

Economic Development

CHAPTER 9

Route 116 Scenic Byway

Introduction

There are many resources that drive the economic activity of the Route 116 Scenic Byway. Visitors to the region are drawn to well-known cultural attractions, outdoor recreational activities or the overall scenic beauty of this quintessential New England area. The area's dynamic economic activities include working farms, unique village center businesses, industrial parks, and some relatively large scale commercial offices that all employ local residents.

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 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 town 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 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 Resources

Existing regional resources that support the tourism industry are a significant component of the Byway area's economy. Local businesses and economic development advocates have focused efforts on particular niches of the tourism industry, 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 industries that are not tourism related. These industries, such as manufacturing, provide important employment opportunities for residents and often are significant contributors to the local municipal tax base. Overall, it is important these industries continue in a manner that is sensitive to the Byway character.

Natural, Recreational and Scenic Resources

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, and biking and hiking trails. Additionally, there are businesses that provide access to outdoor recreation activities, including but not limited to golf, horse-back riding, 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.



The Ashfield Hardware Store.

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. An example is the Outdoor Leadership Program at Greenfield Community College. It is an accredited, one-year program that provides professional training and certifications for a variety of adventure activities, such as backcountry travel, whitewater kayaking, skiing, challenge courses and rock climbing. By training skilled workers to provide a quality service for their employers and clients, the program strengthens the regional tourism sector. In addition, some of the programs graduates may choose to start their own outdoor adventure business.

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 visitors 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

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

rural areas, natural amenities alone are not enough to bring tourists to a region. It was also 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 related businesses would best be accommodated in the village centers and downtowns 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

There are an abundance of historic and cultural resources along the Byway. These resources were detailed in previous chapters and include historic districts, museums, venues for the performing arts, and annual festivals. These resources vary greatly 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 house museums of Historic Deerfield and the historic Bascom Lodge at the Mount Greylock summit are well known and have established hours of operation, while the smaller volunteer run local historical society houses may not have regular hours and staffing.

The development of a coordinated marketing program for all the Route 116 Scenic Byway's architectural, historic and cultural resources would highlight the range of attractions available to travelers. The western Massachusetts Scenic Byway Marketing Project is currently underway to create a coordinated marketing plan, materials, and website for all seven of the Byways in western Massachusetts. This coordinated information about the Byways' resources will encourage travelers to visit these destinations. Additionally, the marketing elements may also target specific segments, such as residents from the region who choose a "stay-cation" or nearby college students seeking adventure activities or cultural experiences.

Sharing information about events and sites along and near the Byway would be advantageous for all attractions and businesses seeking customers. For example, local restaurants may want to be open when attendees are traveling to and from major events like the Solid Sound Festival at MassMOCA or scheduled performances of the Double Edge Theatre in Ashfield. It would 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.

In addition to these attractions, the region is also home to many artisans and craftspeople who produce and sell arts and crafts. Connecting attraction-related (such as gift shops) and independent retail establishments with these locally crafted and produced items supports the local creative economy and further promotes the unique character of this region to visitors. Local arts and business community organizations can take an active role in identifying these local artisans.

Agriculture and Related Businesses

There are numerous farms, orchards, and other agricultural operations along the Byway. These businesses support the maintenance of the Byway's scenic rural landscapes. Therefore it is important to provide support and sustain these agricultural operations. To diversify their revenue sources, some farmers have expanded operations to include either direct sales or development of value-added products. Farms may operate pick-your-own operations, farm stands, maple sugar houses, as well as interactive entertainment activities like hayrides and corn mazes.

Communities can support these farms by establishing local farmers markets and encouraging or supporting "buy local" campaigns. There are several existing organizations and agencies that provide support to the agricultural industry in the region 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. The each also annually publish local farm products guides and maps 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 trusts 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.

Industrial Resources and Major Employers

As described in the historic resources chapter, the Scenic Byway corridor has a strong heritage in manufacturing. This tradition continues today in some of the larger communities. Within the corridor, there are several large manufacturers and major employers. The continued prosperous operation of these businesses and the preservation of the Byway's natural, historic and cultural resources is an important objective. There are recommendations throughout the Corridor Management Plan that seek to promote a healthy business environment while protecting the unique qualities of the Byway.

Another consideration for tourist service businesses along the Byway is that workers at these major employers may also be their customers. Diversifying the customer base is particularly important for businesses to sustain themselves in the seasons that are not as popular with tourists. As a result, marketing efforts should be accessible to local residents as well as visitors.

