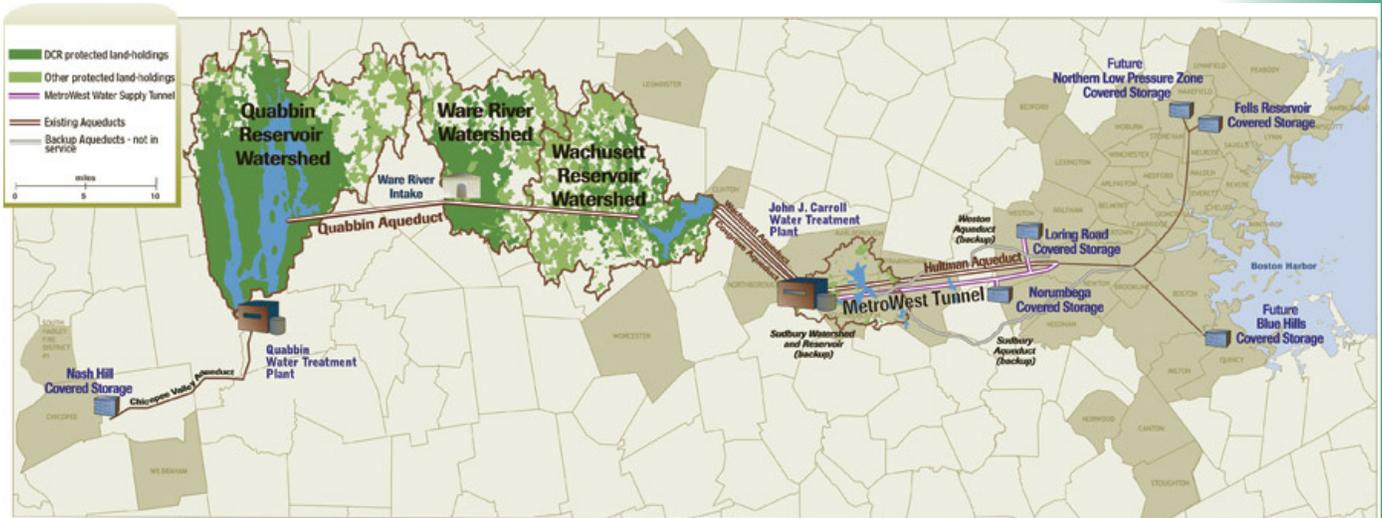


Figure 3-10 MWRA Distribution System (<http://www.mwra.state.ma.us>)

Water Treatment Plant on Burnett Road at the Chicopee/Ludlow city line. After treatment, which includes chlorinating to disinfect the water and corrosion control, the water travels through the water distribution system, a labyrinth of over 240 miles of water mains ranging in size from 4 to 36 inches.

A one million-gallon water storage tank has been constructed in the Fairview section of the City to correct pressure problems. The tank, working in conjunction with a booster pumping station maintains water pressure in an area of the City that previously experienced water supply and pressure problems during the summer months. In addition, the tank insures that an adequate water supply is available for fire protection. The water tank was put into service in June of 1992 and has made a significant difference in water availability for the residents of Fairview and for the growing industrial base in the northeastern section of the City.

**Water Treatment** The MWRA completed construction of the Quabbin Water Treatment Plant in March of 2000 to improve the quality of drinking water delivered to Chicopee, Wilbraham, and South Hadley Fire District #1 - the three communities serviced by the Chicopee Valley Aqueduct. The plant is located in Ludlow.

**Covered Storage for Distribution Reservoirs** Uncovered distribution reservoirs allow pathways for contaminants to enter the drinking water, result in higher water temperatures that favor bacteria growth, allow sunlight to promote plant and algae growth and limit options for corrosion control. Almost all of the cities and towns of Massachusetts currently have covered distribution storage tanks. As part of the Integrated Water Supply Improvement Program, MWRA had phased out five active open distribution storage reservoirs throughout the service area and constructed new covered tanks to provide the necessary distribution storage for peak demands and emergency service. Water quality issues caused by algae and other natural occurrences should be eliminated.

The Chicopee's Nash Hill storage reservoir was completed in 1999. The project includes construction of two 12.5 million gallon tanks for total of 25 million gallons of covered storage. The existing open reservoir has been drained and modified to serve as on-site detention basin.

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**Sewer Service** All old cities were originally built with combined sewer systems designed to carry both sanitary sewage and stormwater to the nearest river for disposal, and eventually, in the later part of the 20th century to wastewater plants for treatment (*Map 6-1: Infrastructure*). During large storms, rainfall can overwhelm the capacity of wastewater treatment facilities so that untreated flow goes directly into nearby surface waters. In the late 1990s, EPA issued Administrative Orders under the Clean Water Act to Agawam, Chicopee, Holyoke, Ludlow, Palmer, South Hadley, Springfield, and West Springfield, setting time lines and goals for abating combined sewer overflows (CSOs). A total of 99 of the 163 CSO outfalls in the Pioneer Valley region have been eliminated to date, but the largest communities (Chicopee, Holyoke, and Springfield) still face more than \$446 million in costs to eliminate or abate flows coming from 64 remaining CSO outfalls. Each of these communities is working with EPA to finalize Long Term Control Plans that evaluate costs and alternatives and describe a phased implementation schedule for CSO work. Of those, Chicopee has 28 CSOs estimated at \$200 million to eliminate or abate.

The City is a member of the Connecticut River Cleanup Committee, a regional consortium coordinated by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to seek SRF funding in support of the region's sewer separation and CSO abatement work.

Due to the amount of sewer separation work that remains, the City projects to raise sewer rates over the next fifteen years to support this work. For residential sewer rates, this translates to an estimated average annual fee of \$722 in 2010 to \$1,268 in 2025.

In 1999, Chicopee was the first community in Massachusetts to adopt a user fee for stormwater management. The purpose of the fee was to generate revenue to support the City's sewer separation work and stop in-cellar sewer backups. Due to the severity of the problem being experienced by residents, adoption of a fee for this purpose was widely supported. The current fee structure generates \$1.5 million annually. Single-family residential units pay \$100 per year; multi-family, commercial and industrial properties pay \$1.80 per 1,000 square feet, with a minimum charge of \$100 and a maximum of \$640 per year.

**Stormwater System:** In 2003, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency implemented the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Phase II under the regulatory jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act. This program regulated U.S. Census designated Urbanized Areas as "Phase II communities" and issued a permit with a series of Minimum Control Measures designed to reduce the volume of stormwater runoff from these areas, and improve water quality nationwide. A renewed permit has been due to be released since 2010. The draft version raises the bar and costs a community will incur to continue to address stormwater management. Chicopee participates in the regional Connecticut River Stormwater Committee, another regional collaboration headed by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to offer services and programming to meet permit requirements in a more cost effective way for municipalities.

**Green Infrastructure** One of the measures being widely promoted by EPA to address stormwater is the use of Green Infrastructure (GI). This is the use of more naturalized and ecologically-conscious engineered systems to treat stormwater at its source thereby reducing runoff and sedimentation of the greater watershed. These stormwater management systems also serve to increasing recharge of groundwater in smaller, decentralized facilities that mimic the natural hydrology of a site. There are two GI locations in

# Community Setting

Chicopee including the rainwater harvesting system at the Jones Ferry Combined Sewer Treatment Facility and stormwater infiltrators at Upper Granby Road. The 2014 Pioneer Valley Green Infrastructure Plan developed by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission includes a list of twelve potential locations for other GI projects in Chicopee. Among them are the RiverMills Center, Szot Park, and Nash Field.

Green infrastructure also includes the planned and engineered systems that directly promote ecological restoration and preservation as well as non-motorized travel. Greenways are a major part of municipal green infrastructure systems that often linking ecological resources for wildlife preservation and restoration while promoting non-motorized travel. These systems therefore promote environmentally conscious development and in turn fall under the greater umbrella of Green Infrastructure.

Use Category	Acres	%
Residential	5,011	32.8
Commercial	577	3.8
Industrial	622	4.1
Transportation	2,347	15.4
Agriculture	166	1.1
Urban/Open	1,209	7.9
Outdoor Recreation	426	2.8
Water	670	4.4
Undeveloped Land	4,257	27.8

**Table 3-12: Chicopee Land Use**  
(Chicopee Local Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan, 2007)

## Long Term Development Patterns

**Land Use and Zoning** Chicopee’s pattern of land use has evolved from its industrial heritage and late 20th century suburbanization. In turn, Chicopee’s topography and rivers shape and constrain these culturally determined land use patterns. In addition to other factors, zoning and other land use regulations constitute Chicopee’s “blueprint” for its future. Land use patterns over time will continue to look more and more like the City’s zoning map until the City is finally “built out”—that is, there is no more developable land left. Therefore, in looking forward over time, it is critical that the City focus not on the current use and physical build-out today, but on the potential future uses and build-out that are allowed under the City’s zoning map and zoning ordinances. Zoning is the primary land use tool that the City may use to manage development and direct growth to suitable and desired areas

while also protecting critical resources and ensuring that development is in keeping with the City’s character.

The Chicopee Zoning Ordinance establishes 14 base zones and four overlay zones (*Map 6-2: Zoning Districts*):

- Four residential zones: Residential A, B, C, and D Districts
- Two commercial zones: Commercial A and A-1 Districts
- Four business zones: Business A, B, and C Districts, and Central Business District (CBD)
- Three industrial zones: Industrial, Industrial Planned Unit Development (IPUD) Type 1 & Type 2
- One mixed use zone: Mixed Use (MXD) District
- Overlay zone #1: Floodplain Overlay District
- Overlay Zone #2: Mill Conversion and Commercial Center Overlay District
- Chicopee Center 40R Smart Growth Overlay District (CC40R)
- Senior Housing Overlay Zone

Currently, development in Chicopee is encouraged by existing zoning and other land use regulations to seek areas where the environmental conditions and existing public utilities support such development. However,

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Chicopee is significantly built-out, so land use regulations need to focus more on redevelopment efforts. Today, the vast majority of Chicopee's 15,260 acres is residential, totaling more than 5,011 acres. Undeveloped land is the second most prolific land use, at approximately 4,257 acres. But this is followed closely by transportation at approximately 2,347 acres, demonstrating Chicopee's extensive road and highway network. Urban open/public land constitutes 1,209 acres, with commercial land (approximately 577 acres) and industrial land (approximately 622 acres) making up the rest of the City's urban fabric. Water comprises almost 670 acres of land in Chicopee, and there are 426 acres of outdoor recreational land throughout City. The final 166 acres of land are characterized as agricultural, again signifying the City's character. Please refer to Map 6-3: Land Use.

Given the limited quantity and quality of suitable land for development, future growth is expected to follow the pattern of recent years including infill of existing developed areas and reuse and rehabilitation of existing land and structures. The primary commercial and industrial growth pattern in Chicopee over the last decade has been in the Airparks created from surplus land from Westover Reserve Base. Some development has taken place outside the parks as discussed previously and expansion of existing business and creative reuse of older facilities. The Chicopee River Business Park is ready for tenants and build-out for the park is expected to take place over the next ten years. This will provide long-term tax base expansion and new job growth. Residential growth will continue as infill in existing neighborhoods and as small subdivisions on old family holdings now being sold off or on less desirable parcels for which the demand now justifies the cost of development.





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## Section IV: Environmental Inventory & Analysis

### Geology, Soils & Topography • • • • •

**Geology:** The City of Chicopee lies within the boundaries of the Connecticut River Valley, which is underlain by metamorphic and igneous rocks known as the Portland Formation (Little). The City, in its entirety, lies to the east of the Connecticut River and is bisected by the Chicopee River which flows into the Connecticut at Chicopee Center. Geologically, Chicopee's topographical features are very young having been created as a result of glacial action that ended about 10,000 years ago.

The Connecticut Valley's geologic birth occurred primarily during the Mesozoic Era (225-65 million years ago). During this period of time, the supercontinent of Pangaea split, initially forming the present day Atlantic Ocean. 'Rift valleys,' or smaller faults formed due to stretching stresses on the land, formed the initial drainage basin of the early Connecticut Valley. Lava flows and sedimentation were primary events during this period. Lava flows, some up to 100 feet thick, resulted in what would become elevated ridges that are today prominent landmarks (i.e. the Holyoke Range). Massive sedimentary processes allowed for the creation of fossilized dinosaur footprints and fossil fish records that have brought worldwide acclaim to the region (Little, Earth View, LLC).

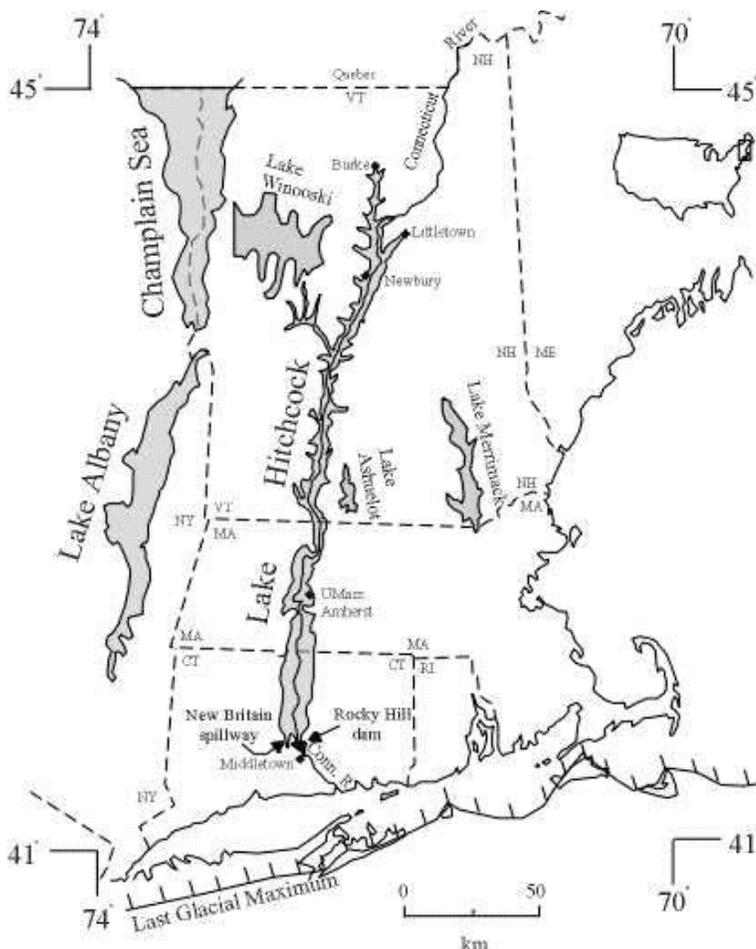


Figure 4-1: Glacial Lake Hitchcock  
(<http://www.bio.umass.edu/biology/conn.river/hitchcock.html>)

By the end of the Mesozoic, the Eastern Border Fault had been inactive for over 70 million years, which allowed the newly formed basin to fill with sedimentary deposits. Over time, the area that would become Chicopee was smoothed by erosion, becoming part of a peneplain, or regional erosional plane (Little, Earth View, LLC).

