

**Community Relations Plan  
U.S. EPA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Grant  
Willimantic Whitewater Partnership Remediation Project  
28 Bridge Street  
Willimantic, Connecticut  
August 2011**

**Overview**

The purpose of the Community Relations Plan (CRP) is to describe communications strategy of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and the Willimantic Whitewater Partnership, Inc.'s (WWP) to address the needs and concerns of residents potentially affected by the proposed removal of environmental contamination present at the proposed Willimantic Whitewater Park located at 28 Bridge Street, Willimantic. The CRP outlines how the organization has involved and will continue to involve, affected residents, Town officials and other local organizations in the decision-making process regarding the environmental cleanup at the site.

This CRP outlines how the DECD and the owner will involve local residents in the planning and cleanup process for redevelopment of the site.

**Spokesperson and Information Repository**

The Spokesperson for this project is Don Friday, Project Manager at DECD, who may be contacted at:

Department of Economic and Community Development  
505 Hudson Street  
Hartford, CT 06106  
860-270-8063  
Don.Friday@ct.gov

The Information Repository for the project is:  
The Office of Willimantic Whitewater Partnership, Inc.  
WINCOG, 700 Main Street  
Willimantic CT 06226

The Office of Willimantic Whitewater Partnership (WINCOG) will be open during normal business hours Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to view environmental reports pertaining to the assessment and remediation of the site. All public meetings will be held at the *Council Chambers, Windham Town Hall, 979 Main Street, Willimantic, CT 06226*. Select documents prepared as part of this project will also be available on the Willimantic Whitewater Partnership website: [www.WillimanticWhitewater.org](http://www.WillimanticWhitewater.org). and [www.wincog.org](http://www.wincog.org)

## **Site Description and History**

### **Site Location**

The site is located at 28-36 Bridge Street in Willimantic, CT and is shown on Willimantic Tax Assessor Map 12-3, Block 137, Lot 1. The site is approximately 3.45 acres in size and contains one building, a former gas station. A former four bay car wash was razed in the spring of 2007. The Willimantic River represents the site's south/southeast boundary with the actual property line along the high water mark of the southern river bank. The site is bordered to the north by an active railroad line operated by the Central Vermont Railroad. Bridge Street abuts the site to the northwest and a commercial plaza is located across the street to the northwest and west. The railroad line also extends westward on the other side of the road. The site is owned by Willimantic Whitewater Partnership, Inc. Cleanup activities at this site will be undertaken by Willimantic Whitewater Partnership using grant funds from the DECD's EPA Revolving Loan Fund.

### **Site History**

Past uses at the site include: a textile mill from 1820-1940; building materials salvage yard, including dismantling of stone mill buildings, until circa 1960; and a gasoline station/fuel oil depot/car wash from circa 1962 to circa 2002. The former gas station building and abandoned underground gasoline and fuel oil storage tanks remain on the site. The site includes the former stone mill foundation and bedrock outcrops along Willimantic River as well as forested area. A stone dam is also present in the river and is part of the site.

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

Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) were completed in March of 2007 for the property. The investigation identified two primary sources of contamination which consist of contaminated, historic fill materials and gasoline station/fuel oil depot-related releases.

Fill material contamination includes identified lead, arsenic, and poly-cyclic aromatic carbons in excess of CTDEP criteria. Fill materials appear to be from historic onsite buildings and additionally deposited materials of unknown origin.

Petroleum contamination including apparent gasoline and fuel oil-related releases were noted in the area of the former pump islands, fuel oil rack, and three underground storage tanks (USTs).

Pinecrest Environmental Services, LLC performed the ESAs in order to collect sufficient information to determine whether or not a release has occurred within identified Areas of Concern (AOCs). Releases of contaminants were detected and the potential risk

presented by such contamination and its potential impacts on anticipated future uses of the Site will be addressed during further investigation of the property. The site assessment consisted of the completion of a Ground Penetrating Radar Survey, the excavation of 12 test pits, the installation of 20 exterior soil borings including two groundwater monitoring wells, and the collection of five surface soil samples. Given the information obtained through the completion of the investigation, soil contamination is present in excess of CTDEP criteria in several areas of the site including historic fill materials and the areas of the former and current site USTs and heating oil filling and dispensing areas.

## **Community Background**

### ***Community Profile***

The subject site is located in the center of Willimantic, a traditional downtown area. The pedestrian-oriented historic downtown area at the center of Willimantic contains high-density urban retail, office, government, arts and entertainment uses. This classic turn of the century downtown, which extends from the Windham Mills to Bridge Street between the Willimantic River and Valley Street, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The proposed park at the site will provide a connection between the downtown and the Willimantic River.

