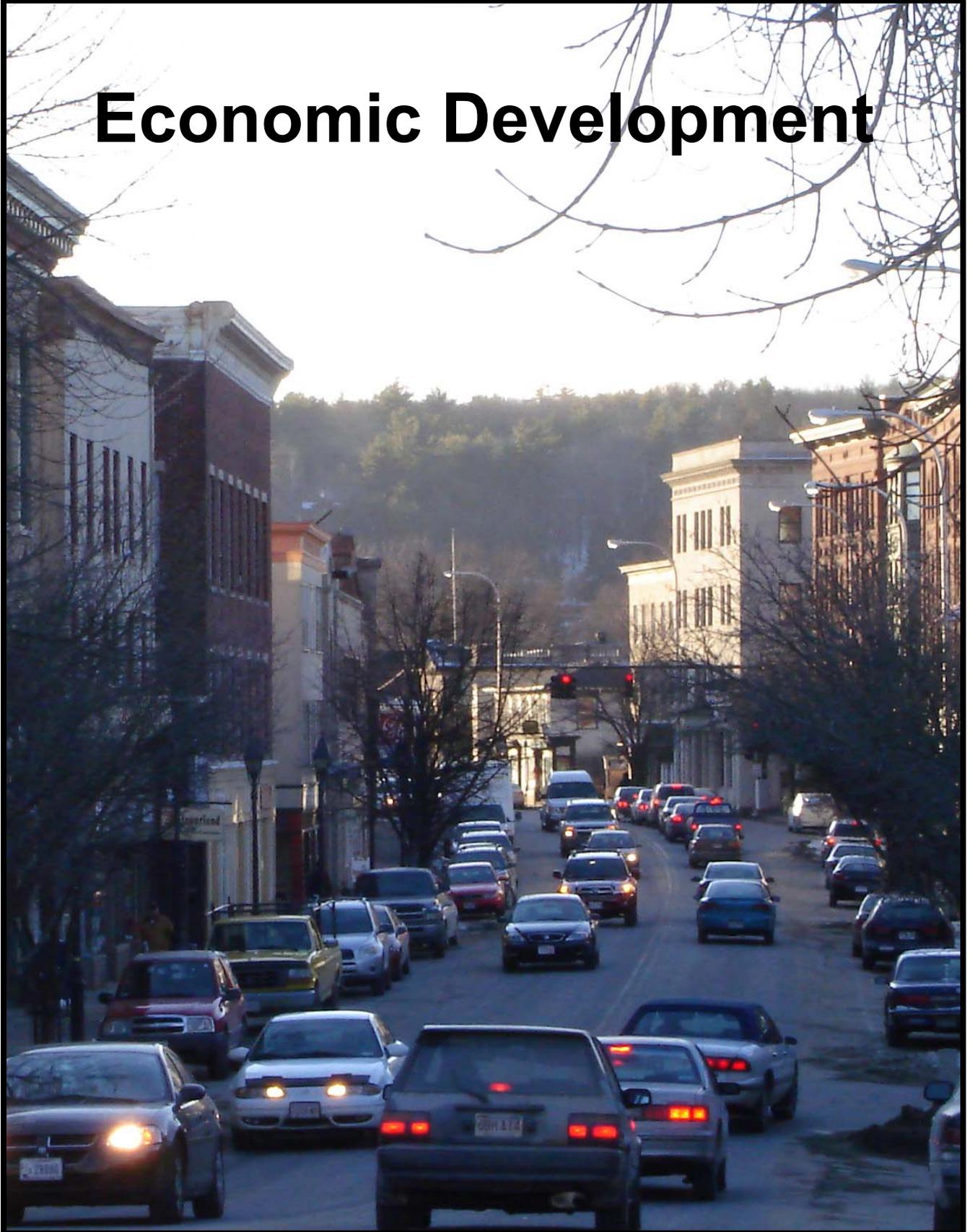


Economic Development



Like a grand main street, the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway (Routes 2 and 2A) travels through the heart of Franklin County and northwest Massachusetts (the Northern Tier). It is the region’s main transportation route. It connects communities and businesses and supports commerce and industry along the northern border of Massachusetts. The Mohawk Trail is part of the region’s identity and an important component of the region’s infrastructure.