During the Cenozoic Era (65 million years ago to present day), two major forces will shape the contemporary Connecticut Valley and Chicopee: uplift and glaciation. Uplift forces result in the peneplain being raised hundreds of feet, resulting in the down-cutting of streams which have created present-day valley forms (Emerson). Erosion proceeded quickly in sedimentary areas and more slowly in others, creating the ridge lines that continue to be major valley features today (Little, Earth View, LLC).

The region's last glacier was at its maximum extent roughly 20,000 years ago. The Laurentide ice sheet which began to melt

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approximately 18,000 years ago covered the Connecticut Valley. Sediments deposited in a pro-glacial lake in present-day Rocky Hill, CT acted as a dam to the Connecticut Valley that impounded glacial melt water north of the area, resulting in Glacial Lake Hitchcock – which extended from Rocky Hill to St. Johnsbury, VT (Figure 1). By 12,000 years ago the natural dam was eroded through, effectively draining Lake Hitchcock. Prior, layers of sediment were deposited seasonally at the bottom of the lake in layers known as varves (layers of silt and sand interspersed with layers of clay) which can be counted like tree rings to estimate the age of a lakebed (Rittenour).

Based on a count of varves within the Valley, Lake Hitchcock is estimated to have existed for at least 4,100 years. During this period a tremendous volume of sediment laden water originating in the Belchertown Plateau filled the Chicopee River, and other tributaries, resulting in the creation of large flat areas known as deltas. As the Chicopee River flowed into Lake Hitchcock these sediments were deposited creating a delta where the water bodies converged. Westover Air Reserve Base (WARB) is constructed on top of one such delta (Rittenour). Please refer to Map 7-1: Surficial Geology

**Soils:** The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service identifies two soil associations that constitute a majority of Chicopee’s acreage: Urban Land-Hadley-Winooski Association (west) and the Urban Land-Hickley-Windsor Association (central-east). Any potential prime farmland soils are located outside of these two Urban Land Soil Associations as seen on Map 7-1: Soil Characteristics. Additionally these Urban Land Soils showcase the significant build out and redevelopment of Chicopee’s area through time.

A majority of Chicopee’s soils originated from the sand delta that formed when glacial waters flowed down the Chicopee River to Lake Hitchcock. Soils are classified from sandy loams to silt loams. Sand deposits are underlain by bedrock composed of shale, sandstone and conglomerate, mostly red in color. Clay from the old lake bottom has been exposed in various places along the face of terrace escarpments where the two rivers cut through the delta after Lake Hitchcock drained.

Overall Chicopee’s soils are deep, sandy and well drained - easily supportive of septic systems although in some cases systems must be designed to slow down infiltration. The soils also support current initiatives for on-site retention of stormwater for new development and redevelopment. Erosion is an on-going concern where terrace escarpment soils are exposed to human activity including construction, point source discharges and recreational activities. Chicopee’s Conservation Commission has adopted strict regulations to protect terrace escarpment soils from further impact.

Chicopee’s Zoning Ordinances do not extend protection to topographically challenged areas including slopes exceeding 25% or resource areas other than floodplain identified on July, 2013 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps. It is likely that this lack of protection will be reviewed as part of the future advancement of city-wide comprehensive planning and associated zoning updates. Please refer to Map 7-3: Soils & Map 7-2: Soil Characteristics.

**Topography:** The region’s geologic evolution has resulted in Chicopee’s land area being predominantly defined by glacial, early post-glacial and post glacial sedimentary deposits. Only three small areas within the City are identified as having abundant rock outcrops and/or shallow bedrock. Fine glaciolacustrine deposits define

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the boundary between the alluvial flood plain of the Connecticut River to the west and coarse glacial deposits covering a significant area of Chicopee (eastern portion of the City). These fine glaciolacustrine deposits define the most significant topographic change (terrace escarpments) within the City and likely correlate to the historic edge of Lake Hitchcock. Please refer to Map 7-1: Surficial Geology.

Some areas of significant slope (15-35% slopes) beyond those identified as terrace escarpments also exist in the eastern portion of the City. Development of these areas is significantly higher in cost and would result increased risk of environmental degradation. Please refer to Map 7-4 Topography

Today, the relative elevation of the City is approximately 176 feet above sea level. The lowest point in the City is 41 feet above sea level at the confluence of the Connecticut and Chicopee Rivers. The highest point in the City is located in the Burnett Road neighborhood at an elevation of approximately 343 feet. Please refer to Map 7-1: Surficial Geology

## Landscape Character



Figure 4-2: Chicopee Falls ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicopee\\_River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicopee_River))

Chicopee's built environment was dictated by the constraints of the natural landscape. Willimansett is physically separated from the terrace areas of Aldenville and Fairview by the Willimansett bluffs – the edge of the Connecticut River flood plain. Topography, wetlands and streams shaped historical development patterns and transportation routes. Neighborhood boundaries coincided with distinctive landscape features that formed visual barriers, physical obstacles for travel, or complicated farming or business ventures.

Man-made features have also played a role in the geographic partitioning of the City.

Rail lines were initially constructed adjacent to both rivers, limiting river access throughout the City. The Massachusetts Turnpike effectively isolated the Sandy Hill and Burnett Road areas, and Westover Air Force Base created a neighborhood of its own. The construction of I-391 created a significant barrier between the Chicopee Center neighborhood and the Connecticut River.

There are several wonderfully scenic vistas across the City offering views of the Connecticut and Chicopee Rivers, as follows:

**Connecticut River Views:** The Willimansett Bluffs curve through the Willimansett and Aldenville sections of the city offering views of neighboring cities and the Holyoke Mountain Range. The James Street Bluffs wind through the Fairview section of the city offering views of the Holyoke Dam and South Hadley Falls and

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**Figure 4-3: Willimansett Bridge over the Connecticut River**

*(<http://lifeonabridged.blogspot.com/2012/02/willimansett-bridge-holyoke-chicopee-ma.html>)*

beyond. The bluffs are comprised of steep terraced escarpments dissected in places by deep ravines. The flood control dikes along the Connecticut River also provide scenic views of the Connecticut River to the west and the bluffs at the edge of the Connecticut River flood plain to the east.

Additionally, the Willimansett Bridge, originally constructed in 1891 serves as an excellent view point over the Connecticut River. The bridge is currently closed to vehicular traffic for the completion of an approximately \$21 million rehabilitation project slated for completion in 2015.

**Chicopee River Views:** A fantastic view of the Chicopee River as well a glimpse into the city of Springfield is proffered by a high point overlooking the former Oxford County Club. The Bircham Bend Chicopee River oxbow puts on spectacular seasonal displays. The Oxford County Club and adjacent City of Springfield properties have been combined to form the Chicopee River Business Park, described in more detail elsewhere in this report.

The Deady, Davitt, and Veteran's Memorial Bridges offer viewings of the Chicopee River. The Deady Bridge is a fine place to enjoy views of Chicopee Falls. The Falls are never dry, even during low water times in the summer. In the winter they often display picturesque cascades of icicles.

While each of these views are beloved community gems, these scenic landscapes have not spared from urbanization and development. Currently the city is working to better protect these environmental gems. This process is detailed in subsequent sections. Please refer to Map 8: Unique Features & Scenic Resources.

**BioMap2:** The character of the landscape offers more than scenic views of rivers that once powered an industrial revolution and inspired the growth of a city and the many exquisite historic homes and buildings. Chicopee's urban landscape is also home some important plant and animal habitat. In 2012, the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, and The Nature Conservancy, developed BioMap2 to protect the state's biodiversity in the context of climate change. The plan identifies two complementary spatial layers: Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscapes. Core Habitat identifies specific areas necessary to promote the long-term persistence of rare species, other Species of Special Concern, exemplary natural communities, and intact ecosystems. Critical Natural Landscape identifies intact landscapes in Massachusetts that are better able to support ecological processes and disturbance regimes, and a wide array of species and habitats over long time frames. A summary of BioMap2 habitats is provided herein, and discussed in more detail in later sections of this chapter.



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essentially built out. However, two large undeveloped parcels on the south bank, located at the confluence of the Chicopee and Connecticut Rivers and the Chicopee River Business Park oxbow, warrant attention for their potential to provide access.

**Connecticut River:** On June 27, 1998, President Clinton named the Connecticut River one of only fourteen American Heritage Rivers in the nation. In 2012, then Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar signed a Secretarial Order establishing a National Blueways System and announced that the 410-mile-long Connecticut River and its 7.2 million-acre watershed will be the first National Blueway— covering areas of Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut. Congress eliminated this program in 2013 making the Connecticut River the only National Blueway.

Both designations have brought recognition, assistance and possible funding from the federal government to aid communities and institutions in the four-state valley in achieving their economic revitalization, environmental conservation and cultural preservation goals. Various programmatic objectives have included riverfront revitalization, access for people and for spawning fish, CSO abatement, riverbank erosion abatement and restoration, scenic views promotion in farming areas and watershed-based initiatives to prevent and mitigate non-point source pollution to the river.

The Connecticut River north of the Holyoke Dam flows through a pastoral setting only recently affected by the pressures of residential development. The riverbanks south of the dam have been subjected to the effects of urban industrial development since the early nineteenth century.

The Holyoke Dam also demarcates a change in water quality. North of the dam the river, once infamous for its pollution, has been reclaimed. This section of the river currently is used extensively for boating, fishing, swimming and other forms of water based recreation. South of the dam, despite reduction of industrial wastes, combined sewer overflows continue to make the water unsafe for primary contact for 48-72 hours after a storm event due to elevated E. coli levels. The Connecticut River Bacteria Monitoring Project has sampled weekly from May to September popular river access spots, including the Median Street boat ramp, for the past six years. Water quality data for these six years can be viewed at [www.connecticutriver.us](http://www.connecticutriver.us).

## Chicopee River Tributaries

*Bisbee Brook* originates in Springfield and flows north as an intermittent stream joining the Chicopee River a short distance from the mouth of Abbey Brook. This short brook drains a developed area and has marginal value as an open space resource.

*Poor Brook* also originates in Springfield flowing northward across Springfield conservation land, residential subdivisions, and the Chicopee River Business Park into the Chicopee River adjacent to Oxford Marsh.

*Cooley Brook* originates within a 200-acre headwater wetland and inland meadow in the Town of Ludlow. Much of the watershed is included within the boundaries of the Chicopee Municipal Golf Course off Burnett Road. Cooley Brook is the main feeder of the Chicopee Reservoir, the City's main water supply until Chicopee tied

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into the Quabbin Reservoir in 1949. The old reservoir is now part of the Chicopee Memorial State Park and has been developed as a high-use, active recreation area. The total acreage is 575 acres including two 25-acre ponds. Cooley Brook's associated marsh almost is completely contained by the park boundaries and offers protection for wildlife and opportunities for the more intrepid hiker to explore a relatively unspoiled natural environment. Cooley Brook continues from the reservoir southwest to its junction with the Chicopee River approximately three-fourths of a mile above Chicopee Falls.

*Fuller Brook* originates in Ludlow where it is called Higher Brook. It winds through the southeast corner of Chicopee to meet the Chicopee River at Bircham Bend, a meander located where the river crosses the boundary between the cities of Springfield and Chicopee. Much of this stream is steeply banked and undeveloped. Fuller Brook is regularly monitored for possible effects from either of the large landfills flanking its banks on either side. The Oregon Sportsmen's Club, a private club controlling 49.6 acres of residentially zoned land, is located on the southern bank of Fuller Brook. The Massachusetts' Department of Fisheries and Wildlife has identified Fuller Brook as a Cold Water Fisheries Resource. These are environmentally sensitive streams found throughout Massachusetts that provide important habitat for native cold water fisheries.

*Abbey Brook* originates in the City of Springfield. The brook flows through Szot Park, a 69.7-acre recreational area, and into the Chicopee River. The brook was dammed in the past to create an ice pond. Once suitable for swimming, Bemis Pond would require extensive work to return to active recreational use but is suitable for passive recreational uses such as hiking and picnicking along its banks.

*Hearthstone Brook* flows from the northeast to the southwest into the Chicopee River. Hearthstone Brook was the subject of an award for a successful bioengineering stream restoration project.

*Girl Scout Brook* is an old brook with a new name that is located east of the Chicopee reservoir.

## **Connecticut River Tributaries**

*Chicopee River* described in more detail above.

*Willimansett Brook* crosses Chicopee from east to west. It is channeled, piped and dammed at various places along its course, eventually joining the Connecticut River north of the Willimansett/Holyoke Bridge.

*Theroux Brook* flows into the Connecticut River close to Chicopee's northeast boundary. In the late 1990s this brook was the subject of a reclamation project.

*Stony Brook* is part of an extensive watershed that includes parts of Chicopee, Ludlow and South Hadley. It flows into the Connecticut River in South Hadley. The Chicopee section is located within the Westover ARB and is not accessible to the public.

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## **Ponds**

*Coburn Pond* is a shallow one-and-a-half acre private pond located off Coburn Street in Willimansett. The pond is used for fishing and skating and could be made suitable for public use. The pond is fed by a small stream that has cut a deep ravine into the Willimansett bluffs from an area of Montgomery Street.

*Pond Lily* is a local designation for large swamp located on the northern fringe of the City. This wetland system crosses into the Town of Granby on the north and is probably connected to wetlands in the Town of Ludlow on the east. The system appears to have been interrupted by the construction of Westover Air Force Base in the late 1930's. The marsh is crossed by New Ludlow Road and Old Ludlow Road and is adjacent to the Granby landfill facility. Although a large section of this system appears to be undisturbed there is some development in the area. A junk yard is located near this wetland system, sufficiently out view so as to escape regular monitoring for wetlands impacts and expansion into resource areas.

*Roberts Pond (a.k.a. Mountain Lake)* in earlier open space plans has been described as “a large, attractive, and potentially problematic area in north central Chicopee.” Roberts Pond was created by damming the Willimansett Brook as part of a flood control project after devastating floods in the 1930s. The pond is a privately owned. In 2005 the dam was breached and the lake was drawn down by order of the Office of Dam Safety. Willimansett Brook is now reestablishing itself in the former lake bed while the owner decides his next course of action. There have been rumors that a turtle conservation organization may be interested in purchasing the property and rebuilding the dam. This would be an agreeable solution to the problem but it is anticipated that the cost may be prohibitive.

*Langewald Pond* is upstream from Roberts Pond and is also part of the Willimansett Brook drainage system. The pond is almost completely filled with sediment.