Town Centers and Identities

The downtowns and village centers located in the Route 116 Scenic Byway corridor vary greatly in size and scope. The Byway is anchored in the east by South Deerfield center and in the west downtown Adams. Both of these communities are significant employment and population centers for the region. The smaller, rural villages that are in between are host to c buildings and some small shops, restaurants, and offices. Visitors may choose to park in one of these downtowns or village centers to explore these offerings, or visitors may drive to a specific business located along the route. To the extent that local residents and visitors can be encouraged to shop at the existing stores and restaurants, local businesses will become more successful, and others may be inspired to open.

Franklin County

Sunderland

In terms of economic activity, the Sunderland Village Center is host to a few restaurants, a bank, a small grocery market, a bicycle shop, and some other retail and service based businesses. The Village Center has been zoned to accommodate more residential, commercial, or 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.

Whately

The byway itself does not travel through Whately, but the Town has been included in the Corridor Management Plan because the northeast corner falls within the project study area. This area of Whately is along Route 5/10 and the southern interchange for access to and from Interstate 91. It is important to note that a Massachusetts department of Transportation Park and River Lot is located along this section of Route 5/10 just off the byway. The Park and Ride Lot opened in November 2012 and has been very well used. A survey of the use of the lot is planned for the fall of 2013 by the FRCOG in order to determine the use level and the purposes of those who are using the lot. The Park and Ride Lot serves as an important economic development resource for the area because of its convenient location to Interstate 91 and Routes 5/10. It is at important cross roads and provides transportation links between the western part of Franklin County and regional employers in Greenfield, Northampton, Springfield and Amherst.

Deerfield

Downtown South Deerfield is one of the major population centers in Franklin County, with approximately one-third of the town's total population located here. Goods and

services are within easy walking distance from the surrounding neighborhoods to the downtown. In cooperation with the FRCOG, the Town of Deerfield recently completed a Downtown Deerfield Complete Streets and Livability Plan² that identified a strong interest in the community for more retail shops and amenities in the Downtown. As described in the Plan, charrette participants “wanted to see a more active, vibrant downtown with opportunities to shop, eat, and see friends.” The Plan also recommended the implementation of a “park once” strategy that would encourage residents and visitors to park once and then patronize multiple establishments.

The development of more shopping and dining options could be established in existing structures as well as in new development. In 2012, the downtown had a commercial vacancy rate of 8 percent³, which indicates there are empty storefronts that could be returned to productive use. There is also room for new development on select infill parcels and at the 16-acre former Oxford Foods property. The Oxford Foods site is owned by the Town and has been cleared of structures. The site is served by public water and sewer systems and natural gas infrastructure. The site is ready for redevelopment and can accommodate a mix of residential, commercial and/or industrial uses. The Complete Streets and Livability Plan strongly recommended that linkages be made to connect this property with South Deerfield center.

In the Whately/South Deerfield area, Routes 5 & 10 is the state’s north-south route parallel to Interstate-91. A mix of relatively large scale retail, commercial office, distribution, and industrial businesses are found in this corridor. This area includes the Yankee Candle Company flagship store, distribution center and office headquarters; a 124-room hotel; manufacturers Pelican Products and Millitech; and the publisher Channing Bete Company. In addition, vacant industrial buildings and infill lots available for development have the capacity to support new or expanding businesses in those sectors.

Improved gateway connections from the Routes 5 & 10 Industrial Corridor to Downtown South Deerfield could help spur the development and retention of new businesses. By enhancing the pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle connections in this area, some of the thousands of Yankee Candle Company flagship store visitors could be encouraged to visit Downtown. In addition, this could encourage other travelers exiting I-91, workers from the nearby large employers, and neighborhood residents to visit South Deerfield center.

Conway

As Route 116 traverses the Town of Conway, it becomes the Village Center’s Main Street with its historic buildings and relatively few businesses. Historically, the village was once a prominent manufacturing area with mills located along the South River. Very few of these structures remain, and only a few manufacturing businesses remain in the Town, such as Poplar Hill Machine, Inc. or the South River Miso Company. However, in

² “Downtown Deerfield Complete Streets and Livability Plan”, Prepared by Nelson\Nygaard, The Cecil Group, and Doucet and Associates, 2013.

http://www.deerfieldma.us/Pages/DeerfieldMA_CompleteStreets/index

³ Source: K. Levitch Associates, 2012.

recent decades the community has seen growth in its residential population. Many residents commute to the large employment centers south of Conway, such as Amherst and Northampton. Most businesses in the community are small operations or home-based, with the exception of a few, such as the Conway Grammar School, Conway School of Design, and the Greenfield Savings Bank.

