

SUSTAINABLE FRANKLIN COUNTY

Chapter 6: Economic Development



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of economic development planning is to forward policies, programs, and projects that encourage economic opportunity for all. This often encompasses activities to encourage job creation, provide job training, foster public and private sector investment in a community, and improve the quality of life. Planning for sustainable economic development requires consideration of how policies, programs and projects impact our communities now and for future generations.

Key elements of sustainable economic development planning are developing strategies that build on local strengths and enhance the connections between people and places. Through public workshops and surveys conducted as part of the public outreach process for this Regional Plan for Sustainable Development, three top economic development goals were identified to promote a sustainable economy.

Top Sustainable Economic Development Goals:

1. Redevelop vacant or underutilized industrial/commercial buildings or sites.
2. Support sustainable economic development in the region.
3. Promote and invest in specific business sectors including manufacturing, agriculture and clean energy.

Other economic development goals that were highly ranked related to supporting “buy local” efforts and retaining local businesses, and increasing jobs in employment centers or near transit services.

This chapter examines the current conditions of the regional economy and determines any constraints or barriers to developing a more sustainable economy. The chapter also highlights key implementation strategies to achieve the goals of this chapter and

identifies benchmarks to measure the region’s success at meeting these goals.

BACKGROUND

This section reviews the conditions that contribute to how the regional economy functions. These conditions include a review of employment centers, labor force characteristics, and organizations that support workforce and business development.

Regional Employment Centers

Franklin County, like many areas in New England, has most of its economic activity concentrated in village centers or industrial and commercial areas. The scenario planning workshops reaffirmed the desire to target economic development activities in these locations that already have infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, etc.) and transit services. At the same time, efforts to retain agriculturally-based businesses and support home-based businesses were also encouraged.

Transportation infrastructure, including transit services, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and parking, is essential to accommodate workers and customers and to serve the needs of residents. A mixture of housing, business and transportation is one formula for creating an environment that fosters robust economic activity and increases sustainability.

Every town in Franklin County has its own community center, whether it consists of a village center with only a few municipal buildings and a country store, or a thriving downtown. Some of these community centers are also regional centers of employment and economic activity. These include the downtowns of Greenfield, Turners Falls, and Orange, and the village centers of South Deerfield and Shelburne Falls. These centers include retail and service businesses and governmental institutions, as well as housing. They also attract workers and customers from surrounding communities. The village centers of Bernardston, Northfield, Sunderland

and the shared village center of Ervingside and Millers Falls also have a mix of uses and the potential to increase their level of economic activity. See Chapter 10: Land Use and Infrastructure for more details.

Various efforts to revitalize and reenergize the region's employment centers are underway. In Greenfield, there has been a significant amount of investment in downtown buildings leveraged through a collaboration of leaders from the public sector, business community, and private property owners. Turners Falls and Shelburne Falls have seen an active arts and cultural community emerge through the participation of individuals, support by local government and businesses, and through the leadership of organizations such as Turners Falls RiverCulture and the Greater Shelburne Falls Area Business Association. Spurring investment in vacant and underutilized buildings takes some creativity. Given the lower cost of commercial/industrial rental rates in the region, the cost of redevelopment cannot often be recouped through market lease rates. Public resources are needed to support redevelopment efforts and are a necessary catalyst. Successful downtown revitalization takes the cooperation of residents, businesses, property owners, and public officials working together, and requires an entity or individual to dedicate time and support to moving collaborative economic development projects forward.

In addition to these downtowns, there are areas with concentrated commercial or industrial uses. For example, the Greenfield Corporate Center on Monson Street is a commercial office complex that houses a variety of tenants. The Venture Center, operated by the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, is a small business incubator that houses small offices and light industry operations. The Route 5 and 10 corridor in northern Whately and South Deerfield is home to several large manufacturing and office operations, as well as the Yankee Candle Company flagship store. The commercial area west of the I-91/Route 2 rotary in Greenfield, has two areas that include national business operations. Other concentrated uses in defined areas are the campuses of large educational institutions, such as private boarding schools including Deerfield Academy and Northfield Mt. Hermon School. The former Northfield campus of the Northfield Mt. Hermon School is presently vacant and owned by the National Christian Foundation. The Foundation is seeking a new owner for the 217-acre property. The future of whether the site will be used more intensively than in the past is not known at this time. Depending on the potential reuse of the property, it may significantly impact the economy of Northfield and Franklin County as a whole.



South Deerfield has been identified as an existing Town Center in which mixed use development is encouraged and recently completed a Complete Streets and Downtown Livability Plan.



Greenfield is in the midst of its Sustainable Master Planning process. Its downtown has also been identified as an existing Town Center in which mixed use development is encouraged.

Table 1: Priority Development Sites for Economic Development

Existing Centers:	Emerging Centers:
Downtown Greenfield	Bernardston Village Center
Downtown Orange	Erving and Millers Falls Village Center
Turners Falls	Sunderland Village Center
Shelburne Falls (Buckland, Shelburne)	
South Deerfield/North Whately	

Having planned industrial park land is very important to guide the siting of similar uses to areas that have been designated for economic development purposes by their community, as opposed to locating in areas that may be in conflict with residential uses. The six industrial parks in Franklin County are also host to several major employers in the region, most of which are in the manufacturing sector.

There are six planned industrial parks in Franklin County, located in the towns of Deerfield, Greenfield, Montague, Orange and Whately. The Randall Pond Industrial Park in Orange is the newest park, and has the most land available for development. Of the remaining parks, a few have been completely developed or only have a few remaining small developable parcels. It is estimated that over 1,800 jobs are located in these industrial parks. New planned industrial park land is needed to provide space for businesses seeking to locate or expand in the region.

Village centers and downtowns, commercial office areas and planned industrial parks each offer different types and sizes of location for businesses. It is important to have a mix of sites for businesses to locate and grow, depending on the type of business it is. The redevelopment and reuse of existing structures and previously disturbed land, whether a vacant mill or underutilized commercial building, also contributes to this mix of spaces. Often these properties have existing infrastructure (i.e. roads, water, sewer, electricity), and their redevelopment allows the region to grow while still preserving natural areas. Sometimes the redevelopment of these properties is

complicated by the concern for the potential of hazardous contamination remaining from the previous use of the site. These sites are referred to as “Brownfields.” The FRCOG has an active Regional Brownfields Program supported by state and federal resources to assess and clean-up these sites. More information about Brownfields is included in Chapter 8: Natural Resources.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts instituted M.G.L. Chapter 43D to allow municipalities to choose to designate one or more areas, pending formal application and state approval, as Priority Development Sites. Towns that have Chapter 43D designation may have priority consideration for select state grant programs (e.g. Brownfields, CDAG, and PWED) for related applications and will also have their Chapter 43D areas included in state marketing efforts. Eleven Chapter 43D designations have been approved in six towns (Bernardston, Deerfield, Gill, Greenfield, Montague, and Orange).

Considering the regional landscape described and the need for a variety of spaces, primary existing and emerging employment centers (listed in Table 1) have been identified as Priority Development Sites and targeted for further economic development. These are specific areas where infill and redevelopment will be encouraged. See Chapter 10: Land Use and Infrastructure for an in-depth assessment and maps of these areas.

Workforce Characteristics

LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS

The labor force is defined as the pool of individuals who are 16 years of age and over, and are either employed or who are actively seeking employment. Persons not actively seeking employment, such as enrolled students, retirees, or stay-at-home parents, are excluded from the labor force. According to the American Community Survey 2006-2010 Five Year Estimates, 68.1 percent of the population 16 years and over are in the labor force. This statistic is referred to as the participation rate.

The participation rate is available from the same data source by sex and by age group. The male participation rate was 84.4 percent, which was consistent with the state (85.2%) and national rates (83.1%). The female participation rate for Franklin County was 79.1 percent, which was higher than the state (76.9%) and national rates (72.4%).

In almost every age cohort, the participation rate for Franklin County residents was higher than the state and nation. This means that more Franklin County residents are able to work and are working in the region, which is a healthy sign for the region. However, this high rate may also be indicative of several issues, such as lower wages being offered and an increased need for two income households. In addition, there may be a greater need for seniors to have to work past retirement age due to financial need.

The workforce population can be divided into four general age cohorts: under 25 years of age, 25-44 years of age, 45-64 years of age, and 65 years of age and over. The size and participation rate of these age cohort populations should be considered when conducting economic development planning. The participation rate for the population under 25 years of age was 66 percent for Franklin County, which was much higher than both the state (60.8%) and national rates (59.9%). The participation rate for 25-44 years

of age was 86.7 percent for Franklin County, and 85.1 percent for the state and 82.6 percent for the nation. The participation rate for the 45-64 age cohort was 78.3 percent for Franklin County and 78.6 percent the state, which was higher than the national rate of 73.5 percent. The participation rate for the population aged 65 years and over was 17.2 percent for the county and 17.6 percent for the state, which was also higher than the 15.6 percent for the nation.