## **Vernal Pools**

Chicopee has six Certified Vernal Pools and twenty-two Potential Vernal Pools (identified by NHESP from aerial photography, needing verification on the ground). In addition, areas of swamps will provide habitat for vernal pool species. Visiting and evaluating Potential Vernal Pools for certification would provide more protection to these wetlands and the species that use them. Since the previous OSRP was completed, three Potential Vernal Pools have been certified.

## **Flood Hazard Areas**

The Connecticut River's natural floodplain is developed with residential, commercial and industrial properties. Access to the Connecticut River in Chicopee is limited by a three mile flood protection dike constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers following a severe flood in 1936. The dike's location minimizes the flood hazard areas along the Connecticut River to a narrow strip between the dike and the river. Access to the river can be achieved through a State operated boat ramp off Medina Street.

The average annual precipitation for Chicopee and surrounding areas in western Massachusetts is 46 inches. The Floodplain Map for Chicopee shows the 100-year and 500-year flood zones identified by FEMA flood

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maps. The 100-year flood zone is the area that will be covered by water as a result of a flood that has a one percent chance of occurring in any given year. Likewise, the 500-year flood has a 0.2 percent chance of occurring in any given year.



**Figure 4-5: Flooding at Connecticut & Chicopee River Delta**  
(Lee M. Pouliot)

In Chicopee, the flood plain of the Connecticut River is a narrow band that follows the City's western border. The 500-year floodplain for the Connecticut River is slightly larger than the 100-year floodplain, and located north of Bolduc Lane along Route 116. There are several residential structures within the Connecticut River's 500-year floodplain. The floodplain for the Chicopee River is larger than that of the Connecticut River. The mouth of the Chicopee River has the second largest amount of floodplain land in Chicopee; is the floodplain area downstream from Dwight Dam, sections of the Interstate-391 on/off-ramp are located. The largest amount of floodplain land in Chicopee is upstream

from the Chicopee Dam. Here, the floodplain can be located by finding the intersection of Morton Lane and Fuller Road; the floodlands in this section of town contain two EPA Tier II facilities (Brownfields).

The major floods recorded in Western Massachusetts during the 20th century have been the result of rainfall alone or rainfall combined with snowmelt. Chicopee has experienced local flooding events over the last decade. In October 2005 the city experienced 15 inches of rainfall in two weeks, causing basement flooding, roadside drainage washouts, and property damage. Generally, these small floods have had minor impacts, temporarily impacting roads and residents' yards and basements. In September 2008 the city experienced nine inches of rain in several days. Steadman and Lorraine Streets were flooded and impassable and yards and basements along the streets were flooded.

**Flooding (100-year base flood):** There are approximately 611 acres of land within the FEMA mapped 100-year floodplain and 85 acres of land within the 500-year floodplain within the City of Chicopee. According to the Community Information System (CIS) of FEMA, there were 25 structures located within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) in Chicopee as of August 1999, the most current records in the CIS for the City of Chicopee. Therefore, a vulnerability assessment for a 100-year flood equals approximately \$4.5 million of damage, with approximately 65 people impacted. Specific vulnerability assessments were estimated for sites within the SFHA which have been susceptible to 100-year floods in the past, they are described below.

Buckley Boulevard/ Fuller Road Area:

- NW Chicopee on the Connecticut River and SE Chicopee on the Chicopee River.
- \$4.5 million potential damage but no recorded flooding in last 50 years - Cost for replacing or

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repairing any power lines, telephone lines and contents of structures not included.

**Flooding (localized):** In addition to the floodplains mapped by FEMA for the 100-year and 500-year flood, Chicopee often experiences minor flooding at isolated locations due to drainage problems, or problem culverts. Most of the flood hazard areas listed here were identified due to known past occurrence in the respective area. There are many areas with no record of previous flood incidents that could be affected in the future by heavy rain and runoff. Additionally, the vast majority of culverts throughout the City tend to be impacted by beavers, so localized flooding can potentially occur at any culvert crossing.

The Local Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan (2007) identified the vulnerability of the City to localized flood events, the property within identified areas was visually analyzed using aerial photography (Pictometry), which allowed structures to be identified and tallied. Specific vulnerability assessments were estimated for sites which have been susceptible to localized flooding in the past, and are described below.

## Steadman and Lorraine Streets

- Low place/street and basement flooding
- Intermittent problem -- when we get heavy rain in short duration
- Vulnerability assessment: \$2.7 million - Cost for repairing or replacing any power lines, telephone lines, and contents of structures are not included

## Roy Street/ Shaw Park Avenue

- Low place/street and basement flooding
- Intermittent problem -- when we get heavy rain in short duration
- Vulnerability assessment: \$1.5 million - Cost for repairing or replacing any power lines, telephone lines, and contents of structures are not included

## Fuller Road

- Low place/street and basement flooding
- Intermittent problem -- when we get heavy rain in short duration.
- Vulnerability assessment: \$4.5 million - Cost for repairing or replacing any power lines, telephone lines, and contents of structures are not included

## East Main Street

- Low place/street and basement flooding
- Intermittent problem -- when we get heavy rain in short duration.
- Vulnerability assessment: \$2 million - Cost for repairing or replacing any power lines, telephone lines, and contents of structures are not included

## Recreation

Recreational use of both the Connecticut River and the Chicopee River along Chicopee shorefronts is limited. Most of the Connecticut River frontage is separated from the developed portion for the City by flood control dikes, steep slopes and the railroad tracks. Boating on the Connecticut, accessed from the Medina and Syrek Streets (Berchulski Fisherman Access) boat ramps, is common and both rivers are used for fishing. The shoals on the Chicopee River near Chicopee Center are a favorite fishing spot. River access from the planned



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Figure 4-6: Downtown Cherry Trees (Jim Dawson)

*Ascomycota*) has significantly diminished the prominence and stature of the American Elm (U.S. Forest Service). Other forest species include Ash (*Fraxinus* spp.) have filled in space once occupied by these two species.

During the early days of settlement, the City's forests were cleared for agricultural production. As populations grew and further development occurred, additional forested areas were cleared to support a growing population. Through the Industrial Revolution and the development of Westover Air Reserve Base (WARB) and a rush of mid-century sub-division of former agricultural land, the City has experienced the severe fragmentation and isolation of these once dominant forests and agricultural lands.

Today, this fragmentation is quite apparent. Chicopee, often described as land poor has experienced the development of the most 'buildable' land throughout the City – leaving undeveloped, forested areas surrounding steep slopes, water resources and wetland areas. Map 9-2: Vegetation showcases this distribution throughout the City and correlates with data representing undeveloped areas.

Prime Forestland, as defined by GIS analysis completed by the Department of Natural Resources Conservation at the University of Massachusetts - Amherst is predominantly associated with the above described remaining forest fragments associated with slopes, water resources and wetland areas. Minimal crop land, pasture and brushland exist throughout the City. Currently, forested areas are not planned, managed or protected by the City, any organization or agency, unless they are associated with forestland within Chicopee State Park, under the management of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCR).

Significant managed grassland/bird habitat exists within the boundaries of Westover Air Reserve Base. A second area of 'created' grasslands has been installed on the site of the City's new Senior Center: RiverMills Center. Prior to construction, the property was home to the Facemate industrial complex and was known as a major Brownfields redevelopment project in the City. The landscape is intended to be a managed meadow and habitat area along the Chicopee River. Only in its second year of growth, the City expects this new grassland/meadow to be significant landscape feature in the future – one that challenges the conventional idea of the highly managed, public landscape.

**2013 Tree Management Plan:** Chicopee's urban forest is important to human health and well-being as well as to wildlife that have found a way to co-exist in this urban environment. In 2013, with grant funding received from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service through its Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Grant Program, the City hired the Davey Resource Group to complete a comprehensive Street Tree Inventory and to develop a Tree Management Plan for the City.

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The 2013 inventory included trees, stumps and planting sites along public street rights-of-way (ROW) and in specified parks and public properties. The City also selected Szot Park to be included in the inventory. A total of 15,043 sites were recorded during the inventory: 8,915 planting sites, 5,805 individual trees, and 323 stumps. A summary of the inventory is as follows:

- The overall condition of the inventoried tree population was rated fair;
- Maintenance needs recommended during the inventory include planting (59%), pruning (36%) and tree/stump removal (5%);
- Maple (*Acer* spp.) composes such a large percentage of the street ROW inventory (41%) that it threatens biodiversity; and
- Overall, the diameter size class distribution of the inventoried tree population trended away from the ideal with a greater number of mature trees than young, established or maturing trees.

Trees provide many environmental and economic benefits that justify spending the time and money for planting and maintenance. Reducing tree-related risk should be prioritized so that those with the highest risk are addressed first. The inventory noted several Severe and High Risk trees (<1% and 11% of trees assessed, respectively). These trees should be removed or pruned immediately to promote public safety. Moderate and Low Risk trees should be addressed after all elevated risk tree maintenance has been completed. Trees should be planted to mitigate removals and increase canopy cover throughout the City.

Chicopee's urban forest will benefit from a three-year young tree training cycle and a seven-year routine pruning cycle. Proactive pruning cycles improve the overall health of the tree population and may eventually reduce program costs. In most cases, pruning cycles will correct defects in trees before they worsen, which will avoid costly problems. Based on inventory data, at least 205 young trees should be structurally pruned each year during the young tree training cycle and approximately 445 trees should be cleaned during the routine pruning cycle each year.

Davey did not recommend pruning Ash (*Fraxinus* spp.) trees at this time because Emerald Ash Borer (*Agilus planipennis*) (EAB) has been found in Dalton, Massachusetts, and these trees will require separate treatment. EAB is an exotic, invasive pest affecting Ash trees. All Ash trees in a community typically die within 10 years of EAB infestation. Chicopee's trees show minor signs of EAB and it is recommended that the City further inspect its Ash tree population in order to verify EAB presence. The City should take steps to mitigate the impact of EAB on its Ash tree population and reduce the impacts of canopy loss.

Additional invasive pests and diseases of concern for Chicopee's urban forest include the following:

- Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) (*Anoplophora glabripennis*) an exotic beetle that is threatening hardwood forest species in North America;
- Dutch Elm Disease (DED) a fungus that attacks and kills the American Elm (*Ulmus americana*) and may impact hybrid cultivars of the species ;
- Gypsy Moth (GM) (*Lymantria dispar*) a European moth species that can impact more than 300 species of trees and shrubs;
- Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) (*Adelges tsugae*) attacks native hemlock species and can damage/kill

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- a tree within years of an infestation;
- Oak Wilt caused by fungus (*Ceratocystis fagacearum*) affects most species of Oak, but is most devastating to species within the red oak subgenus; and
- Sirex woodwasp (*Sirex noctilio*) an exotic species that attacks live pine species.

Planting trees is necessary to maintain canopy cover and to replace trees that have been removed or lost to natural mortality (expected to be 1–3% per year) or other threats (for example, construction, invasive pests or impacts from weather events such as storms, wind, ice, snow, flooding and drought). The Plan recommends planting at least 116 trees of a variety of species each year to offset these losses and increase canopy and maximum benefits. Citywide tree planting should focus on creating canopy in areas that promote economic growth (such as business districts), in parking lots and near buildings with insufficient shade and where there are gaps in the existing canopy. Trees of varied species should be planted; however, the planting of Maple (*Acer* spp.) should continue to be restricted until the species distribution normalizes.

Adequate funding will be needed for the City to implement an effective management program that will provide short- and long-term public benefit, to ensure that priority maintenance is performed expediently, and to establish proactive maintenance cycles. The estimated total cost for the first year of this five-year program is \$293,000; this total will decrease to approximately \$102,000 per year by year four of the program. High-priority removal and pruning is costly; most of this work is scheduled during years one and two of the program, which is why the budget is higher for those years. After this priority work has been completed, the urban forestry program will mostly involve proactive work, which is generally less costly so budgets for later years are projected to be lower. Supporting proactive management of trees through funding will, over the long term, reduce municipal tree care management costs and possibly the costs to build, manage and support city infrastructure.

## Tree Planting Initiatives

Other recent initiatives to preserve, protect and increase the planting of public shade trees include the City's tree planting and replacement ordinance, and a cooperative effort between the City and civic organizations to initiate regular tree plantings. The City also negotiated a large donation of trees for planting in public places from Waste Management Incorporated as part of an expansion program for Chicopee's remaining operating landfill. Hundreds of new trees have been planted since April 2000. Discussions about a tree and nursery program in cooperation with the Chicopee Comprehensive High School Horticultural Department, Parks and Recreation, Forestry and the Planning Department are ongoing.

Chicopee has regularly applied for and received the Tree City USA designation from the National Arbor Foundation. In 1999 the City successfully competed for a DEM Heritage Tree grant to preserve two sycamores in Chicopee Center estimated to have been standing since the 1840s. In 2000 the City received another DEM grant to enhance the plantings for the Theroux Brook stream reclamation bioengineering project mentioned earlier in this Section.

Finally, the City was selected as a recipient for a grant award from the 2015 TD Green Streets Program administered by TD Bank and the Arbor Day Foundation. The \$20,000 grant will support the planting of approximately 160 bare root trees throughout the neighborhoods of Chicopee Center, Chicopee Falls and Willimansett. Additionally, some funds are programmed to assist in the establishment of the City's Urban



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City parks and undeveloped lots and therefore supports a much wider assortment of bird species. Marsh wrens, redwing blackbirds, Savannah sparrows, swamp sparrows and bobolinks are common in marsh areas and along streams and ponds. Upland sandpipers and grasshopper sparrows --endangered birds in Massachusetts -- have been observed in the vicinity of Westover Air Reserve Base (WARB).



**Figure 4-7: Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*)**  
([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upland\\_sandpiper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upland_sandpiper))



**Figure 4-8: Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*)** (Jack Moriarty)

The old Chicopee Reservoir and Fuller Brook, a designated Coldwater Fisheries Resource by Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassDFW), are stocked with trout. A native population of brook trout can be found in Cooley Brook.

The Connecticut and Chicopee Rivers are the largest fishing resources in the City and serve as the most important wildlife habitat corridors in the City and the urban core of the Pioneer Valley. In the spring the two rivers team with shad migrating upstream to spawn. Northern pike also migrate downstream to the Chicopee River from the Quaboag River in Ware. Of particular interest is the breeding population of the endangered shortnose sturgeon found in the Connecticut's waters.

MassDFW lists 37 species of fish in the lower portion of the Connecticut River within the Massachusetts border.

