

Economic Development

CHAPTER 9

Connecticut River Scenic Byway

Introduction

Much of what drives the economic vitality of the Byway region is apparent when traveling along it. The farmland and farm-stands, educational institutions, historic village centers, shops, and restaurants all contribute to the character and economic vitality of the area. These sectors also contribute to the quality of life that residents appreciate and that fuels the regional tourism industry. It is important that future projects and activities foster a robust economy that supports both the preservation of the existing Byway resources, as well as the continued economic vitality of the area. One of the overall goals of this Byway planning process is to develop recommendations that nurture growth in businesses that enrich the experiences of visitors and also provide economic opportunity for residents.

The intent of this chapter is to consider the preservation and enhancement of the Byway resources (scenic, recreational, natural, historic, cultural and tourism) in the context of the regional economy. The existing commercial sectors and resources that could leverage potential business development and economic activity are described in the chapter. Additionally, detailed depictions of the village centers along the Byway are included with descriptions of potential opportunities for economic development. The chapter also includes a list of tools that support business growth and economic development. Finally, issues and recommendations are identified that are intended to support economic development as well as enhance the Byway story. Please note that the descriptions of the Byway resources that are contained in this chapter are brief because there are more detailed write-ups in the other chapters of the plan.

Economic Development Resources

Existing regional resources that support the tourism industry are an important component of the Byway area's economy. Local businesses, business development organizations and industry-specific groups have focused efforts on particular niches of the tourism sector, such as outdoor recreation/natural resources-based tourism, cultural tourism related to heritage or the arts, and agri-tourism. The following sections discuss these tourism related segments of the economy and propose ways that they may be further developed along the Byway corridor. Additionally, the Byway corridor is home to businesses and industries not tourism related, which provide employment opportunities for residents and contribute to the municipal tax base. Overall, it is important these industries continue to operate and grow in a manner that is sensitive to the Byway character.

Environment, Recreation and Scenery as Economic Stimuli for Local Economy

As described in previous chapters, there are abundant environmental, recreational, and scenic resources along the Byway. These resources include facilities that are open and available to the public, such as state forests, public parks, public boat access, and biking and hiking trails. Additionally, there are businesses that provide access to outdoor recreation activities, including but not limited to golf, paddling, and cross-country skiing. The Corridor Management Plan recommends preserving and enhancing these resources. By promoting responsible business development and practices in the nature-based recreational tourism industry, natural resources will be protected and enjoyed in the future.

Generally, the tourism sector benefits from the existence of a “cluster” of businesses and educational programs that have similar goals and objectives. This creates a pool of skilled workers and innovative business owners. For example, Greenfield Community College (GCC) offers a one-year certificate program for Outdoor Leadership, which provides professional training and certifications for a variety of adventure activities, such as backcountry travel, whitewater kayaking, skiing, challenge courses and rock climbing. GCC also offers a certificate program for Farm and Food Systems, which develops skills for food cultivation, processing, and safety. By training skilled workers to provide a quality service for their employers and clients, these programs strengthen the regional tourism sector. In addition, some of the program’s graduates may choose to start their own businesses in the region.

Ensuring that visitors can connect to all types of businesses and services will help to promote this area as a destination for outdoor recreation. The natural, recreation, and scenic based tourism activities are often seasonal. Additional tourism activities could be encouraged and promoted by developing specific events or activities that encourages tourists to visit the area during “shoulder” and off peak seasons. This will make the tourism sector more sustainable year round.

In 2011, the FRCOG prepared a brief summary highlighting strategies implemented in other regions to support the growth of outdoor recreation tourism¹. The summary noted that while the quality of the natural environment plays a key role in drawing visitors to rural areas, natural amenities alone are not enough to bring tourists to a region. It was noted that tourists to rural areas are increasingly looking for a broader experience that combines outdoor recreation with quality accommodations, shopping and cultural opportunities. Infrastructure such as roads, trails, parking, and signs, as well as supporting businesses including lodging, restaurants, and equipment stores or rental services must be in place to promote this type of tourism. Marketing and promotion activities including web-based materials, maps, guidebooks, and advertising are also needed.