An important trend over time is the significant increase in the size of older workforce cohort of individuals age 45-64. Residents between the ages of 45 to 64 comprise roughly 40 percent of the total workforce-aged population. This percentage is higher than the state (33.4%) and national (32.9%) rates for this cohort. This high percentage is a reflection of the “Baby Boom” generation (born from 1946 to 1966) getting older. The circumstance of having an increasingly older work force presents the region with opportunities and challenges. The large older work force in the region has the work experience employers are seeking. However, as technological advances impact many industries, particularly the manufacturing businesses in the County, these older workers will need to be flexible and have access to resources for training and education to diversify their skill set.

As Baby Boomers continue to age, the County population is expected to become increasingly older. It is estimated that the population over the age of 65 will increase by 77 percent over the next 30 years, to account for almost a quarter of the County population, compared to roughly 14 percent currently.¹ Implications of this trend on economic development include an increasing need for health care and other services that cater to seniors. Additionally, the children of the Baby Boomers may feel the pressure of caring for both their aging parents and their own children, potentially impacting their ability to fully participate in the labor force. Finally, as

¹ Ibid.

the Baby Boom generation reaches retirement age, job vacancies will occur. However, postponement of retirement for financial, career or other personal reasons is increasing. Often members of this age group can be a valuable resource of experienced, part-time workers. From a business perspective, the development of new senior-oriented business ventures to serve this demographic group may also be successful.

Not reflected in the Franklin County data is the large population of 16-24 year olds located in neighboring Hampshire County, due to the many higher educational institutions located there. This large group may be a current source of temporary part-time workers under 25 years of age, as well as a consumer pool for targeted business ventures. As these students graduate, they are a significant workforce pool for potential employers seeking college educated, entry-level employees. By creating appropriate employment opportunities and continuing to offer an appealing quality of life, the region will be able to retain a greater number of younger workers.

EMPLOYMENT LEVELS

Over the last decade, the size of the labor force in Franklin County has fluctuated, and has generally declined since 2006. This decrease in the size of the labor force is likely attributable to the leveling off of population growth, as well as individuals ceasing to be counted in the labor force due to retirement, being discouraged from pursuing active employment, or pursuing educational opportunities instead.

The unemployment rate describes the percentage of people in the labor force who are presently not employed, but who are actively seeking employment in a given time period. This statistic is often used as a gauge of economic prosperity or distress. Over the last decade, Franklin County's annual average unemployment rate has fluctuated between a low of

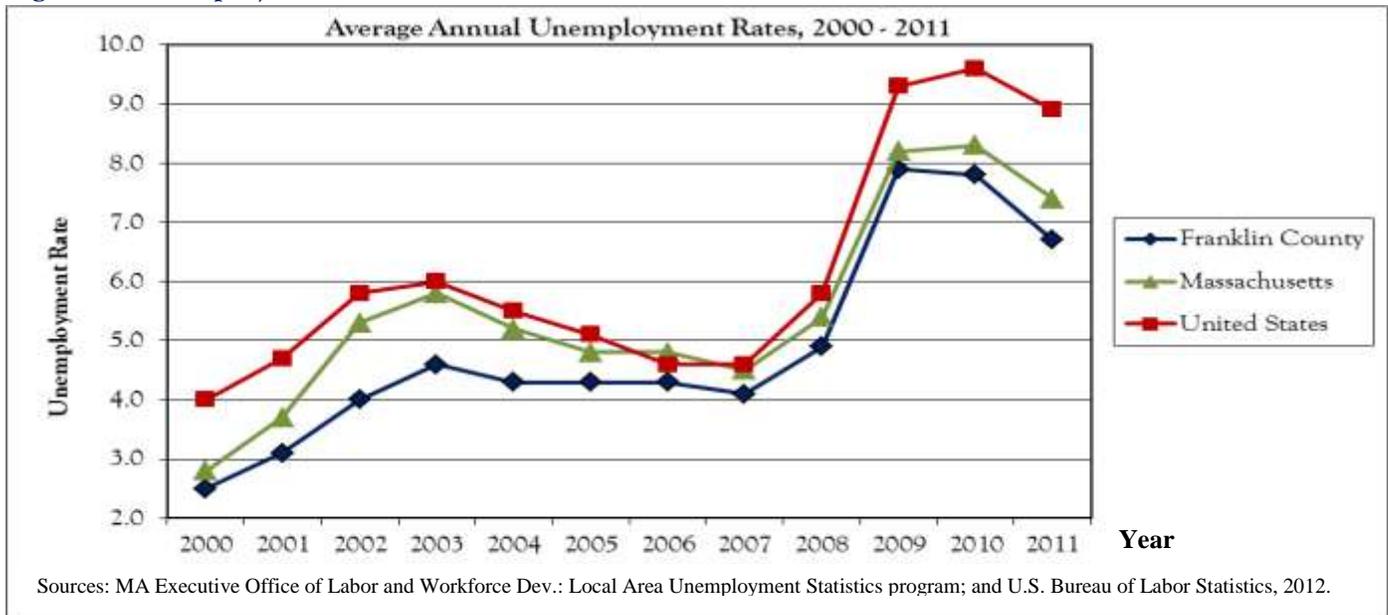
2.5 percent in 2000, to a high of 7.9 percent in 2009.² Over this period, the County's unemployment rate has been consistently lower than that of the state or nation (see figure on following page). Nevertheless the recent high unemployment rates have impacted the region negatively. Certain communities, such as Orange, Montague and Shelburne, are experiencing significantly higher rates of unemployment than the County. It is important to note that the unemployment rate does not reflect the issue of "underemployment," which includes workers with low paying jobs or jobs without benefits, or workers who have multiple jobs. Underemployment in Franklin County has been a chronic problem.

There are many factors that may influence whether a person can find employment, in addition to the availability of jobs. As noted above, changing technologies require employees to continually develop their skills to remain competitive in the labor force. Education and training opportunities must be available that provide the needed skills that employers are looking for in the region. Competition for entry level jobs from more experienced workers who are out of work has meant that many youth in the region have not been able to find their first jobs as teenagers. Consequently, young adults may lack basic employability skills such as time management and workplace expectations.

Not only do jobs, training and education opportunities need to be available, they must also be accessible, particularly to low and moderate-income households. It is critical that there is affordable housing near employment centers, reliable transportation (such as regular transit services), and affordable, quality child care.

² Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development: Local Area Unemployment Statistics program; and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 1: Unemployment Rates



INCOME & WAGES

Overall, Franklin County residents experience much lower incomes and wages than the state averages, and comparable or slightly higher levels than the nation. The poverty rate is generally higher than the state rate and lower than the national rate. While the poverty rate is lower than the nation's, the cost of living in Franklin County is higher than the national average due to transportation and housing costs. In general, given the high cost of living in the Northeast and the existence of underemployment and low wages, it is very challenging for many residents to survive economically.

Per capita income is determined by dividing the total amount of income earned in an area by the number of residents, including a portion of the population that might not be generating income such as children and the elderly.³ According to the latest federal data, the

³ The per capita income statistic is primarily used for comparison purposes, and is not a reflection of the actual per household or per worker income.

per capita income for Franklin County was \$27,544 which was considerably lower than the state's per capita income estimate of \$33,966, and comparable to the national per capita estimate of \$27,334.⁴

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), between 2000 and 2010, Franklin County consistently had one of the lowest per capita incomes of the 14 counties in Massachusetts. Despite the lower income level, over the same period of time, incomes in Franklin County grew at a higher rate (44%) than the state (34%) and nation (32%).

In 2010, an estimated 11.3 percent of Franklin County residents had incomes below the federal poverty level, which is higher than the state rate of 10.5 percent, and lower than the national rate of 13.8 percent. Approximately 28 percent of Franklin County households headed by a single mother had incomes below the poverty level in 2010, a much higher rate of poverty than other family types. In some communities, the poverty rate for single mother

⁴ 2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS) Five Year Estimates.

households, with incomes below the poverty level, is even higher.

There are many types of income in addition to wages from a job. Other income could come from investments, Social Security benefits, disability payments, pensions and retirement funds, unemployment benefits, and child support. Some public benefits that may be of significant cash value to households, but that are not considered actual income in census and other data, include Medicaid, Woman, Infants, and Children nutrition program (WIC), Head Start, Fuel Assistance, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). It is important to note that for lower income households that are experiencing a rise in household income, they may come to a point where they will no longer be eligible for certain public benefits, and actually find themselves worse off financially as their increased income does not cover the value of those benefits.