## **Rare, Endangered and Species of Special Concern**

Habitat for three of the uncommon bird species in Chicopee is the grasslands at and near Westover Air Reserve Base (WARB), BioMap2 Core 1527. These species were generally more abundant when there were more pastures and hayfields in the state. Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow and Upland Sandpiper now make good use of habitat found in man-created and maintained grasslands, including airports. Henslow's Sparrows inhabit open fields where vegetation is comprised of a dense growth of grass, weeds or clover. Some scattered shrubs may be present but extensive shrubby growth makes fields unsuitable. Grasshopper

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Sparrows nest in dry grasslands. Natural situations include sandplain grasslands, but they have adapted well to anthropogenic habitats such as airports and landfills. They are very sensitive to changes in plant composition and respond well to the effects of fire management. In Massachusetts, Upland Sandpiper a slender, moderate-sized shorebird, is restricted to open expanses of grassy fields, hay fields and mown grassy strips adjacent to runways, taxiways of airports and military bases.

The Peregrine Falcon is a beautiful raptor (bird of prey) with long, pointed wings and a long, slightly rounded tail. Currently, Peregrines are often dependent on humans to create nesting sites (boxes on bridges and tall buildings), but they also use a few traditional nesting sites (eyries) located on rocky cliffs. The successful Chicopee nest is in a box that was attached to the MassPike bridge over the Connecticut River in 2011 where Peregrines had been observed attempting to nest for several years. Sharp-shinned Hawks, not reported to breed in Chicopee since 1884, nest in mixed woodlands and coniferous forests, often with nearby open areas where they hunt. They are sensitive to disturbances around the nest, but they do occasionally nest near human development. Increased urbanization and reduction in their favored habitat are likely linked to their absence from Chicopee.

Since turtles travel to nesting areas as adults, they are susceptible to becoming road kill when their routes cross roads. Loss of even a few adults a year can have strong negative effects on the viability of turtle populations; from a conservation perspective, this means that unfragmented habitats are particularly important to maintaining turtle populations. Box Turtles are terrestrial turtles inhabiting many dry and moist woodland habitats. In Massachusetts, their densest populations are in the southeastern part of the state, although they occur in Chicopee and further north in the Connecticut Valley where the scattered populations are particularly susceptible to disruptions. Wood Turtles, known only historically in Chicopee, spend most of their time in streams and associated uplands, preferably with long corridors of undeveloped, connected uplands extending on both sides of the waterways. Strong populations of Spotted Turtles in good habitat - large, unfragmented, protected open space - continue to be of interest for conservation. This small, dark-colored turtle with yellow spots on its carapace use a mix of habitats – dry open uplands for nesting, and forested and non-forested wetlands and their edges for basking, foraging, mating and overwintering. Vernal pools and larger wetlands are important for Spotted Turtles.

Blue-spotted Salamanders breed in vernal pools, but live in the forest floor leaf litter in surrounding uplands for most of their adult lives. For most salamander species like Blue-spotted Salamanders, clusters of vernal pools provide important habitat options, as does maintaining forested areas around breeding pools. BioMap2 Core 1527 which includes the grasslands and wetlands at WARB includes habitat for these salamanders. Four-toed Salamanders (Delisted) are no longer listed under MESA (the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act) but remain of conservation concern. They are also known from BioMap2 Core 1527, but in a different area that meets its particular habitat needs for building nests in sphagnum or sedge hummocks above streams or other open water that the young can drop into after hatching. When not breeding, adults are in surrounding forests. Eastern Spadefoot, has not been reported in Chicopee since 1866, when its favored habitat of undeveloped sand plains would have been more abundant and less fragmented. This burrowing species requires dry, sand or sandy loam soils characteristic of Pitch Pine barrens, oak woodlands or sparse shrub growth, interspersed with temporary ponds where it breeds after prolonged warm and heavy rains.

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The two rare fish species known to be present in Chicopee have different but overlapping habitat requirements. In the Connecticut River, two populations of Shortnose Sturgeons are landlocked, moving between dams, spawning in rocky, fast flowing sections of the river and its tributaries and spending winters in deeper areas of the main stem where they are bottom feeders. These federally endangered fish do not mature until they are 5 to 10 years old and can live into their 20s. They are in the very large BioMap2 core 2943 that also provides habitat for many other species of conservation concern, making protecting water quality and quantity a priority. From an open space perspective, providing as much buffer to the river and its tributaries as possible would help maintain water quality. Last reported in Chicopee in the early 1940s and found in the Chicopee River, Longnose Sucker is a torpedo-shaped fish, is usually less than 20 inches long. It is found mainly in cool upper sections of streams and rivers with rocky to gravel substrates. These fish may swim miles to deposit their eggs on clean and well oxygenated gravel substrates.

Of the eleven uncommon invertebrates that NHESP has data on in Chicopee, five species are freshwater mussels, two of which were known in Chicopee only in the past. All occur or occurred only from the Connecticut River which provides the diversity of habitats needed by these species that are best known for indicating good water quality. Freshwater mussels are sedentary filter feeders that spend most of their lives partially burrowed into the bottoms of rivers and streams. Some species are more likely to be found in sand, others in mud; some seem to prefer faster water than others. As with other aquatic species, protecting land buffering the river is a good way to preserve them and their habitats. Two species of uncommon dragonflies also use the habitats of the Connecticut River and its surroundings with adults inhabiting surrounding uplands, and returning to the river to mate and lay eggs.

The four MESA listed butterflies and moths known from Chicopee are those of dry, open, disturbance dependent habitats on sandy soils rather than rivers. The species use different microhabitats within the WARB grasslands and their shrubby edges.

**Table 4-2: Rare & Endangered Vertebrates** (NHESP, Nov. 2014)

Scientific Name	Common Name	MESA Status	Most Recent Year
<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	Sharp-shinned Hawk	SC	1884
<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>	Shortnose Sturgeon (fish)	E	1999
<i>Ambystoma laterale</i>	Blue-spotted Salamander	SC	2009
<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	Grasshopper Sparrow	T	2012
<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	Upland Sandpiper	E	2012
<i>Catostomus catostomus</i>	Longnose Sucker (fish)	SC	1940s
<i>Clemmys guttata</i>	Spotted Turtle	Delisted	1994
<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Peregrine Falcon	E	2010
<i>Glyptemys insculpta</i>	Wood Turtle	SC	Historic
<i>Hemidactylium scutatum</i>	Four-toed Salamander	Delisted	1994
<i>Poecetes gramineus</i>	Vesper Salamander	T	2009
<i>Scaphiopus holbrookii</i>	Eastern Spadefoot (toad)	T	1866
<i>Terrapene carolina</i>	Eastern Box Turtle	SC	2009



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these areas range from flat to steep slopes with both open and wooded areas. The escarpments are attractive for nature and wildlife study areas, and hiking and picnicking. However, soils in these areas are highly erodible and human activity should be limited.

## **Confluence of the Chicopee and Connecticut Rivers**

The confluence area, also known as the delta, provides unique opportunities for wildlife habitat and management, fishing, and active and passive recreation. The area is vegetated with cottonwood, red and silver maple, black locust, scotch and red pine, shrubs and grasses. The dike system along the Chicopee River and around Medina Street provides access to the northeastern portion of the confluence area for shore fishing or informal hiking trails.

## **End Street**

At the terminus of End Street a large tract of undeveloped land borders the Chicopee River. The site is approximately 150 acres consisting of oak, maple, black locust, mulberry, native shrubs and grasses. Unofficially, it offers hikers a scenic two-mile walk along the Chicopee River with suitable areas available for fishing and picnicking. Development proposals have been submitted for this area, but have been denied due to a general lack of suitability of this land for development. Public opinion to keep this area open was strongly voiced at public hearings. Property is still in private ownership, however, and therefore still vulnerable to development.

## **Local Parks**

Chicopee's local parks provide active and passive recreation opportunities. A complete inventory of local parks is provided in Section 5.

## **Chicopee Memorial State Park**

Chicopee State Park is a large state owned property that offers scenic views, walking trails, picnicking, swimming, camping, hunting, ice-skating, nature observation, and fishing. More information on Chicopee Memorial State Park is available at:

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-west/chicopee-memorial-state-park.html>.

## **Historic and Cultural Resources**

As noted previously, Chicopee is rich in historic and cultural resources. The Massachusetts Historical Commission's Cultural Resources Inventory System (MACRIS) includes twenty three pages of buildings recognized for their historic value. The Unique and Scenic Features Map locates the most streetscapes and historic districts that contain most of the inventoried buildings.

In addition to natural features, Chicopee is rich in historical resources. Over nine hundred buildings have been identified as having historical or architectural significance. The National Register of Historic Places includes the Edward Bellamy House, Chicopee City Hall, Dwight Manufacturing Company Housing District, Polish National Home, and Ames Manufacturing Company. The City has also designated four historic districts:

- *Dwight Mills Historic District* in Chicopee Center - Mill housing, commercial and industrial buildings. National Register designation June 3, 1977.



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Department of Environmental Protection. Located at the Chicopee/Ludlow border on Burnett Road, this site has restricted development in two adjacent residential subdivisions.

The BFI Landfill located on Burnett Road is closed. There are no reuse plans for this site at this time. The Chicopee Conservation Commission has required improvements along the border of this facility where a feeder to Fuller Brook, which skirts the site, has been upgraded and realigned. BFI had hoped to continue operations as a transfer station from this site once the landfill was capped but the required Special Permit for the facility was denied by the Chicopee Board of Aldermen in the early 1990s. However, there is still some activity at the site, including a methane generating plant.

The Connecticut Valley landfill located on Lombard Road is in the process of expanding both vertically and horizontally.

The Chicopee Elks Lodge Landfill is located behind the Elks Lodge on Granby Road. It is now closed and capped.

## **Erosion**

Erosion is evident along many of the City's natural drainage areas due to the limitations of the terrace escarpment soils. Deep ravines have cut into the Willimansett bluffs in several areas, and the north bank of the Chicopee River is particularly vulnerable between Chicopee Center and Chicopee Falls. However, most of the severe problems have been created by an unfortunate combination of soil types and urban runoff.

A ravine created artificially by the drainage from industries located near Exit 6 of the Massachusetts Turnpike is being monitored by the Conservation Commission for potential negative impacts on Cooley Brook. Another problem in this area has been caused by runoff from Westover Airpark West. Erosion and sedimentation has degraded newly named Girl Scout Brook and threatened the integrity of Chicopee's main water line. Major erosion is also taking place behind St. Patrick's cemetery off Fuller Road.

However, in the past ten years Chicopee has made extraordinary progress in employing bioengineering to problem sites. Three projects stand out as notable. (1) The first entailed the repair of a ravine once located off End Street. This monster of unchecked erosion ate its way through a 200-foot utility easement, consuming poles and ultimately threatening the street. (2) The second project included the reclamation of Hearthstone Brook. Bioengineering techniques were employed to stabilize it and restore it to its natural function as part of the Granby Road reconstruction project that was completed in 2002. The brook reclamation is a resounding success. Monitoring of the brook shows the return of flora and fauna to the area much sooner than predicted and the stream functions as it should with no undue stress on its capacity to drain its watershed. (3) The third project was necessitated by a blowout caused by vandals who closed an important drainage pipe during a period of heavy rainfall. The result was the destruction of a watershed off Theroux Drive. Bioengineering techniques were employed in the watershed to reconstruct the drainage area and reintroduce plant species to the watershed. The City is proud that these projects are being lauded around the state as excellent examples of innovative and environmentally sensitive reconstruction of compromised resource areas.

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## **Sedimentation**

The City has had some sedimentation problems in a small stream located just south of the Massachusetts Turnpike off Memorial Drive. The problem is related to the development of several large projects in the area. This is one of the many sites constantly monitored by the Chicopee Conservation Commission. As previously mentioned, Langewald Pond has been degraded by siltation, as well as by pollution. Throughout the City there are problems with sediments collecting in drainage pipes and stormwater catch basins. However, since the last open space plan, the City has acquired specialized maintenance equipment to clean municipal drainage facilities. Consequently, in the past few years the City improved the effectiveness of its existing storm water management system.

## **Chronic Flooding**

Since the construction of the dikes along the Connecticut River and Chicopee Rivers, chronic flooding has not been a significant problem in the City. Snow melt and spring rains are generally accommodated by natural drainage areas and constructed drainage facilities. Unusually large melts or more intense storm events are more likely to cause problems for individual homeowners than large sections of the City. Exceptions to this include some isolated street flooding as previously described.

## **Development Impact**

Most new development is controlled through Subdivision Control Law, zoning, and the City's site plan review regulations. Provisions include on-site stormwater management, landscaping, and, in some zoning districts, imperious coverage limitations. Chicopee's Conservation Commission, Department of Public Works, and Planning Board have all played increasing active roles in regulating new development through adoption of stricter regulations and encouraging best management practices.

## **Air Quality**

Transportation is an important factor in the air quality problems in the Pioneer Valley. Auto emissions account for approximately fifty percent of the high levels of carbon dioxide, volatile organic compounds and ozone in non-attainment areas. As a result of the region's air quality status, the federal government required the Pioneer Valley region develop mitigation measures to decrease auto emissions. As of 2000, 82% of Chicopee's commuters drove to work alone – a typical pattern for the Pioneer Valley.

## **Combined Sewer Overflows**

Combined sewer overflow discharge sites are polluting the Connecticut and Chicopee Rivers. Rainwater overloads the capacity of combined sewer pipes and sewage treatment plants, resulting in the discharge of untreated sewage into the river. The key water quality problem of interstate significance for the Connecticut River is cleaning up combined sewer overflows (CSOs). CSOs prevent the river from meeting Class B fishable/swimmable federal water quality standards in the Springfield/Chicopee/Holyoke metropolitan area. As discussed in Section 3, Chicopee has 28 CSOs estimated at \$200 million to eliminate or abate.

## **Invasive Species**

An inventory of invasive species has not been conducted throughout the city. Like most disturbed areas, common invasive species along roadways and bike paths include Japanese knotweed, multiflora rose, buckthorn, and Oriental bittersweet. The street tree inventory conducted in 2013 identified minor signs of

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Emerald Ash Borer and recommended pruning ash trees at this time to reduce the impacts of canopy loss as these trees die from this infestation.

## **Environmental Equity Issues**

Environmental equity is directly related to Environmental Justice in that it is the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental policies and laws to ensure that no group or community is subject to bear a disproportionate share of the harmful effects of pollution or environmental hazards because it lacks significant economic or political influence. Moving beyond the health hazards of pollution and environmental hazards environmental equity also addresses a community's direct and equal access, and exposure to open space, natural and ecological resources, recreational activities and overall landscape quality. In Chicopee, there is a push to connect and provide neighborhoods, especially those identified as Environmental Justice Block Groups, with more "green space." Green space can be identified as recreational open space, green infrastructure (i.e. rain gardens, street trees, bike baths, etc.), public parks, environmental resources, or public environmental education programs. As seen in Map 10: Parks Accessibility there is generally an even distribution of park spaces amongst Chicopee, but there is a need to better connect them and allow for direct access for lower income individuals. When examining Map 9-2: Vegetation, it can be noted that there is a lack of shade trees within the City. Chicopee is actively pursuing a plan to increase the amount of street trees within the City and hopes to concentrate these efforts in low-to-moderate income neighborhoods.