The encouragement and support of businesses that serve visitors, such as restaurants, lodging and retail operations will support growth in this sector. Further, tourism service

¹ “Recreation/Nature-Based Tourism in Rural Areas: Literature Review and Case Study”, FRCOG, 2011. http://www.frcog.org/pubs/economic/Rec_Tourism2011.pdf

related businesses would best be accommodated in the village centers along the Byway. By having a cluster of destinations and amenities in a specific area, the visitor is more likely to park their car and walk around the community, thus creating more opportunities to generate economic activity.

Architectural, Historic and Cultural Resources as Economic Stimuli for the Local Economy

There are an abundance of historic and cultural resources along the Byway. These resources were detailed in previous chapters and include historic districts, museums, performance venues, and annual festivals. These resources vary in terms of how often they are open, if there is an entrance fee, and even how they are staffed (i.e. community volunteers or paid, professional staff). Attractions such as the Porter-Phelps-Huntington House Museum in Hadley or Mount Holyoke College Art Museum in South Hadley have programming and established hours of operation, while the smaller volunteer run local historical society houses may not have regular hours and staffing.

A coordinated marketing program for the Connecticut River Scenic Byway and the other six designated Scenic Byways of western Massachusetts has been created. The website, www.bywayswestmass.com, and related advertising materials have been published to highlight the various attractions available to travelers. This coordinated information about the Byways' resources seeks to encourage travelers to visit these destinations. Additionally, the marketing elements also target specific segments, such as residents from the region who choose a "stay-cation" or college students seeking adventure activities or cultural experiences.

Coordinated sharing information about events and sites along and near the Byway would be advantageous for all attractions and businesses seeking customers. For example, this would ensure that restaurants and accommodations are prepared for additional customers during special events. It would also be beneficial for attractions that are only open periodically to be open at the same times as other attractions in their community, or to coordinate with other attractions to create a common theme and encourage visitors to attend more than one destination during a visit to the Byway. This can be facilitated by continuing to enhance the coordination among business and visitor associations, tourism councils, and other entities with community calendars.

In addition to these attractions, the region has a thriving creative economy and is home to performers, artisans and craftspeople. It is important that the products created are available for sale at local shops and attractions that have retail operations. Events, from studio tours to local festivals, are another important venue for making these products available for residents and visitors to purchase. By supporting the local creative economy, it further promotes the unique character of this region to visitors and contributes to the quality of life for residents.

Agriculture and Related Businesses

Due to the superior farmland soils in the Connecticut River valley and the region's strong agricultural heritage, there are numerous farms, farm-stands, and agri-tourism attractions

along the Byway. These businesses help maintain the Byway's scenic rural landscape. Therefore, it is important to provide support and sustain these agricultural operations. These farms grow a variety of crops for wholesalers, local food producers, and for retail sale. To diversify their revenue sources, some farm operations include direct sales at farm-stands, operate pick-your-own operations, maple sugar houses, as well as interactive entertainment activities like hayrides and corn mazes.

Some farms have extended their operations to be more actively engaged in the local food production industry. The industry is supported by the Western Mass. Food Processing Center, located in Greenfield and operated by the non-profit Franklin County Community Development Corporation. This commercial kitchen facility has equipment to do processing, bottling and freezing operations. The adding of value to locally grown produce may be done by the farmers themselves, restaurants or retail stores seeking to label their own products, or new food business start-ups.

Communities can boost the local agricultural sector by establishing local farmers markets, and supporting "buy local" campaigns at the individual and institutional level. There are several existing organizations that support the region's agricultural industry and promote the purchase of local products by residents, institutions, and visitors. Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), Berkshire Grown and the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture all have active websites with searchable "buy local" data base that lists local farms, agricultural businesses, farm stands and restaurants that serve local produce. They also publish local farm products guides that are widely distributed.

Another way to support agricultural operations is the permanent protection of active farmland through the purchase of development rights from willing land owners. Regional land preservation organizations, such as the Franklin Land Trust, Mt. Grace Land Trust and Kestrel Trust, have played a vital role in identifying important parcels and facilitating protection of agricultural land. In the past, funding was available through the National Scenic Byway Program for land protection, and approximately 500 acres of active farmland on the Byway have been protected to date with this funding.