Average wage per job information is the amount of wages and salaries paid out divided by the number of jobs that pay wages and salaries. In short, this data describes information on a per job basis, and not on a per resident basis. Similar to the annual personal per capita income information, the average wage per job in Franklin County is consistently less than the state and national average according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). In fact, Franklin County has consistently had the lowest average wage per job of all fourteen counties in Massachusetts since 2000.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development compiles data on the annual average weekly wage for all industries. The data shows that Franklin County’s wages are significantly less than the state averages. In 2010, the Franklin County average annual weekly wage was 63 percent of the state’s average wage. The state data shows that since 2001, the gap between state and Franklin County wages has grown, as the state’s average wage has

increased by roughly 29 percent, while Franklin County’s average wage has increased by 24 percent.

Table 2. Annual Average Weekly Wage

Year	Franklin County	State	Difference between State and County
2001	\$549	\$865	\$316
2002	\$557	\$865	\$308
2003	\$569	\$891	\$322
2004	\$600	\$941	\$341
2005	\$612	\$963	\$351
2006	\$629	\$1,008	\$379
2007	\$670	\$1,063	\$393
2008	\$677	\$1,092	\$415
2009	\$678	\$1,082	\$404
2010	\$682	\$1,112	\$430
% Change	24.2%	28.6%	N/A

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, ES-202 data.

While per capita incomes in the County have grown at a higher rate than the state and nation in the last decade, the average wage per job has not. This may indicate that people are working multiple jobs, or more hours at their jobs, to compensate for lower wages in the region. Wages should also be compared with the cost of living. In regions with a lower cost of living, lower wages per job may be expected. In Franklin County, housing rents and sale prices are typically lower than in the eastern part of the state. Even so, in 2010 an estimated 50 percent of renters and 34 percent of homeowners in Franklin County were “cost-burdened” by housing costs (spending more than 30 percent of their household income on housing).⁵ In addition, other household costs, such as transportation and child care, may be higher in

⁵ Ibid.

Franklin County than other regions due to the rural geography. Increasing the average wage per job in the County, along with adding new jobs that pay a “living wage,” is critical to making the region more affordable. Further details on the cost of living in Franklin County can be found in Chapter 4: Housing.

SIZE OF EMPLOYERS

As of 2010, 95 percent of all Franklin County private sector establishments had fewer than 50 employees⁶, which is consistent with state and national trends. The establishments identified as “major” employers are often more recognizable in a community as they grow or confront difficult times. However, the impact of small businesses in the greater economy cannot be overstated. It may be estimated that approximately half of all jobs in private sector establishments in Franklin County are in firms with fewer than fifty employees. Access to technical assistance, financing, workforce training and other resources is important to sustain and encourage their growth.

Using information collected from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce and the MA Department of Labor and Workforce Development, a list of the largest employers was created. The following table identifies employers estimated to have greater than 250 employees. These major employers are predominantly in the manufacturing, health care and education sectors. This listing includes both public and private sector employers. Please note that the table includes full-time, part-time and per diem employees within its estimated range of employees.

⁶County Business Pattern data does not include workers employed by the public sector or workers who are self-employed.

Table 3. Major Employers

Employer Name	Primary Locations	Estimated Range of Employees*
Yankee Candle Company, Inc.	Deerfield, Whately	1,000 - 4,999
Pelican Products Inc.	Deerfield	500 - 999
Baystate Franklin Medical Center	Greenfield	250 - 499
Deerfield Academy	Deerfield	250 - 499
Farren Care Center, Inc.	Montague	250 - 499
Greenfield Community College	Greenfield	250 - 499
Northfield Mt. Hermon School	Gill	250 - 499
Town of Greenfield **	Greenfield	250 - 499

* Includes full-time, part-time and per diem employees.

** Estimated employment includes municipal department and school employees

Source: MA Department of Workforce Development: 2012 Largest Employers by Area; FRCOG: 2012 Franklin County Regional Transportation Plan.

Regional Clusters

Regional clusters are specific economic groupings of businesses and institutions with some similarity in industry, operation, or technology, and which are generally located within a defined geographic area.

In recent years, economic development strategies have highlighted the importance of cluster development through leveraging the unique competitive advantages of an individual region for the purpose of generating economic activity locally as well as across state and country borders. The growth and success of cluster development generates economic growth at the regional level, while also contributing to a stronger, more diversified national economy.

The clustering of ventures can be mutually beneficial in a number of ways, such as developing a labor force with a common skill set, establishing cluster-specific

support services, and fostering the creation of trade organizations or research institutions that serve to enhance a cluster. A concentration of entities within a cluster may lead businesses to collaborate in ways they may not have considered before, or intensify competition which may pressure firms to increase their productivity, efficiency, or creativity.

The regional clusters each have a particular asset or strength that is unique to either the greater Pioneer Valley region or exclusively to Franklin County, and present a competitive advantage for potential growth in the region. Activities that lead to business development and job growth in these clusters will help sustain and grow the regional economy. Several of these clusters fall within the manufacturing, agriculture, and clean energy industry sectors, identified in the *Sustainable Franklin County Goals Survey* as sectors to promote and invest in.

MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing is the largest employment sector located in Franklin County. The proportion of jobs in manufacturing in Franklin County has consistently been much greater than the state or nation. For example, according to federal 2009 County Business Pattern figures, 20 percent of those employed in the private sector in Franklin County were in manufacturing. This is a much greater percentage than the state (8%) and the national average (10%). This sector also offers the highest average wages, in comparison to other large employment sectors like health care and social assistance, and retail trade. Within the manufacturing sector, there are specific clusters with a strong presence in Franklin County (such as food processing and plastics manufacturing) or in the greater Western Massachusetts region (such as precision machining and metal products manufacturing).

Precision Machining and Fabricated Metal Products

The greater Connecticut River Valley area has been a historical center for precision machining and

fabricated metal products. The precision machining sector includes the manufacture of tools, dies, and levers. Fabricated metal products include items made from stamping, welding, or bending metals to create end products, such as wires or containers. The different types of metal product manufacturing often require similar skill sets for workers and raw materials. This cluster has a high concentration in Franklin County and Western Massachusetts compared to the nation at large. There have been reports that these companies continue to seek a qualified workforce as they need to hire additional workers or replace retiring employees.

Plastics, Polymers and Film Manufacturing

One of the prominent manufacturing sub-sectors is plastic, polymer and film production. From maple syrup containers to industrial cases and protective films for the defense industry, this sector's businesses serve a variety of industries. The region also has a research institute specific to this sector at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, which contributes innovation and a skilled workforce to this industry. Similar to the Precision Machining and Metal Fabrication cluster, this cluster has a high concentration in Franklin County and Western Massachusetts compared to the nation at large, and continues to seek qualified workers.

Food Processing and Specialty Food Product Manufacturing

Businesses in the food processing and specialty food product manufacturing cluster include larger scale operations, such as Lightlife Foods, to the small start-up operations using the Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center, operated by the Franklin County Community Development Corporation. In addition to these businesses, the cluster is also supported by local farming operations that provide the raw materials and a workforce that is certified in food production. While not a large economic sector in terms of jobs, the agricultural, forestry and fisheries industry plays a vital role in the region's quality of life and sustainability. Recent efforts to create a more

sustainable and secure food system relate strongly to this cluster and its assets. Further information about the agriculture and forestry industries can be found in Chapter 8: Natural Resources.

GREEN ECONOMY

The “green economy” encompasses a variety of businesses and perspectives. Businesses that advance new technologies to promote clean energy generation or reduce greenhouse gas emissions are part of the green economy. But so are businesses that seek to retrofit homes and businesses to be more energy efficient. Businesses may choose to participate in the green economy for the opportunity to address environmental concerns, to enter into new markets, to pursue cost savings, or for a combination of reasons. Recognizing these opportunities, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Franklin County seek to support the development of the green economy. Franklin County is fortunate to have a growing number of businesses in this sector from photovoltaic installers to green building contractors.

Renewable Energy Technology and Generation

The region has produced several organizations related to the development of environmental technology, renewable energy, and sustainability. The catalyst for these groups is not only the earth-friendly benefits for implementing such technologies and programs, but also the growth potential of this business sector. State programs, like the Green Communities program, encourage the development of this sector. Half of all Franklin County communities have been designated as “Green Communities” by the Commonwealth, and allow “by right” (i.e. no Special Permit required) solar electric generating installations or renewable energy research and development or manufacturing facilities. More information about Green Communities is included in Chapter 7: Energy.