Economic Development Resources

In 2004, the *Northern Tier Strategic Investment Initiatives Report* was completed. It identified opportunities for developing new economic engines and sectors in the northwestern corridor of Massachusetts. The Northern Tier region encompasses the Byway corridor, and many of the economic development issues researched for the Northern Tier Project are relevant to the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan.¹

Two goals of the Northern Tier Project are to create a stronger and more dynamic regional economic base and establish a training program to help the region’s low-

income and working-class residents to have access to well-paying jobs. Economic and demographic data was collected and analyzed in the *Northern Tier Report*, and an inventory of the region’s economic assets and challenges was prepared.

The *Northern Tier Strategic Investment Initiatives Report* identified four sectors to develop that could “lead the region to a stronger and more dynamic economy.” These sectors are: the Creative Cluster; Ecotourism; Small, Growth-Oriented Manufacturing; and Renewable and Alternative Energy. They parallel the resources and topics that have been examined in this Mohawk Trail East Corridor Management Plan. See Table 9-1 which illustrates these parallels.

Table 9-1 Business Sectors of the Northern Tier and Mohawk Trail

NORTHERN TIER	MOHAWK TRAIL
Ecotourism	Environment, Recreation & Scenery
Creative Cluster	Architectural, Historic & Cultural Resources – Heritage Tourism
Small, Growth-Oriented Manufacturing	Historic Industrial Resources (Mills)
Renewable & Alternative Energy	Town Centers and Identities

1. To varying degrees, both the eastern and western sections of the entire Byway encompass the four sectors. Along the eastern part of the Trail, the emphasis is Manufacturing and the Renewable and Alternative Energy sectors, while the western portion stresses Ecotourism and Creative Clusters.

Environment, Recreation, & Scenery (Ecotourism)

The environmental, recreational and scenic quality of northwest Massachusetts was the reason the Mohawk Trail auto-tourist highway was created, upgraded and expanded during the 1920s through the 1960s. The communities had an interest in attracting tourists and vacationers from the eastern part of the State to augment the manufacturing economy of its town centers – Athol, Orange, Erving, Millers Falls, Turners Falls, Greenfield, Shelburne Falls, Charlemont, and North Adams – and to complement the agricultural base of the region.

Today, under the aegis of the Scenic Byway, towns in the eastern section of the Byway are trying to capitalize more fully on their environmental, recreational and scenic resources to complement their manufacturing economies. They promote river recreation on the Millers, Connecticut and Green Rivers, which parallel or are near the Byway and hiking, biking, picnicking, and camping in the area's parks and state forests. They highlight their scenery and environment through brochures, interpretive centers, town and business web sites, and local and area chambers of commerce.



Greenfield — Historic main street with hilltowns in distance.

Architectural, Historic & Cultural Resources (Creative Cluster)

Athol, Orange, Millers Falls, Turners Falls and Greenfield have historic main streets, many historic and architecturally significant buildings, and deep industrial roots that make them quintessential New England communities. Along the eastern section of the Byway, the towns are working diligently to preserve their historic architectural resources to attract new residents and businesses and bolster their economies through the arts.²

The Town of Athol is currently working to rehabilitate Memorial Hall to improve the acoustics. In

2. Today, the town centers along the western section of the Byway are adding to their economic base by attracting artists and arts programming to help them restore their mill complexes, historic buildings, and main street businesses. Along the western Byway, these Creative Clusters include: North Adams with Mass MOCA in the historic Sprague Mill Complex and Shelburne Falls with many art galleries, a concert/movie theater, and restaurants.

2008, a heritage and preservation study for the Uptown Main Street and Downtown Main Street historic areas was completed with a grant provided by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. In follow-up to that report, the Town applied to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for funding to complete the State Inventory forms for properties within these historic areas. The completion of the State Inventory forms is the precursor to filing the nomination paperwork for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition within the Byway study area there are 7 acres of land and 3 old mill buildings that are under-utilized and are being evaluated for housing or retail development.