Educational Resources as Economic Stimuli for the Local Economy

As has been identified in this and other chapters, there is a significant presence of college students and independent school students (many of whom are boarding students) in the region. In the communities of the Byway corridor and adjacent to it, there are over 36,000 college students in seven institutions² of higher education, and over 2,300 are enrolled at eight independent schools³ that host both day and boarding students. Families of current or prospective students traveling from afar are an important segment of the tourism

² They are: Amherst College, Conway School of Landscape Design, Greenfield Community College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

³ They are: Bement School, Clarke School for Hearing & Speech, Deerfield Academy, Eaglebrook School, Northfield Mount Hermon, Redemption Christian Academy, Stoneleigh Burnham School, and The MacDuffie School.

profile for the region. In addition to students, there are also visiting faculty, returning alumni, and special events and programs that draw people to this region. Ensuring that these students, their families, faculty, alumni and others are connected to visitor services and the resources in the region is essential.

Town Centers and Identities

The six municipalities of the Connecticut River Scenic Byway corridor are home to nearly 40,000 people, which range from the small town of Erving (1,784 population) to South Hadley, the most populous community and home to the Mount Holyoke College (17,723 population).⁴ Within these municipalities are the seven village centers located on or adjacent to the Byway. While each of these areas can be defined as a village center, they vary in size and scope. Some village centers have small shops, restaurants, offices, public services, and attractions, while others mostly retain only their historic public facilities. To the extent that local residents and visitors can be encouraged to shop at these establishments, local businesses will become more successful, and others may be inspired to open.

Table 1: Byway Town Centers

Town Center	Municipality	County
Northfield Village Center	Northfield	Franklin
Millers Falls/Erving side Village Center*	Montague and Erving	Franklin
Montague Center**	Montague	Franklin
Sunderland Village Center	Sunderland	Franklin
North Hadley Village Center	Hadley	Hampshire
Hadley Common	Hadley	Hampshire
South Hadley Village Center	South Hadley	Hampshire

* This shared village center is on both sides of the Millers River. On the Montague side of the Millers River it is called Millers Falls, and on the Erving side of the Millers River it is called Erving side.

** Village Center is not located on Byway, but is within one mile of Byway.

Franklin County

Northfield Village Center

The Northfield Village Center extends from the former Northfield Mt. Hermon School campus south two miles to where Route 10 splits from the Byway. This distance includes a variety of establishments, including public buildings (i.e. town hall, library, post office, elementary school, etc.), restaurants, retail shops, services, accommodations, and other attractions. The Northfield Village Center is a local commercial center for residents as well as a destination for visitors.

With the consolidation of the Northfield Mt. Hermon School onto the Gill campus in 2005, the Northfield campus was vacated. The historic campus has eight dormitories,

⁴ Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-year Estimate, 2009-2013.

seven academic buildings, an administrative building, and features an auditorium with seating for 2,200, a chapel, a gymnasium with a swimming pool and a music hall. A private foundation that owns the campus is seeking organizations with a mission that is in keeping with the legacy of the former school's founder D. L. Moody and that can also meet specific financial requirements. Once returned to active use, the campus will again be an economic driver for the Northfield Village Center and surrounding area.

With two independent boarding schools located nearby, the Redemption Christian Academy on South Mountain Road in Northfield and the Northfield Mt. Hermon School in Gill, the Northfield Village Center continues to attract families visiting students, as well as other tourists attracted to its historic resources and outdoor recreation activities. The Village Center is also a popular stop for bicyclists traveling along the Byway. It is part of the signed Franklin County Bikeway Northfield Connector route. At the very center of the Village (near the intersection of Routes 63/10 and Warwick Road and Parker Ave), residents and visitors are able to park and explore food options and retail offerings by walking along the historic common. Residents and visitors may also choose to drive to a specific business located along the route.

The Northfield Area Tourism & Business Association (NATABA) is working with businesses and public officials to enhance economic activity in the Village Center and throughout the region. Two key components for accomplishing this are: to grow the number of local businesses and foster development opportunities that will increase tourism. NATABA created the VisitNorthfieldArea.com website and is supporting new event programming, such as the new Great River Challenge Off-Road Triathlon that began in 2014. NATABA is also seeking to have a market analysis conducted for the Village Center and exploring the feasibility of creating a visitors center.