Green Construction

As the green economy has gained momentum in the region, a specific cluster within this industry has

emerged with a focus on promoting and implementing on-site sustainable energy generation, energy efficiency, and related green construction. Workforce development programs are targeting green construction training programs and job placement. Several public sector and private sector initiatives have developed to encourage the growth of the green economy. For example, the Franklin/Hampshire Regional Employment Board is a leader in green economy workforce development through their green career coaching network and Northern Tier Energy Sector Partnership. The Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency certificate and degree programs developed at Greenfield Community College contribute to the region’s knowledge and skill base in this industry. Greening Greenfield is a volunteer group consisting of residents, businesses and local government, who work to create a sustainable and vibrant place to live. They have launched campaigns to encourage businesses and households to reduce their energy consumption by ten percent, and regularly coordinate educational and networking events open to the public.

INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

INFRASTRUCTURE

For a long time, Franklin County has lacked a robust, accessible telecommunications infrastructure. This led to a lack of basic broadband service for many areas, which hindered economic development, educational and employment opportunities. Fortunately, due to the consistent and coordinated efforts of many partners, an unprecedented level of investment in telecommunication infrastructure is underway in Franklin County and Western Massachusetts. This investment includes the deployment of the *Axia MassBroadband 123* network, which will deploy an advanced, redundant fiber optic “middle mile” (the backbone that connects local areas to the global system) network throughout the region.

As this advanced telecommunications infrastructure is deployed, a unique junction of “middle mile” fiber

optic networks will be located in Franklin County. This fiber system will become a significant asset that could be leveraged to create technology infrastructure services, such as an interconnection facility with a small data center in Greenfield, or an innovation-oriented business incubator space. These facilities would correspond to other projects in the Pioneer Valley under development, such as the Springfield Data Center and the Green High Performance Computing Center in downtown Holyoke.

Work to extend “last mile” access to advanced broadband services, will result in significantly improved connectivity for homes, businesses, and institutions. This connectivity will help support individuals’ access to education and job opportunities. Businesses will be able to develop and compete more efficiently using broadband services to access customers and new markets, shop for materials and services, complete government reporting requirements, and more.

Presently, most establishments in the information technology (IT) fields are of relatively small scale. Assets and networks have been developed to nurture these start-ups and micro-businesses who require advanced broadband access or are in IT fields. With the region’s limited access to broadband, these efforts have been essential in supporting these firms. For example, Hidden-Tech⁷ is a network of IT-related micro-businesses (many of which are home-based companies) who have created a framework for these professionals to collaborate, market services and engage in professional development.

Another example is the Bridge of Flowers Business Center, a micro-business incubator in the center of Shelburne Falls that is home to entrepreneurs and telecommuters from West Franklin County. The Center has professional office space, communal office

⁷ More information about Hidden-Tech is available at: www.hidden-tech.net

amenities, and access to high speed internet services. Other business incubators in the region, such as the FCCDC’s Venture Center in Greenfield and the Orange Innovation Center in downtown Orange, also have office space available for IT intensive businesses and micro businesses, as well as other businesses in different fields (like small scale manufacturing) and for larger-sized companies. As a more robust technology infrastructure is deployed, businesses in all fields and of all sizes will benefit from this access to a next generation telecom network. The development of more micro-businesses and start-ups in IT-related fields, in particular, are anticipated.

EDUCATION SERVICES

Much of the region’s workforce is employed in educational institutions and organizations located within and surrounding Franklin County. Within an hour’s drive are over 20 colleges and universities as well as a cluster of independent schools and professional educational institutions. In addition, organizations dedicated to curriculum development or related educational services are also in the region.

A concentration of independent schools attracts students from across the country and the world. The relationships these schools have with the greater community are important to both the institutions and the towns and businesses in the area. In addition, relatives visiting students contribute to the tourism base and there is the potential for students to return or remain in the area upon graduation. All these elements contribute to the economic strength of the area.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL –BASED TOURISM

The natural, cultural, and historic assets of the region provide a variety of attractions and activities to encourage tourism. By promoting a planned, coordinated tourism effort, a rural region may use its unique assets to bring dollars from visitors into its



The Route 116 Scenic Byway is one of five Scenic Byway projects in Franklin County which help to encourage tourism and preserve land along the corridors.

economy, while at the same time preserving what is important to the community.

Franklin County's natural and cultural landscape in particular has created a cluster of attractions, services and marketing activities that highlight the region's rural and scenic amenities. Outdoor recreation activities, agri-tourism, and scenic byway designation, have capitalized on these assets, which attract visitors from surrounding areas as well as contribute to the region's quality of life.

In Franklin County, the FRCOG coordinated five scenic byway projects to encourage tourism as well as the preservation of these corridors. Once a byway is designated, an oversight committee is formed and a corridor management plan is created for the byway, which inventories assets, develops strategies to enhance and preserve its special qualities, and identifies important projects. Once formal state or federal designation has been given to a scenic byway, the FRCOG has been able to pursue funding to implement these identified projects. Funded projects over the years have included: the creation of the Sunderland Scenic Turnout Area on Route 47,

informational kiosks on Route 2, Upper Pioneer Valley Visitors Center improvements, and over 271 acres of land protected.

In addition, the FRCOG is working with neighboring regional planning agencies to develop a comprehensive promotional campaign to market the multiple scenic byways designated throughout Western Massachusetts. The Western Massachusetts Scenic Byway Promotional Campaign will include the development of marketing tools, logos, way-finding signs, and websites for all seven byways. The project began in 2011, and is estimated to take two years to complete. The project will provide an opportunity to market and promote the region's recreational and cultural attractions and provide tourists with information on lodging and other amenities.

Franklin County has a wealth of heritage and cultural tourism assets. These resources include established attractions, such as Historic Deerfield or Shelburne Falls Bridge of Flowers, as well as particular events, such as Cider Days, Green River Music Festival and the Garlic and Arts Festival. These resources attract a high volume of visitors. For example, the Bridge of Flowers is estimated to have 36,000 visitors annually and the Green River Music Festival averages an estimated 10,000 attendees.

There are several active organizations that continue to successfully develop and coordinate events and programs that appeal to residents and attract visitors, such as the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, Turners Falls RiverCulture, and Greater Shelburne Falls Area Business Association. In addition Franklin County is home to the Yankee Candle Company flagship store in South Deerfield, which attracts approximately 1.5 million visitors a year making it one of the greatest destination points in Massachusetts.

In addition, local residents and visitors are attracted to the region to enjoy the outdoor recreational opportunities that are abundant here, such as hiking,

fishing, canoeing, kayaking, rafting, mountain and road biking, ziplines and skiing. Communities that are host to these attractions are seeking ways to generate greater economic activity from visitors (such as visitors spending money on dining, shopping, and accommodations) and create a supportive infrastructure for visitors without negatively impacting the community character or natural resources themselves.

Natural resources based tourism activities include public outdoor recreation resources, such as state parks and bikeways, well as private businesses that provide services or have established attractions, such as river rafting outfitters, ziplines and skiing. It has been estimated that the Charlemont-based businesses of Berkshire East, Crab Apple Whitewater and Zoar Outdoor collectively attract between 120,000 to 145,000 visits annually for their downhill skiing, snow tubing, ziplines, white water rafting, kayaking and canoeing instruction, plus their own retail store and lodgings. The two new zipline attractions were created in recent years by Berkshire East and Zoar Outdoor. This year, these two operations and the Warfield House in Charlemont have joined the New England Mountain Bike Association to collaboratively develop an extensive new mountain biking trail system. Events, such as the annual Berkshire Highlands Pentathlon that combines several outdoor sports, was developed for the purpose of building on West Franklin County's reputation as a center for natural resources-based tourism and to extend the season of visitors to begin earlier in the spring and extend later into the fall or winter with limited snowfall. As climate change impacts weather patterns, the attractions and events that extend the season will be important for these outdoor recreation based businesses to continue to be sustainable.

In the North Quabbin region there are continued efforts to encourage outdoor recreation based tourism as well, such as through promotional activities by the North Quabbin Woods initiative and private

companies. The River Rat Race for example, is a canoe race on the Millers River from Athol to Orange that attracts over 250 participants and thousands of spectators annually.

The Connecticut, Deerfield, and Millers Rivers are recognized as tremendous tourism assets due to their scenic beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities. Improving sites for safe and convenient access to the rivers will enhance resident and visitor experience of the rivers. For example, the Town of Sunderland is seeking to further develop bicycle, pedestrian and boat access facilities in the village center for the benefit of residents as well as to attract tourists. Also, the Town of Orange has created the Riverfront Park on the Millers River that provides canoe and kayak access.