Orange is working to restore Putnam Hall for commercial, retail and professional offices. Their anchor tenant will be North Quabbin Woods, which promotes and supports local artisans and craftspeople and is a project of the New England Forestry Foundation. Also, the Town is refurbishing Assembly Hall at the historic Town Hall building as a center for performing arts and community gatherings. Orange has created volunteer guidelines for owners of historic buildings and is seeking Community Development Block Grant funding for a streetscape improvement project. Orange has also recently created Riverfront Park in its downtown, which provides a direct connection from the downtown to the Millers River.

The Village of Millers Falls in Montague has completed a streetscape project and has a number of community programs to attract visitors, while Erving has

upgraded its streetscape along the Mohawk Trail, installed new signage, and improved pedestrian safety.

Turners Falls, also in Montague, is “an extraordinary historic mill town that is blossoming from its industrial roots to become a hub of artistic inspiration, recreational adventure and natural beauty.”³ The RiverCulture Project focuses on bolstering the economy of Turners Falls and promoting the rebirth of the area via the arts – the Great Falls Discovery Center is housed in an historic mill complex overlooking the Connecticut River, and the Shea Theatre and Colle Opera House have been restored to accommodate exhibitions and the performing arts.

Greenfield is revitalizing its downtown through a number of efforts to rehabilitate and retrofit its historic Main Street buildings. Public and private investment is being leveraged with the intent of creating new office, residential and retail space in the downtown. In 2007, the Greenfield Redevelopment Authority (GRA) and the Town of Greenfield created the *Bank Row Urban Renewal Plan (BRURP)* to encourage the redevelopment of Bank Row in downtown Greenfield. The district encompasses many, but not all, parcels located in the block bordered by Bank Row, Main Street, Olive Street (including south of Olive Street to the railroad tracks) and part of Hope Street. The BRURP as well as the 2002 *Greenfield Downtown Master Plan* include recommendations to use

3. RiverCulture web site.



Bank Row redevelopment block in Greenfield

historic tax credits to encourage the redevelopment of underutilized upper floor space. An initiative is underway by the Town of Greenfield, the Greenfield Redevelopment Authority, and local banks to support the redevelopment of the upper floors of buildings within this district. A consulting firm has been retained to provide technical assistance to this project. Currently, five property owners with eight buildings in the downtown have expressed interest in activities to redevelop upper floor space. The Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) are working collaboratively to construct a new regional transit center at the corner of Bank Row and Olive Street.⁴ The Franklin County Courthouse, built in 1931 and located at the

4. The FRTA recently was awarded \$12.8 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act monies to construct the transit center.

corner of Main and Hope Streets, is slated for renovation and expansion at its existing location.

Greenfield is also participating in the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Connecticut River Valley Heritage Landscape Inventory. Heritage Landscapes are defined by DCR as those special places that contain both natural and cultural resources that have influenced the use and development of land and help define a community's character. With the assistance of the FRCOG, community members have identified 33 heritage landscapes within Town, and prioritized 5 of those Heritage Landscapes as part of this process. The Greenfield Heritage Landscape Reconnaissance Report, to be completed in 2009, will provide recommendations for preserving and bringing attention to these special areas within town. The Priority Heritage Landscapes for Greenfield are the Town Common area; Franklin County

Fairgrounds; Mohawk Trail; Rocky Mountain area; and the Meadows.

Other areas just outside the Byway Corridor but important to the scenic, historic and recreational aspects of the Trail include the Greenfield River Industrial Heritage Area and the Mead Street Bike and Walkway.

In addition to the activities taking place within the towns along the Byway the *Fostering the Arts and Culture Partnership* (<http://www.massartandculture.org/>) is an exciting organization with six unique partners who are working to assist artists in the Franklin County region by offering business courses and trainings that will make a difference for individual artists and the Creative Economy as a whole. The partners are the Franklin County Community Development Corporation (FCCDC), Franklin County Chamber of Commerce and Greenfield Business Association (FCCC), Franklin-Hampshire Regional Employment Board (FH-REB), Greenfield Community College (GCC), [masstraveler.com](http://www.masstraveler.com), River Culture, and the Shelburne Falls Area Business Association (SFABA).