Millers Falls and Ervingside

Millers Falls and Ervingside are a shared village center that straddles the Connecticut River, with Ervingside in the Town of Erving and Millers Falls in the Town of Montague. This historic village was once a thriving industrial center and it remains one of the smaller, but defined village centers, with an estimated population of 905 people.⁵

Two large mill buildings remain, both in the Ervingside area. The Renovator's Supply, Inc. property is a 26-acre parcel on River Street that contains a complex of connected mill buildings constructed over decades, starting as early as the 1870s. The property had been home to both the manufacturing and corporate offices of The Renovator's Supply, Inc. bathroom sink, faucet and hardware company. The company outsourced much of its manufacturing in the 1990s, but retains its corporate world headquarters, distribution, and some manufacturing lines there. Space no longer used for the company's manufacturing has been leased to multiple other companies and has the potential to be leased for more intensive commercial and/or industrial uses, such as office, artist studios and rehearsal space, distribution and manufacturing.

⁵ The US Census Bureau has defined the Millers Falls Census Designated Place (CDP) to include both Millers Falls and Ervingside. Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-year Estimate, 2009-2013.

The former Millers Falls International Paper facility on Papermill Road is vacant and available for redevelopment. The plant was built in 1965 has been vacant since its closure in 2000. There is over 240,000 square feet of gross floor space, which includes offices, manufacturing space, and loading docks. The 43-acre site is served by municipal sewer and water infrastructure, utilities, access roads, and on-site parking. The Town of Erving acquired the property in 2014, and is conducting a feasibility study to help guide redevelopment options for the site.

The Byway (Route 63) is the main thoroughfare through the village of Millers Falls. East and West Main Streets and Bridge Street are the heart of the village. The area has been anchored by a small neighborhood grocery store, a pub and a library branch for many years. However, at the same time, the area has been challenged with the presence of distressed properties and vacant storefronts. Fortunately, recent activities show progress. A new brewery has located at a visible, corner store front. Three distressed properties acquired by the Town of Montague were sold to a local construction contractor in 2015, who is planning to redevelop the site into apartments, retail space and office space for the contractor's business. As these properties are redeveloped and returned to productive use, the area will become more attractive to further investment.

Montague Center

Montague Center is one of the five villages in the Town of Montague.⁶ Located less than a mile off of the Byway, Montague Center features an historic Town Common, a branch of the library, post office, other community buildings, and a small convenience store. On the northern edge of Montague Center is the Montague Bookmill, which attracts residents and visitors to its book store, restaurants, artist studios and music retail store. In terms of future development, there is some residential redevelopment proposed, but no major commercial development.

Sunderland

The Sunderland Village Center is host to a several restaurants, a bank, a small grocery market, a bicycle shop, and some other retail and service based businesses. It is at the cross-roads for two main region travel routes (Route 116 and Route 47). The Village Center has been zoned to accommodate more residential, commercial, and mixed use development, and has water and sewer system infrastructure in place. Already existing in the Village Center are public buildings, ball fields, and parking facilities. The Town is exploring the potential for enhancing its pedestrian and bicycle facilities as well as improving access to the Connecticut River. Further infill development and more outdoor recreation facilities may result in an increase in the number of visitor-oriented businesses in the Village Center.

⁶ The five Montague villages are: Lake Pleasant, Millers Falls, Montague Center, Montague City, and Turners Falls.

Hampshire County

North Hadley Center

North Hadley is a historic small village center, which is currently a residential neighborhood with some community facilities, such as recreational fields, a church and public access to Lake Warner.

Hadley Common Area

Less than a half mile west of the Byway are the Town of Hadley's historic Town Commons, a reminder of the community's rich heritage and founding over 350 years ago. In this area, the Route 9 commercial corridor cuts through the Commons and the Byway. The Route 9 corridor is home to both local and national retailers. There are also many service type businesses, as well as community facilities including the town's public high school, library, Town Hall and the popular Norwottuck Rail Trail multiuse path. Infill commercial development along the Route 9 corridor is anticipated to continue.