There are considerable discussions underway about ensuring access to the Connecticut River for outdoor recreation purposes. Presently, FirstLight Power is undergoing its federal re-licensing process for its hydroelectric facilities located on the River. FirstLight Power maintains several facilities along the Connecticut River available to the public, including the Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center, the Turners Falls fish ladder, and the Barton Cove campground and canoe/kayak rentals. Advocates are encouraging greater access to the River for outdoor recreation purposes.

In 2011, the FRCOG prepared a brief summary highlighting strategies implemented in other regions to support the growth of outdoor recreation tourism. The summary notes 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. Tourists to rural areas are increasingly looking for a broader experience that combines outdoor recreation with quality accommodations, shopping and cultural opportunities. Access provided by sufficient infrastructure such as roads, trails, parking, and signage, must be in place, as well as supporting

businesses including lodging, restaurants, and equipment stores or rental services. Marketing and promotion activities including web-based materials, maps, guidebooks, and advertising are also needed. In addition, training may be needed for area businesses in order to support, and capitalize on, the recreation industry.

CREATIVE ECONOMY/ARTISANS

The region is home to many workers who are employed in occupations and at establishments in the creative economy. These workers include independent writers and artists, as well those employed in firms that produce crafts or media content. The region's rural landscape and the quality of life, as well as its affordable cost of living, have allowed many artisans to pursue their careers professionally or start businesses.

A recent analysis of creative economy data demonstrated a higher proportion of artists in Franklin County, relative to other areas of the state. Concentrations of photographers, potters, glassblowers and woodworkers have been identified in the region. Specific assets in the region that support this cluster include entities that provide training in the arts, such as the Hallmark Institute of Photography, and those that conduct activities and services to help grow the market, such as Turners Falls RiverCulture and North Quabbin Woods.

The New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) created a database, called CultureCount, to attempt to capture information about cultural organizations by geography. Individual artists, non-profit organizations, and businesses are requested to submit information voluntarily to populate this database. This data can then be searched by geography, category, and discipline. NEFA has also developed a calculator to demonstrate the economic impact of cultural organizations to a Massachusetts community or county. Using this tool, it was determined that for FY2003 in Franklin County, the cultural organizations

had a \$20 million local economic impact. While this



Photos courtesy of Basecampphoto.com

The annual Creative Economy Summit focused in 2013 on presentations and workshops that benefit the art and culture, business and municipal community and that promote innovative cross-sector, cross-community intersections.

model does not provide for more updated figures, it does demonstrate the contribution of the creative economy to the greater economy. Anecdotal evidence of this type of economic impact can be found with the Double Edge Theatre and Farm Center in Ashfield, which is estimated to attract 2,500 audience members and hundreds of students that train at the Center each year. These visitors shop, dine and stay locally. A partnership has emerged amongst the Theatre and businesses to cross promote their services and products to visitors and patrons.

Local and regional artist cooperatives and organizations have become increasingly more connected to one another and the greater community. The Fostering the Arts & Culture in Franklin County Project and Partnership and the Turners Falls RiverCulture program are two great examples. Fostering the Arts & Culture Project was created through a collaboration of artists, Double Edge Theatre, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, Franklin County Community Development Corporation, Greenfield Business Association, Greenfield Community College, Turners Falls RiverCulture, and Greater Shelburne Falls Area Business Association. The Project has championed the importance of this cluster, which has been highlighted in four Creative Economy Summits. The summit held in 2012 had over 200 attendees for the two-day event in downtown Greenfield to discuss this economic sector and to develop strategies for how to further support it across the greater region.

Turners Falls RiverCulture is a partnership between the arts, cultural organizations and business in the Turners Falls area. RiverCulture works to support and strengthen cultural and creative industries by hosting and promoting events and marketing the area and its attractions. In 2011, RiverCulture won the Massachusetts Cultural Council's Commonwealth Award, which honors exceptional achievements in arts and culture.

In 2012, Shelburne Falls was the first Franklin County community designated by the Massachusetts Cultural Council as a "Cultural District." These districts are home not only to a cluster of cultural facilities and activities, they are also recognized as a walkable area and an area of economic vitality.

There is also strong interest in supporting the Creative Economy in the North Quabbin area through cultivating more cultural activities and supporting the development of outlets for local artists to sell their products. North Quabbin Woods, a project of the North Quabbin Community Coalition, promotes the sale of local artisan wood products and other fine arts and crafts through their retail store in Orange and their online catalog.

Workforce Development

A workforce development system seeks to support the success of businesses and organizations as well as individual workers. Programs are created to assist job seekers and those currently employed to gain the skill level required by the region's employers. The goal is for these individuals to attain or retain employment that offers a living wage to support themselves and their families.

The workforce development organizations and institutions in Franklin County strive to develop resources and curriculums that are responsive to the current and future needs of businesses and individuals. These entities include the Franklin-Hampshire Regional Employment Board, Franklin-Hampshire Career Center, Greenfield Community College, Franklin County Technical School, and other educational institutions and business development organizations.

WORKFORCE TRAINING ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Workforce Development Agencies

The Franklin-Hampshire Regional Employment Board (FHREB) is one of sixteen workforce investment boards across the Commonwealth. The FHREB is the policy-making authority for developing workforce skills for the Hampshire and Franklin County region. The FHREB provides services to support local employers, job seekers and workers seeking new skills, and is a leader in regional economic development activities. As part of their function, the FHREB coordinates a variety of initiatives that provide workforce training, placement programs, and other services. These initiatives utilize both state and federal funding opportunities.

The Franklin-Hampshire One-Stop Career Center operates from locations in Greenfield and Northampton and a satellite office in Orange. The Career Center offers services to job seekers, such as job search assistance, career counseling, workshops (i.e. preparing resumes, developing interview skills), access to computers and other resources, as well as unemployment insurance services. The services available to employers include applicant pre-screening, job posting, targeted mailings, and recruitment activities. Employers are also offered information and assistance about various state and federal government programs, such as training grant programs and tax credit opportunities.

Some of the FHREB initiatives target specific industries or populations. The Franklin Hampshire Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) Project⁸ provides outreach, career coaching, training, and job placement services for underemployed adults, dislocated workers, veterans, and youth interested in STEM careers.

⁸ More information about the Franklin Hampshire STEM Project is available at <http://franklinhampshirereb.org/keyinitiatives>.

The FHREB and Greenfield Community College have been pioneers in nurturing the green economy cluster. The FHREB demonstrated this commitment by launching a green career coaching network for Western Massachusetts and leading the Northern Tier Energy Sector Partnership (NTESP). The NTESP integrated education and training efforts in the renewable energy and energy efficiency field among many partners, including community colleges, workforce investment agencies, technical and vocational educational institutions, economic development groups and private businesses. Funded by a federal Department of Labor grant, the NTESP established a workforce development system that encompassed training and job placement activities. As of June 30, 2012, the NTESP helped 165 unemployed, under-employed and incumbent workers to complete job training programs and helped 50 unemployed workers to secure jobs, exceeding the goals of the program. By its conclusion at the end of 2012, NTESP exceeded its job placement goal.

As the funding for the NTESP ended in 2012, Greenfield Community College implemented the Workforce Development Transformation⁹ program through a federal Department of Labor grant. The program is focused on clean energy, health care, and advanced manufacturing sectors. Its purpose is to shorten the time to graduate, increase graduation rates and increase job placement success for participating graduates.

A partnership of the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, Just Roots (a non-profit organization based in Greenfield), Greenfield Community College and FHREB, has been awarded a federal grant to conduct a community food project that connects workforce training and the local food system. This project allows the FHREB to supervise

⁹ More information about the Workforce Development Transformation program is available at <http://web.gcc.mass.edu/marketing/2012/06/11/gcc-ramps-up-workforce-development-transformation-program/>



Just Roots was awarded a federal grant, in partnership with others, to conduct a community food project that connects workforce training and the local food system

and train youth workers on the Just Roots community farm, while GCC supervises interns from their new Farm and Food Systems program (see below) at the farm. The FHREB and GCC are unique in their support of the agricultural sector, compared to other workforce investment boards and community colleges.

Higher Educational Institutions

Greenfield Community College has a main campus and satellite downtown center located in Greenfield. With a for-credit student enrollment of nearly 2,500 students in fall 2012, the college offers sixteen Associate Degree programs and thirteen certificate programs. Two recent degree programs have been developed specifically to support the green economy and agricultural sectors. The Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency program offers both an Associate's Degree and a certificate program, and offers classes on green construction techniques and

sustainable energy generation systems. The Farm and Food Systems program has been launched to educate students on issues related to sustainable farming, food security, and local food advocacy.