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## Section V: Land of Conservation & Recreation Interest

Open space is a vital part of any community no matter how urban or rural it may be. Just imagine New York City without Central Park, or New Hampshire without the White Mountains National Forest. These are two very different landscape resources but are both considered open space. Floodplain forests, farmland, old-growth forests, meadows and wetlands, are all open spaces. So too are ball fields, bike paths, lakes and ponds. These landscapes not only provide valuable habitat but also contribute to human health and well-being in a myriad of ways. A walk in the park is an opportunity to forget the stresses of the day and recharge one's soul. Open Spaces are places for kids to play and learn, families to spend quality time together, and people of all ages to get much needed exercise. Open Spaces are vital to any vibrant community.

When considering open spaces for recreation one must realize the values of each space as well as the relationships between them. Parks are the perfect spaces for active recreation such as baseball, basketball, water-play, barbecuing, or concerts. More natural open spaces such as forests, meadows, or farmland are ideal for passive recreation. Passive recreation is the act of enjoying nature for what it is. This contemplative mode of recreation is truly vital to the psychological health of residents. This revised OSRP serves to identify the open spaces within Chicopee and recognize the value these spaces have on the psychological, and physical health of its citizens, as well as their ecological and biological values. Treating the City's open spaces as a unit rather than distinct and separate spaces will allow for a sinuous relation between humans and nature.

This section provides an inventory of all conservation and recreational land use grouped by the type of owner – private, public, and non-profit. Additionally, for each property, an assessment of the level of protection is also noted. This is an important consideration in planning for the future of Chicopee's natural resources and recreational spaces.

Most land in private ownership is unprotected and may be developed at will subject only to zoning restrictions. Other forms of regulation on private property include the Rivers and Wetland Protection Act, and the local wetland ordinance. However, such considerations have not been evaluated for the parcels identified herein to determine the extent to which development may occur. Agricultural use classifications (MGL Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B land) can offer temporary protection but land can be taken out of agricultural use at any time and developed. Individuals may voluntarily place restrictive covenants on their own property to restrict development such as conservation restrictions. Municipal land is not inherently protected from development unless it was acquired with certain protective provisions identified in the deed, specifically Article 97 of the Articles of Amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution. However, dedicated parkland is protected in perpetuity from development. This includes land deliberately set aside as park or conservation land. Typically, state and federal grants for open space acquisition require Article 97 language within the deed, and more recently, a conservation restriction held by a third party conservation organization such as a land trust or state agency. Land owned by a Conservation Commission or Water Department is also considered protected.

Figure 5-1 details current levels of open space protection, either permanent or limited as compared to unprotected open space throughout the City. To date, a total of 93 parcels, totaling approximately 1,453 acres of property have some level of protection as compared to 1,015 parcels or 3,362.6 acres of undeveloped, open space that are not currently protected. These 'open space' parcels include large tracts of undeveloped land to small undeveloped, neighborhood parcels. A matrix of ownership over these parcels represents a challenge when considering additional protections as does a need to prioritize parcels that have the highest value and

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potential for protection, conservation or recreational purposes. Also important to note, only 22 percent of Chicopee’s total land area is considered open space. Of that 22 percent less than 10 percent has some level of protection. This speaks to a need to prioritize the protection of remaining open space to address the open space, conservation and recreational goals of the community.

**Table 5-1: Summary of Open Space** (*Chicopee Planning Department*)

Level of Protection	Number of Parcels	Acres
<b>Permanently Protected</b>		
Municipal	26	424.6
State	4	562.4
Non-Profit / Trust	0	0
Private / Conservation Restriction	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>987</b>
<b>Limited Protection</b>		
Chapter 61A	15	98.3
Chapter 61B	1	56.6
Other	47	311.3
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>466.2</b>
Total Acres with some level of protection	93	1,453.2
Not Protected	922	1,904.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>3,362.6</b>
<b>Total Protection / No Protection</b>		
	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Total Acres of Land in Chicopee	100	15,277.6
Open Space	22.0	3,362.6
Open Space with Permanent Protection	6.5	987.0
Open Space with Limited Protection	3.1	466.2
Open Space with No Protection	12.4	1,909.4

Appendix A includes a detailed list of Parcels of Critical Importance, deemed as such through an evaluation based on the parcel’s current status as undeveloped, open space and a review against the Goals & Objectives defined through the community’s input. A total of 181 parcels or portions or parcels were classified as critical. Details regarding ownership, acreage and address are also included in the Appendix.

The process utilized to reach the above classification of Critical Importance for the purposes of this Open Space & Recreation Plan and to generate a total inventory of open space parcels (1,015 parcels) is as follows:

An initial evaluation of parcels throughout the City provided 1,867 total parcels for review, which included Chapter 61A and Chapter 61B lands as well as parcels included in the MassGIS Protected Open Space Data Layer (January 2015). In addition to those areas, vacant lands and lands owned by religious organizations.

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Non-profits, or governmental entities without buildings on the land were also identified. These parcels were identified using Department of Revenue Use Codes as follows:

13x Vacant Land in a Residential Zone or Accessory to Residential Parcel

- 130: Developable Land
- 131: Potentially Developable Land
- 132: Undevelopable Land

39x Vacant Land – Accessory to Commercial parcel or not specifically included in another class

- 390: Developable Land
- 391: Potentially developable land
- 392: Undevelopable Land
- 393: Agricultural/Horticultural Land NOT included in 61A Land

44x Vacant Land – Accessory to Industrial Property

- 440: Developable Land
- 441: Potentially developable land
- 442: Undevelopable Land

93x Municipal of County Codes

- 930: Vacant, Selectman or City Council
- 931: Improved, Selectman or City Council
- 933: Vacant, Education
- 934: Improved, Education
- 936: Vacant, Tax Title/Treasurer
- 938: Vacant, District

95x Charitable

- 951: Other
- 953: Cemeteries

96x Religious Groups

- 962: Other

98x Land held by other Towns, Cities, of Districts

- 988: Vacant, Other District

The remainder of the parcels included in the initial evaluation were added by having a building value of \$0 in the “BLDG\_VAL” field in the M061Assess Table, indicating there are no structures on the land.

This initial evaluation required further ranking based on community goals and objectives to more clearly identify lands of potential interest. Each parcel was evaluated using the 2013 MassGIS orthophotography. If there was any type of development (buildings, parking areas, etc.) identified, those parcels were disqualified.



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## **Oregon Sportsmen Club**

The Oregon Sportsmen's Club is located on 49.6 acres of residential zoned property on Lombard Road. The land might support low-density housing and is adjacent to a landfill that needs room to expand. Fuller Brook, however, runs through the property and there are ponds and other wetlands on the site, which afford the property some protection under the Rivers Protection Act and Wetlands legislation. This is the only property within the City enrolled in the Chapter 61B program.

## **Other Private Facilities**

A number of private social, cultural and athletic clubs, as well as fraternal orders exist in Chicopee and offer a range of recreational services and/or facilities, those with property utilized for recreational purposes are detailed in Figure 5-2:

- Aldenville Junior Athletic Club (AJAC)
- American Legion Charles C. Kennedy Post #275
- American Legion Chicopee Center Post #452
- American Legion Fairview Post #438
- American Legion Willimansett Post #353
- American Legion Post #337
- AMVETS Post #12
- Annie's Driving Range and Chip & Putt
- Chicopee Boys & Girls Club
- Chicopee Braves (football & cheerleading)
- Chicopee Chargers (football & cheerleading)
- Chicopee Lodge of Elks #1849
- D.A.V. Chapter 11
- InspireWorks Enrichment
- Irish Cultural Center at Elms College
- Knights of Columbus Council #69
- Korean War Veterans Association Western Massachusetts Chapter #200
- Loyal Order of the Moose Chapter #1489
- Our Lady of the Elms College
- Polish American Citizens Club (Pulaski Hall)
- Polish Center of Discovery & Learning
- Polish Legion American Veterans Services
- Portuguese American Club
- Saint Stanislaus Athletic Association
- Sunshine Village
- Tigers Athletic Club
- Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter #111
- Veterans of Foreign Wars Fr. William F. Davitt Post #625
- Ward Six

# Conservation

**Table 5-2: Inventory of Private/Non-Profit Land** (*Chicopee Planning Department*)

Private Land	Owner / Manager	Use	Access	Zoning	Protection
Annie's Driving Range / Chip & Putt	Private	Golf	Fee	Residential / Business	None
The Arbors Kids	Private	Child Care	Fee	Residential	None
Chicopee Boys & Girls Club	Chicopee Boys & Girls Club, Inc.	Youth Club	Free	Residential/ Business	None
Chicopee Lodge of Elks #1849	B & P Order of Elks	Private Club	Some	Residential	None
Knights of Columbus	Knights of Columbus	Private Club	Some	Residential	None
Moose Family Center	Chicopee Falls Lodge 1849	Private Club	Some	Residential	None
Mountain Lake / Roberts Pond	Private	Closed	None	Residential	None
Our Lady of the Elms College	Trustees of the College of Our Lady of the Elms	Education	Fee	Residential	None
Oregon Sportmen Club	Oregon Sportmen Club	Rod & Gun	Fee	Residential	61B
Sunshine Village	Friends of Retarded Children, Inc.	Specialized Recreation	By Referral	Residential	None
Valley Opportunity Council (VOC)	Valley Opportunity Council, Inc.	Childcare/ Education	Free	Residential	None

## Chapter 61A Lands

As of FY '15, 99 acres of property in Chicopee are enrolled in Chapter 61A. Some of the property is marginal for development because of topography, wetlands and proximity to perennial streams. Other land is suitable for development and has no protection.

Two Christmas tree farms are located within the floodplain of the Chicopee River on Fuller Road, therefore limiting further development. Laflamme and McKinstry Farms in Aldenville, however, are sited on developable land. The land is relatively flat, services are available and the parcels are zoned for business and residential uses. Ten acres of the Laflamme property will be developed as condominiums. McKinstry Farm has some natural development constraints and is dissected by railroad tracks that may save it from more intensive use.

Chicopee's only remaining dairy farm is accessed from Duprat Avenue off Pendleton Avenue. The development potential of this parcel has not been evaluated. The River's Protection Act and local wetland regulations will limit nonagricultural uses of this parcel.

## Chapter 61B Lands

Only one parcel of property, the Oregon Sportmen Club (49.58 acres) as discussed above is enrolled in Chapter 61B as of FY '15.

## Chapter 61 Agricultural Preservation & Conservation Restrictions

As of FY '15, no property in the City of Chicopee is under Chapter 61 Agricultural Preservation or protected under Conservation Restrictions.

Please see Appendix A for a complete listing of all parcels enrolled in Chapter 61A and 61B.

# Conservation

## Public Land

### State Owned Recreation Sites

#### *Chicopee Memorial State Park*

Chicopee Memorial State Park on Burnett Road, includes 574 acres representing the largest contiguous recreational area in the City. Owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the park is zoned Residential A, is accessible year round, and is open for public use for a fee during the warmer months. The site consists of hilly, wooded terrain with a 24-acre lake fed by Cooley Brook and its marshland headwaters. The diversity of land cover offers extensive opportunities for picnicking, bicycling, cross-county skiing, hiking, fishing, ice-skating, swimming, and sunbathing. The park is well maintained and provides handicapped restroom and parking facilities. The park has no structured playing fields or playground areas, its principal asset being the natural setting. Currently the only formal access is via Burnett Road off Interstate 291. Improved bicycle and hiking access from Memorial Drive (State Route 33) and Sheridan Street would facilitate use, but would be difficult to monitor.

#### *Sarah Jane Sherman State Pool*

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns a two-acre pool site in Willimansett adjacent to the fifteen acre City owned Sarah Jane Sherman Park. The pool site is in good condition.

#### *Boat Launches*

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts operates two boat launches on the Connecticut River:

- *Medina Street Boat Ramp* includes 22 acres of riverfront, a concrete ramp, parking, and informal trails to the Chicopee River.
- *Syrek Street Boat Launch (Berchulski Fisherman Access)* includes a 2.2 acre parcel, a concrete ramp, and parking.

### Municipal Land

Please see Appendix A for a more detailed summary of Municipal Lands in the City of Chicopee.

### Parks

The Chicopee Department of Parks and Recreation manages 29 parks as well as its office location on Front Street, land beneath the Massachusetts Turnpike at the intersection of Grattan Street and Granby Road and three City cemeteries. Most of these sites are protected as parkland. The following is a summary of these facilities:

#### **Aldenville Commons, 1.0 acres**

Location: Between Grattan, McKinstry, and Dale Streets; Aldenville Neighborhood

Facilities: Open space pavilion, waterfall fountain, park benches, drinking fountain, accessible walkways, trees and landscaping, flag pole, trash receptacles, new park lighting, irrigation upgrade and

# Conservation

decorative paving.

Renovation Date: 1990, 2005

Needed Improvements: Assessment needed

Comments: Flag pole dedicated to Lt. Mark Rivest KIA in Vietnam in 1970. Summer concerts are held here.

## **Atwater Park, 24.0 acres**

Location: Hampden Street; Chicopee Center Neighborhood

Facilities: Accessible only via private business on street with parking lot on park land

Renovation Date: No development

Needed Improvements: Suitable for nature trails, dog park

Comments: Site currently not accessible from public right-of-way

## **Bellamy Park, 18.94 acres**

Location: Off Pendleton Ave. behind Bellamy School; Fairview Neighborhood

Facilities: Football practice field and Basketball court

Renovation Date: 2003

Needs Improvement: Bleachers

Comments: Half of the field gets very wet

## **Bowe School Field, 7.12 acres**

Location: Hampden Street; Chicopee Center Neighborhood

Facilities: Play Equipment, Basketball Court and Multi-Use Fields

Renovation Date: 1991, 2003

Needed Improvements: New play equipment, park benches and trash receptacles

Comments: Primarily and elementary school, schoolyard

## **Bowie “Field of Dreams” Park, 14.47 acres**

Location: James Street behind Bowie/Selser Schools on DARE Way; Fairview Neighborhood

Facilities: Baseball field, soccer field, basketball court, playground equipment, trails

Renovation Date: 1991, 2003, 2013

Needed Improvements: New play equipment, park benches, trash receptacles, basketball court

Comments: 2013 Community Development funding for improvements. Bowie School named for Sgt. Herbert Bowie an active community member. Selser School named for Major General James C. Selser a Deputy Commander at Westover 1954- 1956

## **Dana Park, 4.3 acres**

Location: 51 Newbury Street; Chicopee Center Neighborhood

Facilities: baseball/softball diamonds, soccer field, basketball courts, playground equipment and spray pool, signage, benches

Renovation Date: 1991, 2013 - CDBG, \$45,375: Renovation of existing basketball court to a new half court facility. Purchase and installation of playground equipment for children age two to five and five to twelve. Addition of new site amenities to improve the park's safety and cleanliness

# Conservation

including trash receptacles, park benches, picnic tables and landscape plantings.  
Needed Improvements: Accessibility of comfort station, skim coat on cinder blocks of comfort station. Skinned softball field

## **Fairview Memorial Park, 4.2 acres**

Location: 263 Montcalm/Broad Street; Fairview Neighborhood

Facilities: Baseball/softball diamonds, soccer fields, basketball and tennis courts, playground equipment, spray feature, comfort station and swimming pool.