South Hadley Center

The largest commercial and population center along the Byway corridor is the South Hadley Village Center. The Village Center is at the junction of Route 47 and Route 116. The two most notable features of this area are the Mount Holyoke College campus and The Village Commons. The historic Mount Holyoke College campus accommodates nearly 2,200 students annually.⁷ The campus is an economic driver as a major regional employer and purchaser of local goods and services. Additionally, Mount Holyoke College plays a key role in the economy because it draws visiting families and prospective students to the region. The Village Commons is a large residential and commercial mixed use development that includes retail shops, restaurants, a movie theater, services, and more.

Business, Economic and Community Development Tools

There are a variety of programs and organizations available that offer support to individual businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as non-profit organizations and local governments seeking to promote economic development. Access to these types of resources is often vital for new ventures to launch or for existing businesses to grow successfully, and for communities to find the additional resources needed to move projects forward. The entities identified here include government agencies as well as private non-profit organizations. They offer a variety of tools, including business planning and technical assistance, financing, networking, marketing, incentives, and more.

The following are brief descriptions of select programs and organizations that may have useful resources to the businesses and communities of this corridor. They are categorized

⁷ Source: Mount Holyoke College website, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/about/facts>

by the types of services they may offer. For more information about the services described and the eligibility criteria, go to their websites or contact these entities directly.

Community Infrastructure or Construction

- The **MassWorks Infrastructure Program** coordinates the administration of six infrastructure programs: Public Works Economic Development (PWED), Community Development Action Grant (CDAG), Growth District Initiative (GDI) Grants, Massachusetts Opportunity Relocation and Expansion (MORE) Grants, Small Town Rural Assistance Program (STRAP), and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Grants. These programs fund a range of publicly owned infrastructure projects. The CDAG Program provides funding to local governments for projects that “build local economies, eliminate blight, create jobs and produce workforce and affordable housing that would not occur by private enterprise alone.” The Program requires that projects do not benefit any single individual or business, and that the project must be publicly owned/managed for a minimum of 30 years. Website: www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/pro/infrastructure/massworks
- The **Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program** provides assistance for housing, community, and economic development projects that assist low and moderate-income residents in eligible communities. Municipalities with populations under 50,000 must apply to the competitive state program. Within the CDBG Program is the **Economic Development Fund**. The purpose of this Fund is to provide financing for projects that create and/or retain jobs, improve the tax base, or otherwise enhance the quality of life in the community. Example projects include: public infrastructure or rehabilitation project to support the re-use of a downtown commercial or mixed commercial/residential building; pre-development planning study; or revolving business loan program. The Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority has a community development program that works with municipalities interested in pursuing CDBG program grants. Website: www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/community-development-block-grant-cdbg.html and <http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/economic-development-fund-edf.html>
- Through grant and technical assistance programs, U.S. Department of Agriculture (**USDA) Rural Development** forges partnerships with rural communities, funding projects that bring housing, community facilities, business lending, utilities and other services to rural America. These programs can help local governments and eligible non-profits finance or improve public facilities (such as for fire stations, town halls, streets) or water or wastewater infrastructure. The USDA Rural Development state office is located in Amherst and has staff available to work with communities to understand the programs and resources available. Website: www.rurdev.usda.gov/LP_EconDevHome.html

- As part of this work, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) both agencies administer the following federal programs. Websites: www.frcog.org for Franklin County towns and www.pvpc.org for Hampshire County towns
 - The **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Program** provide regional economic development planning services, and maintains the region's eligibility for select **U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)** competitive grants that invest in public infrastructure or feasibility or planning studies that result in job creation and private investment.
 - The **Regional Brownfields Programs** are funded by grants from the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**. This Program provides services (as resources allow) to conduct environmental site assessments on eligible properties and at no cost to the property owner. These assessments determine if the site is contaminated, and if so to what extent.
 - The **Transportation Planning Program** conducts transportation planning studies, conducts traffic counts, and administers the **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**, which programs road, bridge and transit projects that are eligible for federal funding. In addition, they work on the **National Scenic Byway Program**, which is a federal transportation program that provides grant opportunities for eligible scenic byway projects, when federal funding is available.