Willimantic, a borough of Windham, possesses many of the problems of larger cities, including high unemployment and low per capita income. It has a significant per capita percentage of public housing due in part from its small size but also due to the influx of immigrant mill workers now unemployed or underemployed.

### **Chronology of Community Involvement**

The Willimantic Whitewater Partnership (WWP) is a community-based nonprofit organization dedicated to recapturing the waterfront of the Willimantic River. In particular, the Partnership seeks to increase safe access to the river for residents through the development of an urban waterfront park, restore anadromous fish passage through dam modification and in-stream habitat improvements, establish the first public whitewater park in the region, and expand the East Coast Greenway through greenway trail construction. In doing so, the Partnership seeks to enhance the potential of Willimantic as a recreation hub, celebrate the cultural history of the Willimantic River and to support the growth of a trans-cultural arts and enterprise zone in Willimantic, Connecticut.

The WWP began in 2002 as a grass roots organization that has grown to a network of many public and private supporters working toward the goal of developing the park. Support has also included financial grants and donations as well as in-kind services in order to move the project forward. The Community Outreach efforts have included a website (<http://willimanticwhitewater.org/>), a FaceBook page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Willimantic-CT/Willimantic-Whitewater-Parnership-Inc/65700769144>) and a wiki (<http://willi-whitewater.wikispaces.com/>). Additionally, WWP has appeared regularly at local fairs and events. WWP has appeared frequently on

local radio and cable television programs. WWP has collaborated with the University of Connecticut and Eastern Connecticut State University to incorporate various education opportunities into their respective curriculums. Presently, students in the architectural design program at Three Rivers Community College are developing final designs for the proposed structures for the future waterfront park at WWP's Bridge Street Property. WWP holds monthly board meetings open to its members, as well as an annual meeting and partners summit which is open to members and the public.

Community involvement will consist of the following outreach effort appropriate to the scale of this project:

In English and Spanish, publish a notice of the intent to remediate in the Norwich Bulletin: **Date, August 16 & 17, 2011**

Conduct a public meeting to inform interested residents of the scope and duration of the project.

**Date: September 6, 2011. Time: 5:00 pm**

Start of Remediation: **Date: October 17, 2011**

Completion of Remediation: **Date: November 15, 2011**

Redevelopment of the site: 2011-2012

The public meeting will be conducted at:

**Council Chambers, Windham Town Hall, 979 Main Street, Willimantic, CT 06226**

### **Key Community Concerns:**

Presently, no community concerns regarding the proposed remediation project are known, nor have any been communicated to Willimantic Whitewater Partnership.

Any concerns of the local residents about the nature and extent of environmental contamination and the proposed re-use plans for the site will be addressed as part of this Community Relations effort. Information will be shared with residents concerning the types of contaminants that were discovered during the investigation and the corresponding environmental risks. Proposed cleanup plans will also be discussed.

Community concerns will be solicited in the public notice to be published in the *Norwich Bulletin* on **August 16 & 17, 2011** and at the public meeting to be held on September 6, 2011 at 5:00 pm in the Council Chambers at Windham Town Hall located at 979 Main St. Willimantic CT 06226

### **Continued Community Involvement**

A legal notice will be placed in the *Norwich Bulletin* to notify residents of a public meeting regarding the proposed remedial actions. In conformance with Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund requirements, the legal notice will also announce that the information repository on this project, including the environmental assessments and other environmental information is located at the Willimantic Whitewater Partnership Office at WINCOG, 700 Main Street, Willimantic, CT, and is available for viewing during business hours, by appointment, and on the WWP website ([www.WillimanticWhitewater.org](http://www.WillimanticWhitewater.org)) and the WINCOG website ([www.wincog.org](http://www.wincog.org)). The notice will also announce the start of the thirty-day comment period on the ABCA/RAP. The property owner will accept comments on the ABCA/RAP during the comment period and will provide written responses as necessary which will become part of the administrative record. The information repository will be updated with the inclusion of all meeting minutes, status report and other communications. Residents can contact the spokesperson at any point during the project with questions and they will be answered and responded to as appropriate. Project documents will remain in the Information Repository for 14 days following the conclusion of the remedial actions. Project documents will be on file with DECD for a minimum of three years following the closing of the grant.

Long term community involvement will continue in various forms. WWP will continue to maintain its web-site, FaceBook Page and wiki. WWP will continue to attend local fairs and events to present the project to the community. In keeping with its mission, WWP will involve educational institutions as opportunities arise. For six years, WWP has partnered with the Windham Region Chamber of Commerce to organize and conduct the annual Willimantic RiverFest. WWP has an active Outreach and Volunteer committee which organizes and conducts annual site and river clean-ups, as well as an annual National Paddling Film Festival. WWP's annual membership meeting will remain open to the public.