Arts and cultural programs are a powerful industry in New England. According to a study by *The New England Council: The Creative Economy*, both nonprofit and commercial arts organizations and individual artists "support almost 245,000 jobs in New England, an amount that nearly equals the computer equipment cluster and is more than the software and healthcare technology clusters combined."

This partnership has taken on the role of working to meet many

of the creative cluster related goals that were identified in the *Northern Tier Strategic Investment Initiatives Report*. These goals dovetail with the goals and objectives of this scenic byway corridor management plan and should be considered when discussing the creative economy of the Mohawk Trail East Scenic Byway. The goals of the Fostering the Arts and Partnership are to:

- Learn from area artists of all genres what you need to succeed;
- Offer one or two evening business courses, so artists can help themselves and better manage the creative, marketing, financial and other aspects of work;
- Offer information and support in the form of workshops, individualized business plans and one-on-one counseling through the individual partners;
- Build a database of area artists, musicians, crafters, graphic designers, and others;
- Provide a website to serve as a place to promote artists' work, and continually add articles and resources;
- Discover how a Performing Arts Space could serve the region by becoming an exceptional art gallery, a performing artist's showcase, home base for the Pioneer Valley Symphony and other performing arts, and the host site for shared resources for performing and visual artists to record or document their art, offer classes in well-constructed facilities, and much more;



New Home Sewing Machine Company foundry in Orange.

- Hold an Summit to pull together 2006 discoveries and plan for 2007 and beyond; and
- Build the database to stress to potential funders, tourism organizations, and others just how large the region's creative sector really is, and why dollars invested in building the arts and the arts infrastructure can make a significant difference not only to artists, but to the larger region.

Industrial Resources – Small, Growth Oriented Manufacturing

All of the towns along the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway East have many industrial resources to offer including their town center's manufacturing heritage, historic mills, and industrial parks. The towns are undertaking a variety of activities to tap into these

underutilized resources and breathe new life into their local economies. Towns along the byway are:

- Reusing their historic mill complexes for incubator facilities, interpretive centers, performing arts programs, and galleries – Athol, Orange, Turners Falls and Greenfield;
- Bolstering existing manufacturing in their communities such as turbine and paper manufacturing, – Turners Falls and Athol;
- Attracting economic development with new small, growth-oriented businesses – Greenfield, Turners Falls, Millers Falls, Orange and Athol;
- Providing business technical assistance and “gap” financing from the Franklin County Community Development Corporation to start-up and expanding businesses in all the towns along the Scenic Byway – Athol, Orange, Wendell,

Erving, Montague, Gill and Greenfield ; and

- Taking part in the Massachusetts Chapter 43D Expedited Permitting Program by designating priority development sites – Athol, Orange, Erving, Gill, Montague and Greenfield.

central source to a group of buildings, as a clean energy alternative to individual building heating systems by using renewable energy sources such as biomass to generate.

In Athol and Orange a number of individual businesses installing photovoltaic energy systems, and exploring the use of hydropower. The towns have formed Energy Committees, are going through energy audits to upgrade their facilities and reduce their energy consumption, and want to develop sustainability plans for their communities.

Town Centers and Identities – Renewable and Alternative Energy

With a new emphasis on renewable and alternative energy, the villages and towns along the Byway are trying recapture their manufacturing past and vital main streets by capitalizing on going “green.” Recommendations for municipalities to reduce energy consumption and increase production of clean energy are included in the *Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan* (2008). Orange, Wendell, Montague, Gill and Greenfield have signed on to the plan through a memorandum of

agreement to consider these recommendations locally.