Planning, Study, Design or other Assistance for Communities

- The **Massachusetts Downtown Initiative** offers the Technical Assistance Site Visit Program to municipalities. Professional consultant services valued up to \$10,000 are provided at no cost to the community for specific issues related to a downtown revitalization effort. The categories of eligible activities include: Business Improvement District (BID), Design, Creative Economy, Economics of Downtown, Housing, Parking, Small Business Support, Walkability, and Wayfinding/Branding. Past awards in the region include: a downtown wayfinding plan for Downtown Greenfield (2015), a market study to support the Shelburne Falls Composting Collaborative project (2011), a market analysis to explore the development of artist live/work space in Turners Falls (2012), and design guidelines for the Orange town center that included recommendations for a future sign and façade program (2008). Website: www.mass.gov/hed/community/planning/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi.html
- The **Peer to Peer Technical Assistance Program** provides small grants up to \$1,000 to municipalities for short-term problem solving or technical assistance projects. Website: www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/peer-to-peer.html
- MassDevelopment is the state's finance and development agency, which works with businesses, developers, non-profits, financial institutions, and communities

- to provide technical assistance, financing and real estate services. Website: www.massdevelopment.com
- The **Massachusetts Cultural Council** (MCC) supports access to the arts, sciences and humanities. MCC provides Local Cultural Councils with grant funding to support locally selected community based projects. In addition, MCC has the **Cultural Facilities Fund**, which is a competitive program to fund the acquisition, design, repair, renovation and construction of non-profit and municipal cultural facilities. The **Adams Arts Program** is a competitive grant program that funds community-based, creative economy projects. Website: <http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/>
 - The **National Endowment for the Arts** (NEA) administers the **Our Town** program, which supports creative placemaking projects through three categories: arts engagement projects, cultural planning projects, or design projects. This competitive federal grant program is open to non-profit organizations and municipal governments. Website: www.arts.gov/grants-organizations/our-town/introduction

Historic Preservation and Redevelopment

- The **Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund** is a state-funded 50% reimbursable matching grant program established in 1984 to support the preservation of properties, landscapes, and sites (cultural resources) listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Eligible activities include pre-development, development, and acquisition projects. Website: www.sec.state.ma.us/MHC/mhcmppf/mppfidx.htm
- The **MHC Survey and Planning Grant Program** is a federally funded, reimbursable, 50/50 matching grant program to support historic preservation planning activities in communities throughout the state. Annual grants are contingent on Massachusetts' federal budget allocation. MHC is required to pass through grant awards representing 10% of its total annual federal funding allocation to Certified Local Governments. Eligible activities include completion of cultural resource inventories, nomination of significant properties to the National Register of Historic Places, completion of community-wide preservation plans, and other types of studies, reports, publications and projects that relate to the identification and protection of significant historic properties and sites. Website: www.sec.state.ma.us/MHC/mhchpp/Surveyandplanning.htm
- The **National Trust for Historic Preservation** administers the **National Trust Preservation Funds** program, which supports planning studies and other activities to protect historic places and may be used to conduct feasibility studies to determine how historic facilities could appropriately be returned to productive use. Funding may not be used for construction or property acquisition. This is a competitive grant program open to non-profit organizations and members of the National Main Street Network. Website:

www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/preservation-funds-guidelines-eligibility.html

- **Preservation Massachusetts** administers the **Predevelopment Loan Fund**, which offers financing to conduct predevelopment work, such as architectural or feasibility studies, for an historic redevelopment project. The applicant must have site control and sites must be on or eligible for the National Historic Register. Website: www.preservationmass.org/programs/predevelopment-loan-fund-2/

Tax Credits and Incentives

- Both federal and state governments maintain historic rehabilitation tax credit programs. The **Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program** is administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Park Service and the U.S. Department of the Treasury. The tax incentives may be applied to costs incurred for renovation, restoration, and reconstruction of eligible buildings. Generally, the percentage of these costs that can be taken as a credit is 10% for buildings placed in service before 1936, and 20% for certified historic structures. Website: www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm
- The **Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program** is managed by the Massachusetts Historic Commission under the Secretary of the Commonwealth. Under this program a certified rehabilitation project on an income-producing property is eligible to receive up to 20% of the cost of certified rehabilitation expenditures in state tax credits. There is an annual limit on the amount of tax credits available through the Commonwealth's program, so selection criteria is employed to ensure that funds are distributed to the projects that provide the most public benefit. In past years, projects in Downtown Greenfield and Turners Falls have received awards. In the 2014- 2015 rounds, the Brady Sullivan Orange Properties LLC project at 16-36 West River Street, and 58 South Main Street were awarded \$1.4 million in tax credits for their \$9.9 million project to develop housing. Website: www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhctax/taxidx.htm
- Private businesses can partner with local municipalities and state government for a tax incentive through the **Massachusetts Office of Business Development's (MOBD) Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP)**. The project must be located within an economically distressed area, such as a state certified Economic Target Area. Through the FRCOG, all Franklin County towns except Shutesbury, are located within the designated Greater Franklin County Economic Target Area. The EDIP allows communities to negotiate a **Tax Incrementing Financing (TIF)** and other tax incentive agreement with a private business that is expanding, renovating, relocating, or building new facilities and creating jobs with an Economic Opportunity Area (a targeted area designated for economic development with an established ETA). For a business seeking a break from their State tax obligation using this program, they must be able to demonstrate that the project will generate substantial sales outside of Massachusetts, and the project must be approved by Town Meeting and the state. Municipalities may choose to