With no sewer or water infrastructure in the village center, there is limited potential for considerable new development. Modest development of new businesses could be accommodated through the re-use of existing structures. Most business development targeted specifically for Scenic Byway visitors will likely be located along the Byway route in Conway.

Ashfield

The Ashfield Village Center is home to a few restaurants, a popular general store, some art studios and other small businesses, as well as public buildings, recreational facilities, and access to Ashfield Lake. The Village Center has water and sewer system infrastructure in place. The major employers in the Town are the Ashfield Lake House restaurant, Dana Clark Orchards, Decker Machine, Elmer's Store, and Harris & Gray concrete foundations and excavating.

Along the Byway route near the Village Center is the Double Edge Theatre and Farm Center. The Double Edge Theatre is estimated to attract an audience of 2,500 each season, as well as hundreds of students who train there each year. The visitors shop, dine, and stay locally. Consequently, a partnership has emerged between the Theatre and area businesses to cross promote their services and products to visitors and patrons.

Hampshire County

Plainfield

Similar to other small towns along the Byway, Plainfield's village center is a mix of public buildings, private homes, and small local businesses. Approximately ten businesses are located within a half mile of the Byway – three of these are arts and crafts stores, selling soap, pottery, and quilts. The other businesses near the Byway are: three building construction companies, a tire store, a car repair shop, a farm, a law office, and a marketing research firm. Outside of the Byway study area but also in Plainfield, businesses include a farm, a horse boarding facility, horse riding school, an equine dentist, two camp grounds, and a hybrid car dealership. Overall, there are over 20 businesses located in Plainfield.

A sign located in the village center provides directions and distances to nearby local businesses, including two campgrounds and three auto-related businesses. While these businesses are one or more miles away from the Byway, this signage is an good example of an economic development strategy, as it encourages awareness of existing local businesses by both visitors and residents alike.

With limited infrastructure or open land currently available in Plainfield's village center, there is not substantial opportunity for the town to attract new businesses. Along with these physical characteristics, the town's residents generally do not want more development. In the Town's 2003 Vision and Action Plan, residents expressed their belief that the town should maintain its existing rural character and that there should be space between buildings. While there was a modest desire to increase the number of small businesses in town, residents felt that any new development should complement the existing agricultural context. Additionally, business owners that were surveyed indicated they did not have an interest in expanding their existing businesses or substantially increasing their sales.

Berkshire County

Savoy

The Town of Savoy is characterized by forest, and is well known for Savoy Mountain State Forest, which offers camp grounds, swimming opportunities, and an extensive trail network for hiking. In the winter, Savoy has trails for snowmobiling.

Savoy is not home to a diverse economy. Shady Pines Campground is a private campground not directly along the Route 116 Scenic Byway, and the Savoy Hollow General Store offers a variety of provisions for travelers and residents.

Savoy would benefit from greater signage promoting notable resources, including the Mohawk Trail (not on the Byway) and the natural features within Savoy Mountain State Forest such as Tannery Falls, the highest water fall in the State of Massachusetts. Businesses related to outdoor recreation and natural resources could also do well in a place like Savoy—fishing or trail guides might be attractive to visitors unfamiliar with such activities.

Because Savoy itself cannot offer dining or accommodations for visitors, it is challenged to capture the economic benefits of increased visitor ship, which is a change from its past, when Savoy was a popular get-away for residents from Adams and the Pioneer Valley, who would spend a night or two in one of the hotels in Savoy after exploring its natural features and enjoying a country dinner.

Cheshire

Cheshire, like Savoy, is largely rural, and characterized by open space and rolling hills, especially in the section of town through which Route 116 cuts. The larger community of



Sign in Plainfield village center providing directions to local businesses.

Cheshire does host more businesses than Savoy, but these are relatively far from the Route 116 Scenic Byway.

A notable resource for recreation in Cheshire is Cheshire Lake, alongside which visitors can bike or walk the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail. The Appalachian Trail also cuts through Cheshire. There are several retail opportunities in Cheshire on Route 8: Whitney's Farm and Country Market, an antique shop, and Bedard Honda. Two restaurants and a bed and breakfast offer meals and accommodations for visitors.

Along Route 116, there are no signs directing travelers to Cheshire's town center. Businesses along Route 8 could benefit from increased signage. Signage would also direct travelers to existing historic resources along the Byway itself, including the Stafford Hill Memorial, which offers scenic views of Mount Greylock.