Renovation Date: 1996, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2012

Needed Improvements: Renovation or reconstruction of pool, accessibility issues with pool and comfort station, new play equipment, player protection for diamonds, repairs to tennis court and water spray surfaces, signage, picnic table and umbrellas for pools.

Comments: The wading pool was converted to a spray feature area in fall 2005. The pool's roof was refurbished with new plywood and shingles. New park benches and trash receptacles were added in 2012. Pool named for Max Schorr a World War I Veteran and Alderman. Fairview Park also named FX Vaillancourt Memorial Park for a World War I Veteran KIA in France 1918.

## **Garrity Grove Park, 12.3 acres**

Location: 44 Peter Street; Chicopee Falls Neighborhood

Facilities: Baseball, softball, football, lacrosse, and soccer fields; basketball and tennis courts; playground, surfaced paths, walking trail and spray pool.

Renovation Date: 1997, 2005 wading pool converted to spray pad

Needed Improvements: accessibility issues with comfort station, signage, play equipment, basketball court, park benches, parking, player protection fencing and tennis court repairs, skinned infield for softball, seating around spray pad

Comments: Need grant funding for future renovations

## **Ike Alpert Park, 4.5 acres**

Location: Beauchamp Terrace; Chicopee Falls Neighborhood

Facilities: Playground equipment, soccer field, skate rink used four seasons and basketball court.

Renovation Date: 1995, 2003, 2009 – CDBG: new hockey rink with arena style rink boards, hockey goals, and players benches

Needed Improvements: Accessibility issues with comfort stations, curb cuts, signage

Comments: The skating arena was dedicated to Fred R. Krampits, a former Alderman

## **Ira Bullen's Veteran's Memorial Park, 0.1 acres**

Location: Junction of Center St. and Cabot St. in front of Post Office; Chicopee Center Neighborhood

Facilities: Open space, park benches, brick walk ways, and a monument

Renovation Date: 1982, 2004.

Needed Improvements: None

Comments: There are provisions for handicapped parking. The Chicopee Office of Community Development funded improvements in 2004 which included new park benches and trash

# Conservation

receptacles.

## **Lincoln Grove**, 8.0 acres

Location: 224 Broadway Street; Chicopee Falls Neighborhood

Facilities: Soccer field, baseball and softball fields, basketball court, playground equipment spray pad, and a skate park.

Renovation Date: 1993, 2006, 2010 – CDBG: skate park and play equipment

Needed Improvements: accessibility issues with comfort station, repair spray pad surface and basketball court surface, skin infield, add picnic table and benches, spray pad features, signage

Comments: Baseball diamond dedicated to Max M. Lesniak a dedicated youth and adult baseball manager and supporter, active with the Tigers Athletic Club Association for 20+ years.

## **Litwin School Field**, 8.0 acres

Location: Litwin Lane; Burnett Road Neighborhood

Facilities: Baseball and softball fields, soccer field, basketball court and playground equipment.

Renovation Date: 1995

Needed Improvements: Means of traversing steep slope toward athletic field and bleachers; surface paths, drinking fountain, and new trees, skinned softball field, repair to basketball playing surface

Comments: This was part of Litwin School and has been transferred to the Parks and Recreation Department for permanent park use. Litwin School was named after Sgt. Robert R. Litwin KIA in Vietnam 1967

## **Lucy Wisniowski Memorial Park**, 1.7 acres

Location: Between School/Chestnut/Park Streets; Chicopee Center Neighborhood

Facilities: Basketball court, playground equipment, spray apparatus, walk ways, benches, drinking fountain.

Renovation Date: 1997, 2014 – CDBG: Design of various park improvements in a historic park, and construction of a splash pad funded with assistance from an Our Common Backyards Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Needed improvements: lighting and security, basketball court improvements, furnishings and surfacing (pavement, benches, trash receptacles, etc.), repair basketball surface, signage, play equipment

Comments: A historical “Common” dating back to the formation of the City of Chicopee. Currently under renovation to convert the wading pool into a spray feature funded by a Common Backyard Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This park is the social center of the neighborhood.

## **Mandalay Road Mini-Park**, 3.04 acres

Location: Mandalay Road; Fairview Neighborhood

Facilities: Neighborhood pocket park, basketball court, playground equipment

Renovation Date: 2005, 2007

Needed Improvements: Curb cuts, surfaced paths to courts, fencing

# Conservation

## **Massachusetts Turn Pike Area**, 0.30 acres

Location: Between Memorial Drive and Montgomery Street; Aldenville Neighborhood

Facilities: Open space, signage

Comments: Open space near busy highway interchange with no amenities

## **Nash Field**, 6.4 acres

Location: Ferry Street; Willimansett Neighborhood

Facilities: Baseball and softball fields, basketball court; bike park area, access to Connecticut River dike, playground equipment and wading pool.

Renovation Date: 1973, 2005 roof repair, 2014 – CDBG and KaBoom! Play Construction Grant:

Design, purchase and construction of playground equipment targeted for children ages 5 to 10 years old. To be constructed with community volunteers, consistent with the non-profit funder KaBoom!'s Community Build Process model.

Needed Improvements: Accessibility issues with comfort station, curb cuts, ramps, surfaced paths, signage, drinking fountain, bleachers, skinned softball field, repair or replace bike ramps

## **Preston Park**, 17.5 acres

Location: 30 Access Road off James Avenue; Fairview Neighborhood

Facilities: Baseball diamond, soccer field, playground equipment and trails in naturally wooded area

Renovation Date: 2005

Needed Improvements: Curb cuts, ramps, surfaced paths, accessible drinking fountain, bleachers, new play equipment, new skate park, new basketball court and player protection fencing.

## **Ray Ash Memorial Park**, 11.4 acres

Location: Alden Street off Meadows Street; Aldenville Neighborhood

Facilities: 3 Baseball/softball diamonds, soccer field, basketball court, skate park, water spray pad, swimming pool, play equipment, comfort station, parking lot and pathways

Renovation Date: 1989, 2006, 2007

Needed Improvements: Pool reconstruction or renovation due to water loss, accessibility issues with pool and comfort station, player protection fencing, skinned softball diamond, signage, picnic tables and umbrellas for pool area

Comments: Ray Shirley Ash Park was named after a deceased Korean War Veteran and Civic Leader. The basketball court was dedicated to Kenneth Hambley in 1997 in recognition of his coaching four sports, co-founding Boys Suburban Basketball League and his involvement with the Aldenville Jr. Athletic Club.

## **Rivers Park**, 16.7 acres

Location: 19 Alden Street off Meadow Street; Willimansett Neighborhood

Facilities: Baseball and softball fields, protective fencing for player safety, soccer field, basketball courts, playground equipment, picnicking, swimming pool, pavilion, and new water spray features.

Renovation Date: 1980s, 2002, 2005 accessibility, 2009 playground and water spray, 2012 skate park site amenities

Needed Improvements: renovation or reconstruction of Pool, accessibility for pool and comfort

# Conservation

station, picnic tables and umbrellas for pool, signage, additional parking for spectators, bleachers, skinned softball field, player protection fencing, flag pole and dug outs at 90' as it is at high school field

Comments: Tennis Court dedicated to PFC Edward J. Downey KIA in Vietnam 1968. Baseball diamond is dedicated to Dionysis "Danny" Dulchinos veteran and dedicated Chicopee Comprehensive High School Baseball coach for more than 30 years. Very busy park for both family gatherings and sport play.

## **Roger A. Laplante Parks and Recreation Office, 1.5 acres**

Location: 687 Front Street; Chicopee Center Neighborhood

Facilities: Roger A. LaPlante Office Building and recreation program and play area

Renovation Date: 1992, 2009

Needed Improvements: Accessibility issues, lighting

Comments: Explore additional uses of activity room at rear of offices.

## **Sarah Jane Sherman Park, 15 acres**

Location: Stedman Street off Meadow Street; Willimansett Neighborhood

Facilities: Baseball, softball and soccer fields, playground equipment, skatepark, a picnic table and walking paths.

Renovation Date: skatepark 2003, bubbler 2006, bleachers 2007, 2009, CDBG Design, purchase and construction of playground equipment for children age five and younger, and new skatepark

Needed Improvements: Accessibility in comfort station, drinking fountain, water spray pad, skinned softball infield, resurface skate park features, seating near spray pad, repair spray and skate surfaces, skim coat cinder block wall of comfort station, picnic tables, grills, pavilion, signage

Comments: A very busy park for both family gatherings and sports play

## **Sheridan Street Playground, 0.6 acres**

Location: Intersection of Sheridan Street and Taylor Street; Chicopee Falls Neighborhood

Facilities: Playground equipment and open space, park benches.

Comments: A neighborhood pocket park

## **Stefanik School, 14 acres**

Location: Meadow Street; Willimansett Neighborhood

Facilities: Football field and basketball court.

Needed Improvements: Curb cuts, ramps surfaced paths.

Comments: This is School Department property and consists of sport fields and a basketball court maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department. Stefanik was named after Brig. General John Stefanik a highly decorated member of the US Air Corp.

## **Szetela Park, 6.5 acres**

Location: Macek Drive; Sandy Hill Neighborhood

Facilities: Softball fields, soccer fields, playground equipment and walkway.

# Conservation

Renovation Date: 2004 play equipment and benches

Needed Improvements: Ramps and accessible walkways.

Comments: Szetela School was named after Lt. Leon W. Szetela who died in 1944. The 60' diamond at Szetela Park was dedicated to Ed "Szlats" Szlachetka in 1994 in recognition of his service as a Park and Recreation Department employee and volunteer coach.

## **Frank J. Szot Park, 69.7 acres**

Location: Sgt. Tracy Drive off Front Street; Chicopee Falls Neighborhood

Facilities: Baseball, softball, football and soccer fields; basketball and tennis courts; shuffle board, volleyball, horseshoes, playground equipment, swimming pool, pavilion, picnicking, open space, bocce courts, gazebo.

Renovation Date: 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2011, 2012, 2014

Needed Improvements: Upgrades to restroom facilities at stadium, Access to ball fields, fencing improvements, upgrades to Bemis Pond, lighting around parking areas, skinned softball diamonds, signage.

Comments: City of Chicopee's premier facility. Urban Self Help Grants in 1999 and 2001, address accessibility of the pool, picnic area, playground and pavilion. Upgrades to tennis and basketball courts, parking, ball diamonds, water spray area and stadium facilities were also completed. In 2012 a Gateway Grant provided new stadium lighting, automatic irrigation system, new scoreboard, new drainage and turf improvements to baseball field. Gateway Grant of 2014 has allowed for new accessible aluminum bleachers and dugouts on 90' diamond.

## **Vietnam Veteran Memorial Park, 0.95 acres**

Location: Corner of St. Louis Avenue and Chicopee Street; Willimansett Neighborhood

Facilities: Open space, park benches, waterfall fountain

Renovation Date: 2004 New park benches and trash receptacles were added in 2004

Comments: Park located nearly under I-391 Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge Previously known as Willimansett Memorial Park

## **Westover Gate Park, 7.1 acres**

Location: Westover Road; Westover Neighborhood

Facilities: Open space

Renovation Dates: 2006

Needed Improvements: Curb cuts, traversable surfaces, park benches

Comments: This is a passive recreational area that serves the immediate neighborhood and contains natural wooded areas, paths and turf areas.

## **Williams Family Park, 14.95 acres**

Location: Burnett Road by Basil Road; Burnett Road Neighborhood

Facilities: Baseball/softball diamonds, soccer field, play equipment for 2-12 year olds, water spray features, walking trails, paved parking lot, irrigation, two tennis courts, volleyball court, open space, tree and shrub plantings, signage, and trash receptacles, bubbler, and fencing

# Conservation

Needed improvements: Frisbee golf course, benches and picnic tables

Construction /Renovation Date: 2002 parking, 2004

Comments: Land for Williams Park was donated in 2002 by William's family of Williams Distributing, by 2006 park was completed.

## **Parcels With No Recreation Potential**

**Alder Park** – Captain Mac Street: triangle shaped, smaller than a house lot, no amenities.

**Indian Park** – Intersection of Nonotuck Ave and Indian Park: traffic island, no amenities.

**Victoria Park** – Victoria Park Street; median with trees.

**Desmond Park** - 135 Stearns Terrace; traffic island with tree, no amenities.

**War Memorial** - Front Street; War Memorial Plaza with monuments.

## **Cemeteries**

### **East Street Cemetery, 2.5 acres**

Location: East and Broadway Streets; Chicopee Falls Neighborhood

Needed Improvements: Curb cuts and ramps off Broadway and East Streets.

Comments: This old cemetery is inactive with regard to burials. New cemetery fencing installed at the East Street area in 2004. Approximately 35 veteran stone monuments that are tarnished were replaced in 2005 in cooperation with local veterans groups.

### **Fairview Cemetery, 40 acres**

Location: Abbey Memorial Drive; Chicopee Center Neighborhood

Renovation Dates: 1995, 2000's

Needed Improvements: Road work is needed especially under historical arch. Cremation garden under consideration, Gutters for cemetery maintenance building. Development of new grave lots.

Comments: The Sarah Jane Spalding Chapel was completely renovated with new stained glass windows, concrete fascia repaired, interior painting, lighting, gate, and roof repair. New landscaping and signage also added to cemetery. Inventory of trees for removal and plan tree plantings

### **Maple Grove Cemetery, 5 acres**

Location: Grape and Auburn Streets; Chicopee Center Neighborhood

Renovation Dates: 2000's

Needed improvements: Assessment needed

Comments: This old cemetery is inactive with regard to burials. There was a major improvement to the road entrance way and signage.

## **Conservation Land**

There is one parcel currently under the jurisdiction of the Chicopee Conservation Commission. The site is a short strip of former railroad right-of-way that extends from the eastern side of the Davitt Bridge to Grape

# Conservation

Street and is the site of the Chicopee Riverwalk Phase I.

Another more sizable site sometimes assumed to be conservation land is known by convention as the Slate Road Conservation Area. The history of this designation is unclear and there are no found records to support it. The property consists of 42.3 acres bordered by Slate Road (off Sheridan Street), the Massachusetts Turnpike, and Chicopee State Park. The site is used informally for hiking, cross-country skiing, and horseback riding. A service road and a number of footpaths traverse the site. Use is neither encouraged nor discouraged.