offer a tax incentive applicable to the business' local property tax obligation, which does not require the same thresholds to be met as required by the State. The regional office of the Massachusetts Office of Business Development is a key partner in guiding businesses and communities through this process. Website: www.mass.gov/portal/business/taxes/credits-incentives

Public Park Development

- The **Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's (MassDEP) Conservation Assistance for Small Communities Program** offers reimbursement funding for Open Space & Recreation Plans (OSRPs), other plans to facilitate land conservation, and/or appraisals contracted in order to apply to the LAND or PARC grant program. Available to all communities with a population of 6,000 or fewer people. Funding is non-competitive; all eligible applicants will receive contracts on a rolling basis until all available funding is allocated. Website: www.mass.gov/eea/grants-and-tech-assistance/grants-and-loans/dcs/grant-programs/conservation-appraisals.html
- The **MassDEP's Massachusetts Land and Water Conservation Fund** provides up to 50% of the total project cost for the acquisition, development and renovation of a park, recreation or conservation area. Municipalities, special districts and state agencies are eligible to apply. Access by the general public is required. Website: www.mass.gov/eea/grants-and-tech-assistance/grants-and-loans/dcs/grant-programs/massachusetts-land-and-water-conservation-fund.html
- The **MassDEP's Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Program** (formerly the Self-Help Program) was established to assist municipal conservation commissions acquiring land for natural resource and passive outdoor recreation purposes. Lands acquired may include wildlife, habitat, trails, unique natural, historic or cultural resources, water resources, forest, and farm land. Compatible passive outdoor recreational uses such as hiking, fishing, hunting, cross-country skiing, bird observation and the like are encouraged. Access by the general public is required. Offers a reimbursement rate of 52-70% of project cost with a maximum award amount of \$400,000. Website: www.mass.gov/eea/grants-and-tech-assistance/grants-and-loans/dcs/grant-programs/massachusetts-local-acquisitions-for-natural.html
- The Massachusetts **Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Program** (formerly the Urban Self-Help Program) was established to assist municipalities in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes. Any town with a population of 35,000 or more year-round residents, or any city regardless of size, that has an authorized park /recreation commission is eligible to participate in the program. Communities that do not meet the population criteria listed above may still qualify under the "small town," "regional," or "statewide" project provisions of the program. Grants are available for the acquisition of land and the construction, or renovation of park and outdoor recreation facilities. Access by the general public is required. Up to \$250,000 of

funding is set aside for grants in the Small Town category. Website: www.mass.gov/eea/grants-and-tech-assistance/grants-and-loans/dcs/grant-programs/massachusetts-local-acquisitions-for-natural.html

Business Technical Assistance and Financing

- The **Franklin County Community Development Corporation** provides direct technical assistance and business planning workshops, administers a small business lending program and operates the Western Mass. Food Processing Center (a commercial kitchen for food-based enterprises) and the Venture Center (a business incubator) at their facility in Greenfield. Website: www.fccdc.org
- **Common Capital, Inc.** is a non-profit organization that offers loans and other financing, such as the Community First Fund, for start-up ventures and businesses seeking to expand. Website: <http://www.common-capital.org/>
- Based in Springfield, **Valley Venture Mentors (VVM)** is an accelerator program to provide business support to selected start-up businesses seeking to grow quickly. Website: www.valleyventurementors.org/
- The **Massachusetts Small Business Development Center (MSBDC) Network** provides one-to-one free comprehensive and confidential services focusing on, business growth and strategies, financing and loan assistance as well as strategic, marketing and operational analysis. In addition, low cost educational training programs are offered across the state targeted to the needs of small business. Website: www.msfdc.org