Adams

The Town of Adams is home to an abundance of significant natural, historical and recreational assets, such as Mount Greylock State Reservation, the Hoosic River, a number of historic sites and buildings, and the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail which extends southward almost to Pittsfield from downtown Adams. An aggressive revitalization process has also been underway in the downtown area. These efforts have included development of the *Adams Downtown Development Plan*, a mill conversion to high-quality housing (actually done over a decade ago), streetscaping improvements, storefront façade improvements, and new business start-ups.



A glimpse of the Hoosic River in downtown Adams. The Hoosic powered the mills that catalyzed growth and industry in the 19th and 20th centuries.

As reflected in the *Sustainable Adams* action plan, the Town is interested in revitalizing the commercial and light industrial enterprises in the downtown area, paying special attention to the town's natural resources. Of the Town's 4,362 housing units, 2,102 (48 percent) are single-family homes. Housing is relatively dense in and around the downtown area, consisting of a mix of single-family dwellings, duplexes, and multi-family apartment buildings.

Adams is pursuing several development projects to enhance and revitalize the Downtown. The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, a recreation path proposed to traverse the length of Berkshire County from Connecticut to the Vermont border, has been extended a

total of ten miles through downtown Adams. The trail's extension behind the Town's "Main Street" will establish a key activity/interest generator that has the promise of expanding the customer base for downtown businesses and fostering new complementary business creation. The Town is working to extend the Ashuwillticook north to connect with downtown North Adams. If successful, the rail trail will provide an important alternative transportation mode in the northern Berkshires.

The Town has been assisted in implementing its economic development strategy, by MassDevelopment, particularly, in the development of the Adams Visitors Center, the environmental center to be located at Greylock Glen, and redevelopment of the vacant Jones Block (c. 1896) on Park Street, the Town's "Main Street."

Economic Development Tools

There are a variety programs and organizations available that offer support to individual businesses and entrepreneurs. Often access to these types of resources is key for new ventures to launch or for existing businesses to grow successfully. These entities offer access to business planning, financing, networking, marketing, and workforce development opportunities. The following are descriptions of a selection of business development related organizations that serve the communities of this corridor.

Corridor Region:

- The **Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network** provides free one-to-one business counseling services and low cost training programs at their regional offices and outreach sites throughout the Commonwealth. Services target specific needs for both start-ups and existing businesses.
 - In Franklin and Hampshire Counties - www.msfdc.org/wmass
 - In Berkshire County - www.msfdc.org/berkshire
- The Massachusetts Economic Development Incentive Program allows designated municipalities that are part of an established Economic Target Area (ETA) to negotiate a **Tax Increment Financing** or other similar tax incentive agreement with a private business that is expanding, renovating, relocating, or building new facilities and creating jobs within an Economic Opportunity Area (a targeted area designated for economic development within the 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. Website: <http://www.mass.gov/hed/business/incentives/edip/>

- In Franklin County, the towns of Ashfield, Conway, Deerfield, Sunderland and Whately are part of the established Greater Franklin County Economic Target Area.
- In Hampshire County, the Town of Plainfield is not part of a designated Economic Target Area.
- In Berkshire County, the Town of Adams is part of the established Northern Berkshire County Economic Target Area.

In Franklin/Hampshire Counties:

- **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 to farmers and agri-businesses. Website: www.buylocalfood.org
- The **Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts** is a private, non-profit organization that has been recognized by the State as an Economic Development Organization. They provide support for companies that are or are considering investing in the region. Website: www.westernmassedc.com
- **Franklin County Chamber of Commerce** provides services to large and small businesses throughout Franklin County, including health insurance, networking opportunities, lobbying representation, and assistance with events. Website: www.franklincc.org
- The **Franklin County Community Development Corporation** provides direct technical assistance and business planning workshops, administers a small business lending program, and operates a commercial processing kitchen for food-based enterprises and a business incubator in Greenfield. The FCCDC serves the greater Franklin County region. Website: www.fccdc.org
- The **Franklin/Hampshire Regional Employment Board and Franklin/Hampshire Career Center** work with individuals seeking employment and employers seeking to find workers in Franklin and Hampshire Counties. The Board provides training programs on behalf of businesses and industry seeking a workforce with skills or knowledge. Website: www.franklinhampshirereb.org
- **Fostering Art and Culture Project and Partnership** is an initiative to grow the creative economy in Franklin County. The project manages an online database of artists and creative businesses, and has initiated various events and projects such as the annual Creative Economy Summit, drawing artists and business people from the greater western Massachusetts region, and monthly networking opportunities for artists. Website: www.fosteringartandculture.org
- The **Greater Shelburne Falls Area Business Association** has over 250 members from ten West County region towns, including Ashfield, Conway and Plainfield. The GSFABA coordinates cooperative marketing efforts, organizes events, promotes networking opportunities, offers access to discounted group rates for