In the greater region surrounding Franklin County, there are over a dozen colleges and universities, including the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. These institutions are a major educational resource for residents who are able to access them, and also serve as employers for many Franklin County residents.

In its capacity as a research institution, the University of Massachusetts (UMass) may be a source of spin-off entrepreneurial ventures. Leadership at the University encourages efforts to increase research and development activities. As research and development are conducted, future workers are trained and entrepreneurs created that may some day have their own businesses in the field. Pursuing opportunities

between these university-led endeavors and increasing spin-off businesses in Franklin County should be continued.

The two other higher educational institutions in Franklin County include the Hallmark Institute of Photography and the Conway School of Landscape Design. The Hallmark Institute is a 10-month intensive professional photography school in Turners Falls. Its complex of educational buildings is located in the Airport Industrial Park, and feature state of the art facilities using the latest technology. The presence of Hallmark's instructors and students contribute to the region's growing creative economy cluster.

The Conway School of Landscape Design (CSLD) offers a 10-month intensive graduate program in sustainable landscape planning and design. The graduates of this program also contribute to the region's creative workforce. The school has an impact on the region through its community service program, which has students work on design or planning projects under the guidance of instructors for a negotiated fee for municipalities and non-profit organizations. For example, CSLD completed a "Foodshed Analysis" for the Natural Resources Chapter of this Plan.

Secondary Educational Institutions

Local schools provide the education and skill foundation for future employees and business leaders. Schools are also a significant consideration to business leaders when they are deciding where to locate their companies, and to skilled workers who are considering relocation. Funding for public and higher educational institutions has been strained in recent years due to local and statewide budget constraints. Within Franklin County, there are eight public high schools, including one charter school and one vocational-technical high school. As is often the case for vocational-technical high schools, Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) has the highest percentage of graduates directly entering the workforce compared

to all other Franklin County high schools. The technical programs offered at FCTS include construction trades, automotive, culinary arts, machining, health care, computer programming, and more.

There are also four private high schools, three of which offer educational opportunities for boarding students as well as commuting students. These institutions attract students to the region, many of whom come from across the country and the world. A new private educational institution, Kemsley Academy, has opened at the former Lake Grove at Maple Valley School campus in Wendell. The school serves Chinese and other international students studying in America.

WORKFORCE NEEDS AND IMPEDIMENTS FOR SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

Community Action of the Franklin, Hampshire, and North Quabbin Regions conducted a survey of adults with low and moderate incomes in Spring 2011. The report created from the survey results identified several key challenges related to job readiness and job development. A copy of the complete report is available in the appendices.

One significant item of note from the survey was that relatively few respondents said they were unemployed because of a lack of jobs in their line of work (11%). Transportation problems (19%), insufficient education or training (13%), not enough experience (11%), and child care problems (8%) were other concerns identified. The single largest reason for being unemployed, by far, was disability (63%), followed closely by health issues (36%).

As the most rural area of the Commonwealth, there are challenges for agencies that deliver services as well as for the residents seeking those services. Limited public transportation services, limited access to broadband, and the geographic distance to access resources are all significant challenges. For example,

while Greenfield Community College offers many quality programs, there are gaps in what is offered. Advanced technical training in health care, business, and information technology is available at other community colleges or institutions in the Pioneer Valley, but they are located beyond the feasible daily public transportation routes presently available for many Franklin County residents.

CLUSTER-SPECIFIC WORKFORCE NEEDS

Through the Community Action survey report and information provided by the FHREB, several industry cluster-specific workforce needs were identified. Manufacturing, healthcare, and education services should remain the region's top priority economic development clusters, since they employ significant numbers of people, have the greatest potential for a living wage, and are drivers of the regional economy.

The retail trade and food service sectors are large employers and growing. While they are often not high wage jobs, they do offer many entry-level positions which may provide a starting point for some specific populations, such as youth, people with low levels of education, people with limited English proficiency, or people with disabilities.

While relatively small in terms of employment size, the agricultural, forestry and wood products, and green economy sectors are growing and directly support environmental and community sustainability aims. There is interest in continuing to support this sector by developing resources to enhance the workforce in these fields and by creating infrastructure assets that will allow businesses in this sector to flourish. Examples of potential assets include developing local processing facilities for meat, dairy or grain; expanding cold storage capacity for local produce, and creating cluster-specific training institutions.

Business Development

Franklin County has many examples of successful, locally grown businesses. Many of these businesses

started in entrepreneurs' homes and barns, and grew with community support. Some of these ventures grew to become major employers, while others are part of the region's small and micro-sized businesses that sustain the regional economy. Access to infrastructure that supports entrepreneurship and small business development is essential to creating a robust local economy. Important resources include access to business technical assistance, alternate financing, networking and marketing programs, and a variety of available commercial and industrial space. In addition, towns can support home-based businesses by updating their zoning.

Business Development Organizations

Entrepreneurship training and support services are available through the Franklin County Community Development Corporation (FCCDC) and the Young Entrepreneurs Society, Inc. (YES). The FCCDC has been the starting point for many successful businesses in the area for over thirty years. The FCCDC offers a suite of services for entrepreneurs and business owners, including lending and business technical assistance. Business technical assistance takes the form of workshops and trainings, as well as direct counseling. All of these services are either free or offered for a nominal cost. Workshops may address general interest in how to start a business, to specific topics such as marketing, financing, or government regulations. One of their most successful programs is the 12-week, 36-hour business planning class. This course offers an opportunity for entrepreneurs to complete a business plan for either a new venture or for an established business. At times, the FCCDC has tailored its programs to focus the curriculum to a targeted group, such as artists or farmers.

The FCCDC offers office or light industrial space at their Venture Center business incubator located in Greenfield. The facility has flexible spaces to accommodate phased growth and creates a community atmosphere to foster business growth. Also at their Greenfield location, the FCCDC operates the

Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center (FPC). Completed in 2001, the FPC provides both physical facilities and professional technical support to assist food products entrepreneurs. The facility includes a commercial kitchen, storage space with a loading dock, and co-packing functions. Since opening, over 80 businesses have utilized the facility.

Many of these businesses create specialty food products that use local agricultural ingredients and have formed relationships with farmers in the region. The region has a successful history in creating large scale food producers that have gone on to become major manufacturing employers in the region, such as Lightlife Foods in Montague. The FCCDC plays a supportive role to allow new businesses to achieve this level of growth. In addition to business planning assistance, the FCCDC offers services for a fee to assist in recipe development and nutritional analysis, which is necessary to move a product into the marketplace. As these businesses grow, they graduate from using the FPC to develop their own facilities and increase employment opportunities.

A great example of a successful graduate is Real Pickles. Started as a home-based business in 1999, the business owners began using the FPC to produce their line of naturally fermented products. As their business grew, they became a full-time tenant of the Venture Center and increased their usage of the FPC. By 2010, they utilized the FCCDC lending program to secure financing to purchase and redevelop a property of their own to be their office and production headquarters.

The FPC is a unique asset in the region that also draws users from the Boston metropolitan area and neighboring states. In 2009, the FCCDC initiated a pilot venture to purchase local produce for processing and freezing, which is then sold to schools and institutions in the region. This venture supports the agricultural industry by creating a new market for local farmers, and at the same time, provides quality local

food to consumers and school children. The impacts of Tropical Storm Irene in August 2011 reduced the amount of vegetables available for the freezing project. However, this concept has been proven through the pilot stage, and is ready to be expanded. Further investment in the equipment and facility is necessary to take the venture to the next stage.

The mission of YES is to empower young people (ages 13-24) in Franklin County and the North Quabbin region to be active and economically productive community members through entrepreneurship, job readiness and financial life skills education. Through their Biz Venture series, YES coordinates business plan competitions, a summer camp, and many more activities throughout the year. The organization operates out of the YES BizLoft, a property in downtown Orange that houses their offices and educational spaces, and a full service copy shop. YES proposes to renovate the building's upper floor to create office space to incubate small businesses and provide much needed professional offices for lease in the downtown.

Buy Local Efforts

Efforts that promote the purchase of locally-produced goods and encourage residents to shop at locally-owned businesses contribute to the development of a sustainable regional economy. Buying locally helps to maintain and grow employment in the region; keeps more dollars in the regional economy; cuts down on environmental impacts such as emissions from transporting goods over long distances; and creates more vibrant, healthy downtowns and village centers where locally-owned businesses are often concentrated.