Along the eastern section of the Mohawk Trail, Greenfield in particular is exploring green industries. There is a proposal for a biofuel plant; a number of businesses are installing photo voltaic energy systems to save money and to contribute to a cleaner environment; and community members have established the Greening Greenfield campaign, a collaborative effort of the Greening Greenfield Energy Committee (GGEC) and the Town of Greenfield to build a sustainable Greenfield. They are working with ICLEI to write and implement a sustainability plan to reduce the town’s carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. In addition, there is currently a group in Greenfield pursuing the feasibility of “District Heating”, which is the supply of heat from a central source to a group of buildings, as a clean energy alternative to individual building heating systems by using renewable energy sources such as biomass to generate.

In Athol and Orange a number of individual businesses installing photovoltaic energy systems, and exploring the use of hydropower. The towns have formed Energy Committees, are going through energy audits to upgrade their facilities and reduce their energy consumption, and want to develop sustainability plans for their communities.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Issues

Architecture, Historic and Cultural Resources (Creative Cluster)

- There are few brochures or educational materials highlighting the unique historic architectural resources of the Scenic Byway – Greenfield and Turners Falls have brochures.
- There is no listing of arts and cultural organizations, museums, galleries, and events in the region or along the Mohawk Trail East Scenic Byway.

Environment, Recreation and Scenery (Ecotourism)

- There is no web site or brochure about the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway.
- The communities and businesses have not developed a regional approach to tourism, as suggested in the *Northern Tier Strategic Investment Initiatives Report*, which the Scenic Byway could stimulate.

Historic Industrial Resources (Mills) (Small, Growth-Oriented Manufacturing)

- There is little information about the historic mills in the town centers along the Scenic Byway – total number of buildings, square footage and feasibility for reuse, cost of adaptive reuse and restoration for new industries, particularly renewable and alternative energy.

Town Centers and Identities (Renewable and Alternative Energy)

- The historic mill complexes could be sites for the new energy economy and green jobs.
- Franklin County has many green energy entrepreneurs.

Recommendations⁵

Architecture, Historic and Cultural Resources (Creative Cluster)

- Compile a directory of the arts and cultural organizations, museums, gallery, artists, performers, and events located in the Byway area that can be compiled into a printed document or included in a website for the Mohawk Trail East Scenic Byway to promote the creative arts economy in the area.
- Create a brochure and web site to promote the arts along the Byway and encourage tours of galleries, museums, and studios.
- Work with the Chambers of Commerce, Community Development Corporation, and Town Business Associations and town officials to encourage creative cluster development along the Byway.
- Encourage discussions between the nonprofit cultural institutions, individual artists and performers, and creative businesses operating along the Byway.
- Promote artisan and crafts related business development.
- Capitalize on the synergies between the creative cluster and other economic sectors along the Scenic Byway.

5. Many of the recommendations were adapted from the *Northern Tier Strategic Investment Initiatives Report*, prepared by Mt. Auburn Associates, Inc., October 21, 2004.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations — Continued

Environment, Recreation and Scenery (Ecotourism)

- Develop a brochure and web site about the environmental, recreational, historic and scenic resources along the Byway.
- Include information on eco- and heritage tourism in Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway (East) promotional materials that are developed.
- Convene a Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway (East) ecotourism working group.
- Develop more touring and recreational packages.
- Broaden the region's tourism infrastructure – financing, technical assistance, computer-based marketing; collaboration between bed and breakfast, inn, and restaurant owners
- Support the ecotourism sector.

Historic Industrial Resources (Mills) (Small, Growth-Oriented Manufacturing)

- Seek funding to inventory and conduct feasibility studies of the historic mills along the Byway for reuse as incubators, industry and manufacturing, and museums/galleries.
- Support activities to restore and retrofit historic mills for re-use.
- Support the establishment of a Mohawk Trail Entrepreneur and Manufacturing Program that might include: an Information Technology service; a database network of industry experts; market development services; a regional matching grant pool for growing entrepreneurs; and an active business outreach program.

Town Centers and Identities (Renewable and Alternative Energy)

- Support the creation of a strong economic development leadership capacity in renewable energy in the region.
- Support the development of the region's role as a leader in renewable energy education and training.
- Position the region as a national center for biofuel technology development.
- Investigate the opportunity to develop Greenfield as a regional manufacturing and distribution hub for renewable energy.