- health care plans, and pursues economic development initiatives. Website: www.gsfaba.org
- **Greenfield Community College** is a public higher educational institution that offers a variety of degrees and certifications, including the Outdoor Leadership Program and the new Farms & Food Systems Program. Website: www.gcc.mass.edu
 - **Hidden Tech** is a community of mostly home-based businesses in western Massachusetts that connect to each other online and at events for networking and business development programs. Website: www.hiddentech.net
 - The **Hilltown Community Development Corporation** provides business training workshops, individual business counseling and maintains a Hilltown Business Director. The Hilltown CDC serves Ashfield and Plainfield. Website: www.hilltowncdc.org
 - **Pioneer Valley History Network** is a non-profit organization consortium of historical institutions that supports communication and collaboration among history related organizations in the Pioneer Valley. Membership is free to individuals and organizations. Website: <http://pvhn.wordpress.com>

In Berkshire County:

- **1Berkshire** is an independent not-for-profit corporation charged with strengthening and growing the Berkshire economy using an innovative collaborative approach among the region's business, tourism, economic, and creative development efforts. It is comprised of a partnership of the **Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, the Berkshire Visitor's Bureau, and Berkshire Creative**. The work of 1Berkshire is retaining and attracting jobs, tourism and creativity for the benefit of everyone in the Berkshires. Website: www.1berkshire.com
- **Berkshire Creative** is a networking organization dedicated to helping creative Berkshire residents in finding jobs, collaborators and resources. Berkshire Creative is dedicated to sustaining and growing the creative economy in ways that impact life in the Berkshires. Through its collaboration with the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce and the Berkshire Visitors Bureau, the organization helps to provide economic development, programming and marketing in support of creative initiatives. Website: www.berkshirecreative.org
- **Berkshire Visitor's Bureau** is the official destination marketing organization for Berkshire County, representing more than 700 private businesses that make up the area's Tourism Industry. The Bureau promotes the Berkshires as a premiere travel destination. It also works to stimulate year-round interest and visitation to the area and to generate overnight travel, increase attendance at regional attractions and increase patronage of area businesses for the continual economic benefit of the community. Website: www.berkshires.org

- **Berkshire Chamber of Commerce** The mission of the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce is to lead and advance economic development and support the civic and social welfare of Berkshire County through the advocacy and support of its members, and the Berkshire Community. Website: www.berkshirechamber.com
- **Berkshire Regional Employment Board (BCREB)** is composed of knowledgeable and influential business and community leaders who are appointed by the Mayor of Pittsfield on behalf of the thirty-two communities in Berkshire County. The board serves as the oversight and policy-making body for federally funded employment and training services in the region. The board also has the broader role of addressing critical labor market issues and developing strategic partnerships with local leaders in economic development, the K-12 and higher education system, government agencies, chambers of commerce, community-based and labor organizations. Website: www.berkshirereb.org
- **Berkshire Grown** supports and promotes local agriculture as a vital part of the Berkshire community, economy and landscape, by advocating for farmers, supporting best practices in agriculture, fostering education and outreach, and promoting locally grown and produced food. Berkshire Grown aspires to be the ‘go to’ network linking farming to the Berkshire community. Website: www.berkshiregrown.org
- **Southern Berkshire Community Development Corporation** is a nonprofit organization that creates housing and economic opportunity for low and moderate-income households in the southern Berkshires, and focuses on building healthy, sustainable communities. The Southern Berkshire CDC works collaboratively with town governments and other non-profit organizations in creating affordable housing and living-wage jobs. Website: www.cdcsb.org
- **Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation** is a non-profit organization working to build stronger, more vibrant communities and improves the quality of life for all residents of Berkshire County, MA; Columbia County and northeast Dutchess County, NY; and northwest Litchfield County, CT. by building a network of permanent community resources. Website: www.berkshiretaconic.org
- **Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce** provides extensive information about community resources and travel and tourism for Great Barrington, Sheffield, Egremont, Otis, and nearby towns. Website: www.southernberkshirechamber.com
- **Northern Berkshire Community Coalition** provides support, technical assistance, and leadership development for area neighborhoods through Northern Berkshire Neighbors. Northern Berkshire Neighbors works to engage residents in recognizing and addressing neighborhood and community issues through a variety of programs including neighborhood meetings and community events. Website: www.nbccoalition.org

Community Development Tools

Community Economic Development Resources

Part of a Scenic Byway's appeal is how the visitor experiences the corridor, which includes getting out of their vehicle and enjoying the communities and attractions. Enhancing the physical environment of village centers and facilities along the byway will encourage this personal interaction. There are limited resources available, particularly for rural communities, to fund planning, infrastructure and development projects. The following list identifies potential resources that could support these activities.