The definition of "local" can vary based on a product or service, or the goal of an initiative. For instance, there are organizations that work to build collaboration and "buy local" efforts for the Pioneer Valley region, or the North Quabbin region. Then there are community-specific efforts that focus on a downtown or village area. Statewide efforts also exist,

such as the Associated Industries of Massachusetts' BuyMass.org program which seeks to create a business-to-business network to connect suppliers and customers.

Listed below are some of the existing initiatives in Franklin County and the greater Western Massachusetts region that support locally-produced goods and locally-owned businesses.

AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST PRODUCTS

There are many venues for consumers to purchase locally-produced food and wood products in Franklin County. Farmers markets (now including winter markets), farm stands, craft fairs and agricultural fairs have been an integral part of Franklin County's culture for generations. These venues provide consumers direct access to an array of locally-made products, in an atmosphere that promotes a sense of community and connection to the region's natural resources.

Many stores in the region sell local products on a regular basis that is convenient for shoppers. The Franklin Community Co-op, which operates Green Field's Market in Greenfield and McCusker's Market in Shelburne Falls, the Leverett Village Co-op, and the North Quabbin Community Co-op located in the Orange Innovation Center in downtown Orange, are member-owned cooperatives that sell produce and value-added products from local farms, businesses and artisans. These markets are supported by the community through membership fees and volunteer work.

On the supply side, the Pioneer Valley Growers Association is a farmer-owned cooperative that distributes produce from a number of Franklin County farms to grocery stores and farm stands throughout New England, expanding the definition of "local" to encompass the greater region. As mentioned previously, growth in local specialty food products in recent years has been greatly facilitated by

the development of the FCCDC's Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center. The Center's "Extended Season" program works with local farms to freeze and store produce that is then sold to local schools and institutions during the off-season.



The Commonwealth Quality Label identifies products that are sustainably grown, harvested and processed in Massachusetts.

Marketing campaigns are another way to reach a wide audience to promote local businesses and products. At the state level, the Commonwealth Quality brand, designed by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, serves to identify products that are grown, harvested and processed in Massachusetts using practices that are safe, sustainable and don't harm the environment.¹⁰ Producers are identified by a Seal of Commonwealth Quality, and can be found through a search engine on the program's website. Currently there are a handful of Franklin County farms and forestry operations enrolled in the program.

¹⁰ Commonwealth Quality website: <http://www.mass.gov/agr/cqp/index.htm>.



Local Hero is the longest-running “buy local” program for farm products in the country.

Several agricultural and forest products “buy local” efforts closer to home have been immensely successful. Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), based in Deerfield and serving the Pioneer Valley, launched the Local Hero public awareness and marketing campaign in 1999. According to CISA’s website, the program has since become the country’s longest running and most comprehensive “buy local” program for farm products. In addition to marketing local farms, businesses that document significant efforts to purchase and promote locally grown products are eligible to be labeled as a “Local Hero,” making the connection between growers, producers, and businesses that sell directly to consumers. To date, more than 204 farms, 50 restaurants, 32 grocery stores, six landscape/garden centers, 11 specialty producers, and 15 institutions have enrolled in the program.¹¹

North Quabbin Woods, a project originated by New England Forestry Foundation and managed by the North Quabbin Community Coalition, seeks to

¹¹ Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA) website: <http://buylocalfood.org/page.php?id=15>.

revitalize the economy of the North Quabbin region, including the Franklin County towns of Orange, Warwick, Wendell, Erving, and New Salem, through the sustainable use of the region’s forests. The project works to market locally made wood products on their website and at the North Quabbin Woods shop in downtown Orange. Workshops, wood products displays, and media coverage also raise awareness of the economic, social, and environmental role forests play in the region.¹²

PROMOTING LOCALLY-OWNED ENERGY SOURCES

Energy is another commodity that may be produced locally, at varying scales and from various methods. There are growing opportunities for consumers to access locally generated and/or owned energy. These opportunities often highlight access to energy that is generated from renewable resources. Efficient use of energy is also being explored, such as through combined heat and power systems. More information about energy is included in Chapter 7: Energy.

Co-op Power Franklin County is a member-owned energy cooperative dedicated to developing locally-owned sources of sustainable energy. Currently the organization’s largest project is developing the Northeast Biodiesel plant located in the Greenfield Industrial Park. The plant will make up to 1.75 million gallons per year of biodiesel from recycled vegetable oil for home heating and transportation use.

SUPPORTING LOCALLY-OWNED BUSINESSES

In addition to “buy local” initiatives that focus on locally-produced goods, efforts also exist that focus on supporting locally-owned businesses and establishments in our region. Pioneer Valley Local First is a volunteer organization that works to educate residents, businesses, and community organizations about the benefits of shopping at locally-owned, independent stores, and banking at local banks. Each holiday season, the Shift Your Shopping campaign

¹² North Quabbin Woods website: <http://www.northquabbinwoods.org/project>.

aims to encourage consumers to do their holiday shopping at local independent businesses.¹³

In June 2012, the radio station WRSI “The River,” based in Northampton and Brattleboro, VT initiated a new “buy local” effort called the Cash Mob. The radio station asked its listeners to identify a local business that they thought was worthy of a sudden, coordinated influx of shoppers to be organized by the station. Over 100 people participated in the first cash mob at Wilson’s Department Store in Greenfield on June 7 from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., providing the store both a boost in revenue and media coverage. The station is planning future Cash Mobs at businesses located throughout its listening area.¹⁴

Several efforts in the region promote businesses and events in a downtown or village center. The Greenfield Business Association (GBA) issues Greenfield Dollars, a local currency designed for use at local businesses in Greenfield. The purpose of the currency is to strengthen the local economy by distinguishing local businesses that accept the currency and building stronger relationships between businesses and citizens.¹⁵ The North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce offers gift certificates for sale that can be spent at a variety of participating businesses in their area. Turners Falls RiverCulture is a partnership of leaders in the arts, culture, business, and community in Turners Falls who are working to promote and enhance the cultural offerings of the village to residents and visitors. The local “consumption” of art and culture translates into real economic impact for the village in the form of business generated by people spending time downtown. Additional goals are to support artists and craftspeople in town, and to create a vibrant and

¹³ Pioneer Valley Local First website: www.pvlocalfirst.org.

¹⁴ WRSI The River website: <http://wrsi.com/>.

¹⁵ Greenfield Business Association website: <http://www.greenfieldbusiness.org/>.

desirable place for people to live, shop, and establish a business.¹⁶

Access to Childcare and Early Education

Child care and early education (infant and toddler care, pre-school, and before and after school programs) is increasingly being recognized as an important component of local and regional economic development. Access to quality, affordable child care and early education opportunities benefit economies in several ways. It allows parents to work and increases their productivity through less absenteeism and a better ability to focus knowing that their children are being well-cared for. For the same reasons, businesses are better able to attract and retain employees if quality, affordable and convenient child care is available. Additionally, child care and early education helps prepare children for school. Research has shown that children who participate in child care and early education programs have a better chance of succeeding in primary and secondary school, are less likely to drop out, and are less likely to be reliant on social welfare as an adult. And finally, child care and early education is an industry in itself, generating income and providing jobs.

According to the U.S. Census, in 2010 there were 3,410 children under the age of five living in Franklin County. Approximately ten percent of the labor force in the County has children under the age of six, with 70 percent of these workers part of a household where all parents work (whether a single parent or couple).

Formal child care in the region is provided through private and non-profit child care and early education centers as well as home-based programs. Providers are licensed through the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). Some parents also rely on informal care, such as relatives, friends, or neighbors, especially if working night or weekend shifts. As of May 2012, there were a total of 113

¹⁶ Turners Falls RiverCulture website: <http://www.turnersfallsriverculture.org>.

licensed child care providers in Franklin County, with a total capacity of 1,454. It should be noted that not all providers with a current license are necessarily still operating, and not all providers choose to fill to capacity for a variety of reasons. Therefore the total capacity of formal child care in the region is likely less than this number. Currently child care capacity in the region is considered to be adequate, however the capacity for care for children under the age of 15 months is significantly less, and has been identified as an issue in the region.¹⁷

While overall capacity may not currently be an issue in the region for pre-school and school age children, the ability of parents to pay for quality child care is an ongoing problem. Community Action of the Franklin, Hampshire, and North Quabbin Regions serves as the resource and referral agency for parents looking for child care in Franklin County. This free service includes a database of licensed center-based and family child care providers in each town within the region. The EEC website also links to a database of licensed providers in the state. Community Action also serves as the largest provider of licensed child care in Franklin and Hampshire Counties, providing care for over 630 children from low income families through Early Head Start and Head Start programs.¹⁸ A voucher program for income-eligible families is available through several state agencies that can be used to help pay for center-based or family child care, however there is a waiting list due to limited funding availability. Recently, Community Action staff have seen more parents trying to work split shifts, or have one parent forego working and stay at home, in order to save on child care expenses. In addition to the cost of child care, finding child care that is convenient to either work or home can be a challenge, particularly if parents are relying on public transportation.