## Schools

The City School Department manages a number of athletic fields and playground areas in concert with school activities. These parcels are used primarily by the City youth and provide safe, accessible and convenient locations for recreational purposes. Nine school properties offer some form of recreational amenity. Five of these facilities, Bowie, Bellamy, Litwin, Szetela and Stefanik are maintained by the Department of Parks & Recreation. In Chicopee, there is a strong relationship between schools and parks. Limited land and resources make shared use practical. Additional facilities available at the school sites not listed in the Parks above are outlined below:

- Chicopee Comprehensive High School – Montgomery Street. Facilities include football, soccer and softball fields; tennis courts; swimming pool; track.
- Chicopee High School – Front Street. Facilities include athletic field, track and swimming pool.

There are also several private schools in Chicopee that provide recreational facilities for registered students:

- Our Lady of the Elms College
- Hampden Charter School
- Holyoke Catholic High School
- Saint Stanislaus School
- St. Joan of Arc/St. George School

## Other Public Open Space

The City of Chicopee owns two large parcels that are particularly significant in regard to open space considerations. The Chicopee Country Club, managed by the Chicopee Golf Commission, is the location of the only golf course remaining in the City. The second parcel is located at the confluence of the Chicopee River and the Connecticut River and known locally as Delta Park.

**The Chicopee Municipal Golf Course** is located on the eastern edge of the City off Burnett Road. The 18-hole course and clubhouse are sited on 130 acres of rolling hills and ponds. However there is some interest in swapping some abutting state owned land for municipal land at the entrance to the State Park to allow for expansion. Further area for expansion is possible should the City acquire abutting private property to the southwest of the course entrance road.

**The confluence of the Chicopee and Connecticut Rivers** includes 135 acres --118 acres of which is under City of Chicopee control. Chicopee flood control land constitutes 96 acres. Delta Park, zoned and used for industrial purposes, includes 17 acres and the remaining acreage is the site of the former Hampden Power

# Conservation

Steam Plant. The plant has been demolished but the site has a number of environmental problems including oil seepage and areas of unclean fill. Clean-up efforts are underway. The site abounds in natural assets with a number of informal trails, and plenty of wildlife located in and about the waterways and the island habitat. Access to the property is restricted via a locked gate.

There are also two significant public riverwalk projects in various stages of design and construction: The Chicopee Riverwalk Phase I and II, and the Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway.

**Chicopee Riverwalk – Phase I and II** Phase I is a short strip of former railroad right-of-way extending from the eastern side of the Davitt Bridge to Grape Street and is owned by the Conservation Commission. Set on the bank of the Chicopee River, users enjoy fantastic views of the river set against historic mill buildings in the city center that once fueled Chicopee's economic engine. Phase II is a planned to begin at Grape Street and terminate at the RiverMills Center (former Uniroyal site), including connection to Szot Park. The terminus shall include amenities including security from the industrial area. The connection to Szot Park will include improved parking facilities at the Park's Department offices and an at-grade crossing to the park entrance including walkways. Additional connections will include a path to the Chicopee Public Library.

**Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway** Communities are rediscovering nearby rivers and improving the environment by instilling an appreciation of them through improved access to rivers and education about them. As part of a regional effort in Hampden County, the communities of Agawam, Chicopee, Holyoke, Springfield and West Springfield, together with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, have developed a plan for a 21 mile pedestrian and bicycle path along the banks of the Connecticut River. With the goals of revitalizing the riverfront and improving the quality of life for residents, this plan promotes numerous user types (strolling, jogging, biking, roller blading, etc.), provides overlooks and rest stops, and connects each community to the river and each other. Chicopee has approximately seven miles of Riverwalk in design phases.

The Connecticut Riverwalk North is located between the Connecticut River and the City-owned Connecticut River flood control levee extending from the Medina Street boat ramp to Nash Field, an overall distance of approximately 2.4 miles. The proposed alignment begins at the Medina Street boat ramp and parking lot, passes under the Massachusetts Turnpike, over a storm drain discharge channel associated with Paderewski Street pumping stations, then passes by or under two service bridges that provide access to the Jones Ferry Pumping Station discharge gates before terminating at Nash Field. The Riverwalk is designed as a multi-use trail including two parallel paths: a paved path for bikes at the base of the flood dike on the westerly (river) side, and a gravel path at the top of the dike. Final design plans include overlooks to the river, way finding signs, parking locations, pathways over the levee to connect neighborhoods to the trails without erosion, root barriers, fishing access areas, benches at scenic vistas, bike racks, landscaping for privacy screening for abutters where needed, handicap accessibility, police access, and compensatory flood storage areas. Design was funded by a 2013 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant.

# Conservation

## **Church Affiliated Land**

Chicopee's churches own and manage a total of 275 acres of land throughout the City. Most of this land is in use as cemeteries. Our Lady of the Elms holds 25 acres, including Elms College and a chapel located on Springfield Street in Chicopee Center. Please reference Appendix A for a more detailed summary of church holdings in the City of Chicopee.



# Community Goals

## Section VI: Community Goals

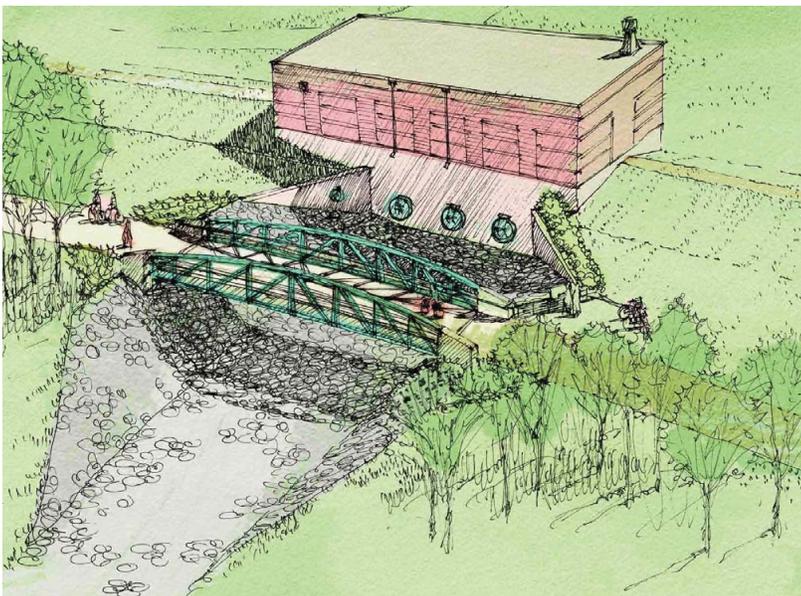
### Description of Process

The 2015-2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan update has been underway for the past year. However, recent changes to departmental staff and administration (new director of Parks and Recreation Department, new acting director of the Planning Department, and new Mayor) have stimulated deeper conversations regarding parks and open space, and launched a renewed attempt to update the former OSRP. A description of the community engagement process was provided previously in Section 2. The following is a summary of the findings from the community survey and other public outreach processes in recent years that offered insight into recreation and open space needs in Chicopee. Discussion at the three public meetings echoed survey responses and are thus not summarized separately but provided in the Appendices.

### Community Survey

The findings from the community survey can be summarized under the five categories:

- **Bike and pedestrian accessibility/alternative forms of transportation;**
- **Recreation;**
- **Land conservation;**
- **Food security; and**
- **Facilities and improvements.**



**Figure 6-1: Schematic Rendering, Pedestrian Bridge - CT RiverWalk**  
(BETA Group, Inc.)

### Bike and Pedestrian Accessibility

A need for bike paths ranked as the top priority for city improvements among survey respondents (58.9%). Alternative modes of transportation including bike paths, bike lanes, and multi-purpose trails were important or somewhat important to 73.6% of respondents. An overwhelming 85.4% said they support the development of new greenways and multi-use paths in the city. When asked where should multi-use paths be located, 55.1% said within existing neighborhoods, 51.2% said on the Chicopee River, 43.5% said on the Connecticut River, and 32.5% said on Memorial Drive. At the neighborhood meetings, a strong desire to see paths along the Connecticut and Chicopee Rivers were

expressed. Chicopee's unique location at the confluence of two major rivers was recognized as special and meaningful. Residents expressed frustration about the very limited access to these rivers and were agitated about delays in the design and construction of the Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway and the continuance of the Chicopee Canal and Riverwalk beyond Grape Street. Residents especially noted concerns about unauthorized use of the cleared rail bed behind the Chicopee Library Main Branch and requested city officials

# Community Goals

move forward in completing that phase of the trail.

## Land Conservation

Conserving forests, farms and wildlife habitat was the second highest priority among survey respondents (50.4%) after a need for bike paths, with only 3.7% stating no need to conserve any more of these areas. When asked to rank priorities relative to open space preservation, 72.8% noted land should be preserved for conservation purposes, whereas most believed land should be preserved for recreation and outdoor education purposes: active recreation (76.8%), access or outdoor recreation (75.8%), passive recreation (75.4%), and access to rivers, streams and ponds (74.6%). In another question, 79.1% believe open space for conservation to be very important or somewhat important. And, 47.6% stated there is not enough open space (forests, wetlands, agriculture lands, natural areas, undeveloped land) in Chicopee protected from development. When asked what respondents would be willing to do to preserve land in Chicopee, 57.7% said they would “encourage my city councilor to vote for city-supported land acquisitions,” and 39.8% said they would “volunteer on a committee/board.”

## Recreation

Open space for recreational purposes was clearly identified as important to residents. When asked if Chicopee was adequately served by recreational facilities, 58.9% of respondents said “no”. This discussion was highlighted at the neighborhood meetings. Although Chicopee has a significant number of parks for a community of its size, the city is not offering the recreational facilities residents want today. In addition to an overwhelming cry for bike paths and hiking trails along the rivers that offer access for canoes and kayaks, residents desire new sports fields, indoor gym space, and neighborhood based options including adequate sidewalks that offer connections to the city’s network of parks and open spaces. Families in Chicopee are either active or seeking to be more so.

Recreational options need to meet the needs of multiple age groups and abilities. A majority 75.4% of respondents said they leave Chicopee to participate in recreational opportunities that interest them. The majority of respondents think teenagers, young adults, adults and elders do not have sufficient recreational opportunities in Chicopee, while children under age 12 are well-served. The majority of respondents also believe children and adults with mobility impairments do not have sufficient recreational opportunities. Respondents also believe that the City should focus efforts on improving and developing recreational facilities and parks, and provide well-maintained facilities with comprehensive management plans.

## Food Security

A need for neighborhood-scale community gardens ranked as the third highest priority among survey respondents (30.5%), and 88.2% of respondents said the availability of locally grown produce or other food products was very or somewhat important to them. The majority (73.8%) said they support the development of neighborhood community gardens. This issue was also raised at the neighborhood meetings. The citizen group Chicopee Community Garden Council has been adopted by the Parks Commission and will spearhead development of a new community garden at Lincoln Grove Park to be built in 2015. This is an exciting new initiative that has the opportunity to dovetail with the Chicopee school department’s summer lunch program and recreational programming sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Department which will be assuming responsibility for the Falls Branch Library, located next door to Lincoln Grove.

# Community Goals

There is also a need for a more substantial farmer's market within Chicopee. A small market exists one day a week under the I-391 overpass in the summer. At neighborhood meetings, residents expressed a desire to relocate the market to a more central location and/or to a location that draws people for other reasons to capitalize on people in the area. The new Consolidated Plan for the Community Development Block Grant program has identified food security as an important theme in the community. The plan seeks to find a permanent home for a farmer's market within the next five years.

## Facilities and Improvements

The most heavily visited parks include Szot, Rivers, and Sarah Jane Parks. When asked why respondents have not visited certain parks, 47.6% stated "facilities do not provide equipment/space for activities I'm interested in." Residents recognized a need for investment in bike routes (off road and roadway shoulders), sidewalks, walking/jogging paths, trees, and safety (crime related). The need for a dog park was articulated in both the survey and neighborhood meetings. Pet waste is a problem throughout city parks and on sidewalks that needs to be addressed.

Last, 79.1% of respondents noted places of historical value to be very or somewhat important to them. This is no surprise given the extensive inventory of historical resources in Chicopee recorded in the Massachusetts Cultural Resources Inventory System (MACRIS) at the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Residents cherish Chicopee's rich cultural and architectural history, which could be capitalized on to support recreation and economic development in the form of walking tours around the city as used in other places such as Boston's Freedom Trail and Portsmouth, NH's Harbour Trail.

## Community Development Projects

Although this will be a very informative process, much public outreach has been conducted in the past five years relative to various community development projects. The following is a summary of those efforts and feedback received relative to open space and recreation. This information has been used to inform the goals, objectives and actions outlined in Sections 8 and 9.

*H.E.A.L. Chicopee: A Strategic Plan for the Uniroyal/Facemate Properties  
Cornell University Capstone Project, Spring 2010*

This report is the result of a community survey conducted in February and March 2010, and a student visioning exercise, both designed to solicit input from residents about the Uniroyal/Facemate Property including local history, education, river usage, desired future public amenities and visioning for the City. Community feedback gathered through this process informed the subsequent Uniroyal/Facemate Redevelopment Plan called RiverMills: Visions for Redevelopment (April 2011).

The survey collected information from 404 participants, a sample size large enough to extrapolate with confidence, the views of the City's population. Younger generations responded proportionally more than older generations resulting in a slight bias in favor of those ages 19 to 35. The three most important survey results were:

- Citizens of Chicopee want a waterfront park with a walking and bicycling trail. They would like to see the Facemate tower, and if possible, the Uniroyal office building preserved. Other site structures

# Community Goals

- were not particularly favored.
- Citizens want more river access, primarily for walking and scenic views, but also for canoing, kayaking, and fishing.
- Citizens would like to see Chicopee Center revitalized into a vibrant mixed use community similar to Northampton, Massachusetts, located approximately 20 minutes north.

The student visioning exercise was implemented across the Chicopee Public School System during March and April of 2010. The exercise was designed to expose city students to Chicopee's history through the lens of industrial development on the former Uniroyal/Facemate properties. A second lesson was developed to introduce students to the basic concepts of sustainability as they apply to the re-imagining of post-industrial Brownfields. Last, students were asked to participate in a visioning exercise through the creation of a new 'city seal' that represents Chicopee in the year 2030.

682 students attended the lessons and participated in the visioning exercise, the majority of them were elementary school students with the remainder middle school students. The three most important results from the visioning exercise were:

- Overwhelmingly, participating students foresee a park framework defining Chicopee's future. This finding is consistent with conclusions drawn from the community survey results.
- Chicopee's students, from a civic and patriotic perspective, are exceptionally proud of their city and country. The civic framework was the second largest category of student seals. Many students referenced Westover Air Force Base with specific elements including planes, soldiers, American flags, and local Chicopee symbols. Future redevelopment throughout the City should continue to showcase such assets to serve as a foundation for continued emphasis of the city's national role.
- Of all the elements students detailed in their seal designs, natural elements (exposure to sunlight, views of the sky/clouds/weather), park space, vegetation, patriotic elements, animals, people, the Chicopee River, homes and existing factory buildings were the most popular.