- The **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program** provides assistance for housing, community, and economic development projects that assist low and moderate-income residents. Municipalities with populations under 50,000 must apply to the competitive state program administered by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development for funds. Within the CDBG Program is the Economic Development Fund, which provides financing for projects that create and/or retain jobs, improve the tax base, or otherwise enhance the quality of life in the community. Website: www.mass.gov/dhcd
- The **MassWorks Infrastructure Program** coordinates the administration of six Commonwealth 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 Downtown Initiative** offers the Technical Assistance Site Visit Program to municipalities. Professional consultant services valued up to \$10,000 are provided to the community for specific issues related to downtown or town center revitalization. The categories for awards include: design, creative economy, economics of downtown, parking, housing, and way-finding/branding. Website: www.mass.gov/hed/community/planning/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi.html
- Each of the Regional Planning Agencies serving this corridor administers a federally-funded **Regional Brownfields Program**. These programs include access to a revolving loan fund that offers low interest loans to eligible, credit worthy, public and private sector entities for the purpose of cleaning up contaminated brownfields sites. Depending upon availability, these Agencies may also have access to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency resources to

conduct environmental site assessments to determine if properties are contaminated, and if so to what extent.

- In Berkshire County - www.berkshireplanning.org
 - In Franklin County - www.frcog.org
 - In Hampshire County - www.pvpc.org
- Each of the Regional Planning Agencies serving this corridor also conducts regional **economic development planning programs** that can support access to select federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants. In Franklin County, this program is called the Greater Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Program. In Hampshire County, the program is called the Plan for Progress. In Berkshire County, Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.
 - In Berkshire County - www.berkshireplanning.org
 - In Franklin County - www.frcog.org
 - In Hampshire County - www.pvpc.org
 - The **National Scenic Byway Program** is a federal transportation program that provides funding for eligible scenic byway projects. With the completion of a corridor management plan and formal designation as a Scenic Byway, projects identified by the plan may be eligible for implementation funding from this program. Website: <http://bywaysonline.org/> . Note that under the current transportation bill, funding is not available, but it may be with subsequent bills.
 - The **Highland Communities Initiative**, a program of the Trustees of Reservations, seeks to encourage conservation of the natural and cultural landscapes in 38 rural Highland towns in Massachusetts, including Ashfield, Conway, Plainfield, and Savoy. The program offers grants up to \$5,000 for programs and projects designed to preserve the natural and cultural landscapes of the region. Recent projects include zoning revisions, trail maps and signs, publicity and outreach, and planning and feasibility studies. Website: www.thetrustees.org/hci
 - The **Deerfield River Watershed Association** is a non-profit organization that works to “preserve, protect, and enhance the natural resources of the Deerfield River watershed.” The Association’s work includes regular water testing, monitoring, and river clean ups, protection of open space within the watershed, and public education and recreation opportunities to improve stewardship of the watershed. Website: www.deerfieldriver.org

Issues and Recommendations

Issues

- There are few year-round customers to sustain businesses that may have the majority of its business from seasonal tourism.
- There is a long distance from major markets to the rural corridor.
- There is a need for improved access to business technical assistance resources.
- There is limited community infrastructure to supports business development, such as parking facilities, streetscape amenities, public water and sewer infrastructure.
- There is a need to better sustain agricultural operations along the Byway.
- There is a need to provide better access to technical assistance and financial support for new ventures and business expansion.
- There is a desire to balance the economic development of local businesses and services with the preservation of historic structures.

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.
- Foster the connection between entrepreneurs and business owners with the organizations and programs that promote business development.
- Foster the connection between local officials and community leaders with the organizations and programs that promote economic development.
- Coordinate marketing of 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 area festivals and performances are occurring.
- Expand tourism season with events and activities in the off season.
- Promote local Byway attractions and businesses to residents and workers 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 development services to specific industries, such as outdoor recreation.

- 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.