Business and Industry Support, Marketing and Networking

- **Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA)** is a Pioneer Valley-based organization dedicated to making connections between farms and the community. CISA conducts marketing programs and offers business technical assistance workshop to farmers and agri-businesses. Website: www.buylocalfood.org
- The **Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts (EDC)** markets development opportunities in the region, and provides data and information to help business locating to or expanding in the region. Website: www.westernmassedc.com
- **Franklin County Chamber of Commerce** is the regional chamber of commerce and regional tourism council serving Franklin County. The Chamber provides services to large and small businesses, including health insurance, networking opportunities, lobbying representation, and assistance with town events. Website: www.franklincc.org
- The **Hampshire County Regional Tourism Council** is a partnership of the Amherst Area, Greater Easthampton, and Greater Northampton Chambers of Commerce, and the regional tourism council serving Hampshire County. The

- Council maintains an active website and email list to promotes the activities and attractions of the region. Website: www.visithampshirecounty.com
- The **Mohawk Trail Association** is a regional tourism council that markets the northern tier region from central Massachusetts to the Berkshires. The Association produces an annual visitors' guide and maintains a comprehensive website that identifies attractions and tourism services. Website: www.mohawktrail.com
 - The **Montague Business Association** is the local business association serving the Town of Montague. Website: www.montaguebusinessassociation.com
 - **Turners Falls RiverCulture** is a cultural organization that promotes activities in the Turners Falls and surrounding areas of Montage. Website: www.turnersfallsriverculture.org
 - The **Northfield Area Tourism and Business Association** works to promote the greater Northfield area to visitors and to encourage the growth of local businesses. Website: www.visitnorthfieldarea.com

Issues and Recommendations

Issues

- There is a need for more year-round or traditionally “off season” visitors to sustain businesses that rely heavily on seasonal tourism.
- There is a need to spread awareness of tourism opportunities to both people outside and inside the region.
- There is a need to share information about events and activities happening in the Byway among businesses and organizations with event calendars.
- There is a need to better sustain agricultural operations along the Byway.
- There is a need to better connect local artists, craftspeople and specialty food producers with local shops selling products to visitors along the Byway.
- There is support to sustain and expand education and workforce development programs that support the Byway's important economic sectors.
- There is a desire to balance the economic development of local businesses and services with the preservation of the Byway's agricultural, historic and cultural assets.
- There is a need for continued access to business technical assistance and financial support for new ventures and business expansion.
- There is a need for investment and redevelopment of vacant or underutilized properties located in the village centers.

Recommendations

- Support the development of businesses that create jobs and provide services and goods for residents and visitors, and that are in keeping with the Byway character.
- Encourage the development of businesses that enhance the visitor experience.
- Support the development of community facilities that enhance the visitor experience, such as Connecticut River access, parking facilities, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and visitor information services.
- Foster the connection between entrepreneurs and business owners with the organizations and programs that promote business development and marketing of the region.
- Foster the connection between local officials and community leaders with the organizations and programs that promote economic development, and develop strategies to encourage private investment in vacant or underutilized village center properties, such as in Millers Falls/Ervingside and the Northfield campus.
- Maintain and update the BywaysWestMass.com website.
- Continue to coordinate marketing the Byway with popular events and destinations in the Byway area.
- Coordinate attractions and visitor service businesses to be open at the same time, such as when regional events are occurring.
- Expand tourism season with events and activities in the off season.
- Promote local Byway attractions and businesses to residents and college students located in the region.
- Facilitate the sharing of information among existing businesses so that they can cross-refer their customers, such as lodging businesses that can inform their guests about restaurants and destinations, and event organizers that can recommend lodging and dining destinations to their attendees.
- Target business and workforce development services to specific industries, such as outdoor recreation, and farm and food systems.
- Connect local arts and crafts producers, as well as local value added food producers to attraction-related and independent retail operations on the Byway.
- Seek funding for land protection projects that preserve active agricultural land and other scenic areas.