*Revitalizing Chicopee's West End Neighborhood: A Technical Assistance Panel Report  
Urban Land Institute and MassDevelopment, October 23, 2014*

Under the direction of the Urban Land Institute's Boston District Council, the Chicopee Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) convened in Chicopee in October 2012, bringing together stakeholders, City planners, community leaders, and a panel of real estate, planning, and development professionals for a day-long session focused on identifying opportunities and strategies for revitalizing the residential and commercial areas in Chicopee's West End neighborhood, specifically the Cabotville site. Recommendations resulting from this collaborative process related to open space and recreation in the West End include:

- The Cabotville site is critical to the success of the development efforts in the West End of Chicopee. The buildings occupy a prominent location on the Chicopee River near the main intersection in downtown Chicopee and adjacent to the highly visible Ames Privilege apartment project and the new Route 116 bridge. The redevelopment and revitalization

# Community Goals

potential is huge because the buildings present an opportunity to create at least 227 new apartments in Building 1, along with “sprucing up” the commercial buildings which currently house over 60 businesses, including incubator space for approximately 10 arts-related studios or businesses. Redevelopment of this site is necessary for developing access for a planned extension of the Canal Path, a pedestrian walkway that would link the West End to the Chicopee Riverwalk.

- Delta Park Site – The Delta site presents a wonderful open space opportunity for passive recreation and public waterfront access; the possibility of a boat launch and/or marina should be considered here. The low railroad overpass at the main entrance to the site presents a design challenge and may limit development. The owner of the overpass, Pan Am Railways, needs to be engaged to seek cooperation in developing a solution.
- Masonic Hall and Small Sites – Attention should be paid to the smaller vacant sites, the “broken teeth” that are scattered between larger areas of active use. Although small, they contribute to an overall impression of an area in decline. In particular, the Mobil parcel on Center Street is a prominent “gateway” site that could be activated as a park or farmer’s market.
- The Riverfront – Chicopee’s downtown has an untapped asset in its frontage along the Chicopee River. Currently the river is isolated from the neighborhood; it isn’t even visible from street level because of the flood barrier. Creating visual access points at strategic locations along the riverfront, perhaps from bridges or other natural high points, would help capitalize on this significant resource. Improving physical access for recreational uses such as fishing and boating could draw both residents and visitors to the area.

*RiverMills: Visions for Redevelopment – A Resource Guide for Developers  
Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. and RKG Associates, Inc. April 2011*

The City and MassDevelopment embarked on a planning effort to prepare a Redevelopment Plan for the 65-acre Uniroyal/Facemate site located in the Chicopee Falls area of Chicopee. During the planning process, the site became known as RiverMills at Chicopee Falls. The Plan sets forth the framework for implementing a series of strategic redevelopment initiatives that will maximize reuse of this unique economic development resource and will build upon previous and ongoing work at the Uniroyal/Facemate properties.

A community outreach process was held over a 12-month time frame and was used to keep the community informed and up to date on the findings of the existing site conditions and market analyses, and to solicit feedback on the development alternatives. Three community outreach meetings: March 13, 2010, April 22, 2010, and December 14, 2010.

*Chicopee Gateway Plus Downtown Revitalization Plan, August 2009*

254 respondents to a community survey largely focused on housing and economic development needs

- Half of all respondents wanted to see more parking, more green space and flowers, more benches and seating, and sidewalk and accessibility improvements.















# Goals & Objectives

## Section VIII: Goals & Objectives

Chicopee's goals for open space and recreation have not changed dramatically since the 2007 OSRP was completed. The current update emphasizes developing a network of parks and modern recreational facilities with connections to undeveloped open space along the Connecticut and Chicopee Rivers. Crucial to implementation of this vision is the need for residents and city officials to be engaged in the various stages of planning for these projects, and informed about the opportunities a network of parks and open space can offer in support of the Cities' other community and economic development goals.

### **GOAL #1:**

**The recreational needs of all residents are met regardless of age, race, sex or ability.**

#### **Objectives**

1-A: Existing facilities and recreational programs are maintained at a high standard, including improvements and renovations as needed.

1-B: Programs for residents with special needs are available.

1-C: Recreational programs are coordinated with interested City Departments, agencies and non-profit groups.

1-D: Access to parks and recreational programs is improved for all residents.

### **GOAL #2:**

**Citizens are aware of the City's natural, cultural, and historic resources, and informed about their value to the community.**

#### **Objectives**

2-A: Community character and natural resources are emphasized in educational programs.

2-B: School children and the elderly are involved in environmental programs.

2-C: There is active communication between City Departments about open space and recreational issues.

2-D: Educational materials about the City's history and natural resources are available to the public.

# Goals & Objectives

## **GOAL #3:**

**The Connecticut and Chicopee Rivers are protected for their open space value and well-utilized as recreational resources.**

### **Objectives**

- 3-A: Access to the Connecticut and Chicopee Rivers is available, and enhanced to protect the river bank and offer exceptional scenic vistas.
- 3-B: Incentives are available to developers for incorporating open space conservation into project design and construction.
- 3-C: Continue to coordinate with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and neighboring communities on regional strategies for river restoration and protection.

## **GOAL #4:**

**The ecological integrity of wetlands, streams, ponds, floodplains, existing and potential aquifers, and groundwater recharge areas are protected.**

### **Objectives**

- 4-A: Local wetlands are considered for educational programming
- 4-B: Sources of water pollution are identified and abatement initiated where feasible.
- 4-C: Wildlife habitat is protected, enhanced, and expanded.
- 4-D: Brownfields and other environmentally degraded areas are assessed, cleaned up, and redeveloped in a way that supports the ecological integrity of the surrounding area.

## **GOAL #5:**

**Urban agriculture is a vibrant part of the community and source of local, fresh food for residents.**

### **Objectives**

- 5-A: Local policies and regulations support farming in the community.
- 5-B: Venues for locally grown and produced farm products are available year-round and accessible to residents.
- 5-C: Community gardens exist throughout the city as a place for residents to grow food, support outdoor educational opportunities, and create healthy habitat for pollinators.





# Action Plan

## Section IX: Seven Year Action Plan

Based on the analysis of needs presented previously, a seven-year action plan has been developed. Please refer to Map 12: Action Plan.

### Action Plan Legend

#### **Action**

Actions are tasks to be implemented during the seven year period to achieve the goals for one or more of the objectives for which they are identified under.

#### **Years of Action**

A relative prioritization list for the action plan over a seven year implementation period. Many of the actions are identified as on-going (2015-2021) because they are part of long-term planning, assessment, development and/or management programs.

#### **Responsible Entity**

List of the City Department(s) and/or organization(s) that have been identified to implement the action.

#### **Potential Funding**

These are sources of funding that are most appropriate for implementation of the action. We acknowledge specific grants that have been listed are not guaranteed to be available in the future nonetheless, they are included as potential sources of funding for the action listed. Complete grant applications will need to be developed in order to seek the potential funding identified.

# Goal 1

Recreational needs of all residents are met regardless of age, race, sex, or ability

## Action

## Years of Action

## Responsible Entity

## Potential Funding

Continue reuse planning and development of the River Mills site for terraced playing fields, senior housing, small businesses, and a gymnasium facility.

2015-2021

Parks, Comm. on Disability, Conservation Comm, Planning, Council on Aging

City Funds, EPA, Brownfields Grants, MassDevelopment, PARC

New pool construction

2015-2021

Parks, Mayor

City, PARC

Improve internet connection for residents, including new City website with responsive design and on-line program registration

2015-2021

IT Department, Mayor, Planning

City Funds

Improve management of public gardens; stormwater management areas including library grounds, Council of Aging grounds, liner parks and decorative islands

2015-2021

Dept. of Public Works, Council on Aging, Library, Office of Com. Development

City Funds, SRF Grant/Loan

Complete Szot Park Phases 2 & 3

2015

Parks, Dep. of Public Works

Gateway Cities Grant

Seek ADA compliance at all City facilities

2015-2021

Parks, DPW, COA, Comm. on Disability

City Funds

Modernize the Parks and Recreation Department with improved internet access, on-line services work order system as well as time clock, increase productivity and accountability

2015-2021

Parks

City Funds

Re-evaluate how youth sport services are structured in Chicopee

2015-2017

Parks, Non-Profits, Youth Sports Org

City Funds, Organizational Funds

Expand summer programming for parents needing child care

2015-2021

Parks

City Funds, User Fees

Continue annual assessment of park facilities as well as prioritize improvements for funding

2015-2021

Parks

City Funds

Assess existing programs for youth with special needs, and develop/expand programming as identified

2015-2021

Parks, Comm. on Disability

City Funds, User Fees

# Goal 2

Citizens are aware of the Cities' natural, cultural, and historic resources as well as informed about their value to the community.

Action

Years of Action

Responsible Entity

Potential Funding

Increase participation in Parks and Recreation programs	2015-2021	Parks	City Funds, User Fees
Develop a wider range of program offerings	2015-2021	Parks, Historical Commission	City Funds
Increase partnership between schools and Parks & Recreation Department on program development	2015-2021	Parks, Schools	City Funds
Increase partnership among Parks & Recreation Department, the city library system and the Council on Aging for programming including Chicopee Arts Project (CAP), concert series, seniors reading to children, bocce court use by seniors, etc.	2015-2021	Parks, Library, Council on Aging	City Funds
Increase partnership with non-profits including the Boys & Girls Club and Valley Opportunity Council	2015-2021	Parks, Boys and Girls Club, Valley Opportunity Council	City Funds, Organizational Funds
Increase opportunities for community celebrations and events	2015-2021	Parks, Mayor, Non-profits, Local Businesses	City Funds, Local Business Sponsorship
Establish a social media platform to inform the community of public events, programs and opportunities for involvement	2015	Parks, Planning	City Funds

## Action Plan

# Goal 3

The Connecticut and Chicopee Rivers are protected for their open space value and well-utilized as a recreational resource.

Action

Years of Action

Responsible Entity

Potential Funding

Continue design and construction for the Chicopee Riverwalk Phase II	2015-2018	Office of Community Development, Planning	MassDOT
Develop the Hampden Steam Plant and Delta Park as recreation destinations	2015-2021	Office of Community Development, Planning	PARC, EPA, Brownfield Grants
Continue participation in Connecticut River Cleanup Committee and Stormwater Committee	2015-2021	Department of Public Works	City Funds
Seek implementation of West End Brownfield Are-Wide Plan	2015-2021	Office of Comm. Development, Planning	City Funds

## Action Plan

# Goal 4

The ecological integrity of wetlands, watersheds, existing and potential aquifers, groundwater recharge areas, ponds, streams, and floodplains are protected.

Action	Years of Action	Responsible Entity	Potential Funding
Design and construction of trails behind Bellamy School and Roberts Pond	2017-2021	Office of Comm. Development, Planning, Parks, Conservation Commission	PARC, DCR Recreational Trails Grant
Preserve farmland and other open space resources with local, state, private and non-profit partners	2015-2021	Office of Comm. Development, Planning, Parks, Conservation Commission	MADAR, LAND Grant, Land Trusts
Promote adoption of the Community Preservation Act	2015-2021	Mayor, Office of Comm. Development, Planning, Historical Comm.	City Funds
Continue to advance design and construction of Combined Sewer Flow (CSO) abatement projects, including the use of green infrastructure where appropriate	2015-2021	Office of Comm. Development, Department of Public Works	Municipal Stormwater Fee, City Funds, SRF Grant/Loan
Continue to work with EPA, DEP, and Mass Development on Brownfields assessment, cleanup and redevelopment	2015-2021	Office of Community Development, Planning	EPA Brownfields Grant
Develop a community garden	2015-2018	Office of Community Development, Planning, Mayor	City Funds

## Action Plan

# Goal 5

Urban agriculture is a vibrant part of the community and source of local, fresh food for residents.

Action	Years of Action	Responsible Entity	Potential Funding
Support development of a community garden at Lincoln Grove Park	2015-2018	Office of Comm. Development, Planning, Mayor, Comm. Garden Council	City Funds, Harvard Pilgrim Healthy Food Fund
Identify location for year-round farmer's market and establish	2015-2019	Office of Comm. Development, Planning, Mayor, Comm. Garden Council	City Funds, Private Funds
Consider adoption of a right-to-farm by-law	2017-2021	Planning	N/A
Work with agricultural land owners on strategies to permanently protect working farms and farmland including agricultural preservation restrictions	2015-2021	Planning, Office of Comm. Development, Mayor	City Funds
Form an Agricultural Commission	2015-2018	Planning	City Funds

## Action Plan





# Public Comment

## Section X: Public Comment

### Local Review

On March 17, 2015 the Chicopee Department of Planning & Development distributed a draft copy of the Open Space and Recreation Plan to the following individuals and organizations. Comments and ideas were requested to be submitted to the Planning Department by April 3, 2015. Comments received from the following organizations, through the community outreach process and Letters of Endorsement from the Mayor, Parks Commission, Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission are included in Appendix C.

### Draft Plan Distribution List

Aldenville Junior Athletic Club	CT River Watershed Council
Boy Scouts of America	Edward Bellamy Memorial Association
Boys & Girls Club of Chicopee	Girl Scouts of Western Massachusetts
Chicopee Cemetery Commission	Hampden Charter School of Science
Chicopee Chamber of Commerce	Holyoke Catholic High School
Chicopee Chix	Knights of Columbus #4044
Chicopee City Counsel	Lorraine's Soup Kitchen
Chicopee Conservation Commission	Partners for a Healthy Community, Inc.
Chicopee Council on Aging	Pioneer Valley Local First
Chicopee Cultural Council	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Chicopee Historic Commission	Polish Center of Discovery & Learning
Chicopee Mayor's Office	St. Stan's
Chicopee Parks Commission	Sunshine Village
Chicopee Planning Board	The Arbors at Chicopee
Chicopee Public Schools	The Trust for Public Land
Chicopee Public Schools Athletics	Tigers AC Club
Chicopee River Watershed Council	Valley Opportunity Council
Chicopee Sportmans Club	Ward Six
Chicopee Zoning Board of Appeals	Westover Air Reserve Base
College of Our Lady of the Elms	Westover Job Corps Center
Community Gardening Citizens Group	



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# Appendices

## Appendix A:

### Land of Conservation & Recreation Interest



# Appendices

## Appendix B: ADA Review



# Appendices

## **Appendix C: Public Comments**



# Appendices

## Appendix D: Maps