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European green-industry company, Socaplast USA, chooses Springfield for U.S. headquarters

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According to Mayor Domenic Sarno, Springfield has become the U.S. headquarters for Socaplast USA, a Belgian business with a concentration on recycling. The company, which is the European supplier for the Indian Orchard-based Solutia, Inc., will be located in the Solutia business park at 730 Worcester St. The new development will create about 15 permanent full-time jobs and has resulted in private investment by Socaplast of \$3.4 million in facilities and equipment.

Mayor Sarno said the Belgian company's decision to headquarter its American operations in Springfield plays a vital role in two important areas; the rebirth of the city's economic base and its chief economic development strategy of environmental sustainability. "This newly acquired green credential will go a great distance as Springfield works toward an identification that is eco-friendly and nationally recognized," said Sarno. "And with its creation of 15 jobs, it is going to have an immediate and tangible impact on this city's economy and the well being of its citizens. We welcome Socaplast to the United States, and more specifically to Springfield, with wide open arms."

Raf van der Perre, chief executive officer of Socaplast Belgium, joined Mayor Sarno for the announcement and said his company is eager to settle into their new Springfield offices.

"It is important to us that Socaplast USA is part of the Springfield business community and contributes to the economic wealth of the commonwealth of Mass.," he said.

For more than 30 years, the Belgian company has held a strong position in the international recycling market and has become known for its excellent production services. For more than a decade, the focus of Socaplast has been on polyvinylbutyral (PVB), a special plastic used to make laminated glass. The glass is strong enough to provide protection from bomb blasts and earthquakes. Socaplast has developed a unique technique to recycle PVB foil and trimmings, which are cut off during the lamination process.

Solutia, which makes the Saflex interlayer used in automobile glass at its Indian Orchard plant, negotiated an agreement to host Socaplast on its Springfield campus. After touring several sites in northern Connecticut and western Massachusetts, Socaplast decided on the Springfield location, citing its close proximity to Solutia. The company plans to start operations here in mid-2008. Socaplast has already begun making arrangements with local businesses including Adams and Ruxton, TJ Conway and Industrial Transfer.

Stefaan Florquin, world wide manager of operational excellence for Solutia, said Socaplast will recycle all the PVB trims recuperated from the region's NAFTA laminators. "Solutia is thrilled to have the group invest in a recycling operation in our Indian Orchard facility," he said.

The Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council (EDC) spent several months assisting Socaplast and connecting their staff with state agencies such as: the Massachusetts Office of International Trade and Investment, the Massachusetts Office of Business Development and the

Massachusetts Export Center.

Allan Blair, president and CEO of the EDC, said: "The decision to found this U.S. headquarters in Springfield will be mutually beneficial to both Socaplast and Solutia, while benefiting the region through new investment and job creation."

Congressman Richard Neal noted that he was pleased to welcome Socaplast USA to Springfield.

"Nearly 20 years ago, I brought the region's first recycling facility to the city of Springfield. As a strong advocate of environmental responsibility, I knew how important a successful recycling program would be to the people of western Massachusetts," Neal said.

"That is why I am pleased that a Belgian recycling company has chosen Springfield as the site for its American headquarters. I have supported the effort to recruit international business to the Pioneer Valley, particularly green companies, and today's announcement clearly demonstrates that our endeavor has been worthwhile."

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