¹⁷ Community Action of the Franklin, Hampshire, and North Quabbin Regions, June 2012. Infant capacity per provider is limited based on available licensed staff.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Integrating child care into economic development strategies can help overcome some of the obstacles to developing new facilities, while also supporting broader economic and community development goals. Locating child care facilities near mixed use developments, housing, employment centers, industrial parks, and transit routes can translate into less time spent by parents driving to and from home, child care, and work, thereby increasing quality of life and decreasing the amount of traffic and congestion on local roads. Integrating child care facilities into new development or redevelopment projects can leverage public funds to help overcome the initial capital costs of building a facility. Finally, while center-based child care is exempt from zoning regulation in Massachusetts, family-based child care, which typically provides the majority of infant care, can be either encouraged or discouraged through local zoning regulations.¹⁹ Fortunately, many towns in Franklin County allow “By Right” small home-based child care businesses.

Greenfield Community College offers both a certificate and an Associate’s Degree in Early Childhood Education. The certificate program provides the courses required by the EEC for licensure as head teachers in licensed early education settings.

¹⁹ *Child Care and Sustainable Community Development: The Importance of Ensuring Adequate Child Care in Planning Practice.* American Planning Association, 2011.

CONSTRAINTS

The public participation process and data analysis conducted for this Plan identified several major constraints that are acting as barriers to improved sustainability in Franklin County. This section discusses those economic development-related constraints so that recommendations may be made to rectify the issues.

Workforce

- Older members of the workforce may need further training to remain employable. Some workers may have difficulties transitioning after years in one job or function.
- Due to high demand for all jobs, youth are not getting their first jobs as teenagers, which makes it more difficult for them to be hired as a young adult.
- The need for specific skills training for a particular profession, as well as a broader education that promotes general problem solving and life-long learning. Lack of resources makes it difficult to offer both.
- Average wages in the region are low and not growing as fast as other areas of the state. The region is unaffordable to many earning average wages due to the housing and transportation costs in the region.
- Quality childcare remains unaffordable to many families, limiting their ability to fully participate in the workforce, or forcing parents to choose lower quality care that is not always reliable and may not provide their children with the stimulation and early learning the parents desire.
- Employment, educational opportunities, and child care are frequently inaccessible via public transit.
- In general, state and federal funds for social services, job training and education, child care subsidies, housing subsidies, transit, etc. are becoming less available. As a result, access to support services is becoming increasingly limited.

Property Development/Redevelopment

- High cost of redevelopment of historic downtown structures is often not able to be recouped through competitive local lease/rental rates.
- Limited funding to support redevelopment of vacant or underutilized commercial and industrial buildings, including Regional Brownfields Program grants, Tax Credit and incentive programs, and staff support to implement projects.
- Limited municipal staff capacity to pursue funding sources and implement collaborative projects and programs.
- Limited appropriate land (near existing infrastructure, appropriately zoned, accessible to transit services, and not impacting sensitive environmental areas) available for industrial park development.
- Limited resources to fund marketing, design, and engineering studies necessary to pursue infrastructure grant funding.
- Limited resources for expansion or upgrades to sewer and water infrastructure, and stormwater management.
- In some communities, zoning bylaws need to be updated to support sustainable economic development principles, such as allowing mixed use development and infill projects.

Regional Clusters

- Limited resources to sustain existing entities and expand their capacity in their efforts to foster the growth of regional clusters, such as the Fostering the Arts & Culture in Franklin County Project and Partnership.
- Reduction or elimination of incentives to install renewable energy generation projects will impact feasibility of these projects.
- Limited understanding of available manufacturing careers by high school students and adults seeking new job opportunities.

- Limited availability of suitable industrial park land for manufacturers to locate or expand.

Business Development

- Decline in the availability of government grant funds to expand technical assistance programs for businesses.
- Limited resources to fund local and regional business association, cluster development, and marketing initiatives.
- Very limited access to venture funding, angel investing or other capital (that is not a loan) for start-up businesses and cooperatives.

LOCATIONS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REDEVELOPMENT

Based on the responses from the Scenario Planning Workshops and Survey, there is strong support for locating new housing near jobs and transit services, and to protect farmland and forests. As a result, economic development and redevelopment efforts should be primarily targeted to existing and emerging regional employment centers and where infrastructure is located.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

The Regional Plan for Sustainable Development takes an extended view of the actions that must happen to make Franklin County a sustainable region. Some of these longer-term actions may require partnerships that do not currently exist, may be costly, or may require additional research to implement. Regardless of such potential barriers, it is important to include these types of actions in the plan to ensure that they move forward and are ready to be implemented when the partnerships, funding, or additional information are available.

Based on responses from the Scenario Planning Workshops and survey, there was strong support for ensuring county-wide broadband access and for sewer/water infrastructure upgrades in select communities. As indicated by the goals, there is strong support for brownfields redevelopment, village center revitalization, and site preparation to create developable industrial park properties. The current industrial parks are home to over 1,800 jobs. Increasing the amount of developable land available in planned industrial parks will support manufacturing and other industries, as well as steer development away from prime farmland or forested areas. Increasing access to transit services and child care facilities for employees located in employment centers, including both industrial parks and town centers, is recommended. Table 4 presents the complete Recommendations and Strategies.

Table 4: Recommendations and Strategies for Economic Development	Implementation					Partnering Organization(s)*
	In Progress / Ongoing	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	
Support activities to enhance job skills and access to employment in regionally significant clusters and industries						
Marketing campaign to promote career awareness for K-12 students, particularly in regional clusters and growing industries	X					Franklin-Hampshire Regional Employment Board (FHREB), Franklin-Hampshire Career Center (FHCC), North Quabbin Community Coalition (NQCC), K-12 schools
Support for creating job connections - internships, job-employer matchmaking, etc. - between prospective employee and employer	X					FHREB, FHCC, Greenfield Community College (GCC)
Develop and improve adult vocational education facilities to allow dislocated and older workers to attain skills to transition to new careers		X				FHREB, GCC, Franklin County Technical School (FCTS)
Develop system to better connect youth with employment, internship, and/or volunteer opportunities. Such a system requires cultivation and maintenance of relationships with employers, and career awareness for youth such as conducted by a school and Career Center career development counselors	X					FHREB, FHCC, GCC, Young Entrepreneurs Society, Inc. (YES), Community Action Youth Programs
Develop stronger working relationships between employers, community colleges and FHCC/FHREB to implement Just-In-Time job training to allow workers to be agile in adapting to new skills required by employers	X					FHREB, FHCC, GCC
Implement Workforce Development Transformation program and strengthen FHCC and GCC pathways for training and career development support	X					FHCC, GCC
Develop program to meet gaps in healthcare career ladder	X					FHREB, FHCC, GCC
Explore the feasibility of developing child care facilities in new developments or redevelopment projects, especially at employment centers such as industrial or business parks, and near transit hubs		X				Community Action of Franklin, Hampshire and North Quabbin Regions (Community Action), Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG)

*See also Page 18 of Chapter 4 Housing for a key to the Partnering Organizations abbreviations

Table 4: Recommendations and Strategies for Economic Development	Implementation					Partnering Organization(s)
	In Progress / Ongoing	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	
Create a center for residents to access multiple public assistance, and health and human services		X				Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority (FCRHRA), Community Action
Create a Center for Middle Skills Development to support access to training and education for individuals who have completed their secondary education but are not pursuing college degrees			X			GCC, FHREB, FHCC, FCTS, K-12 schools
Develop programs to forge a stronger connection between the region's industrial heritage and the current manufacturing sector's needs for mentoring, skills training and fostering of innovation		X				GCC, FHREB, FHCC, FCTS, K-12 schools, Museum of Our Industrial Heritage
Support and expand immigrants' access to English language education and the tools necessary to achieve and maintain economic independence and stability in this country		X				Center for New Americans, Community Action, FHCC, The Literacy Project
Support and expand access to resources that promote stability in the workforce, i.e. access to food, shelter, and heat; quality child care; financial management education; transportation; acquisition of basic employability skills; and affordable medical and mental health care		X				Community Action, FCHRA, FHREB, FHCC, FRTA, GCC
Support activities that redevelop vacant or underutilized commercial and industrial properties						
Support continuation of FRCOG Regional Brownfields Program	X					Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG)
Support the redevelopment and reuse of historic structures, particularly those located in village centers, such as the Strathmore Mill, Putnam Hall, First National Bank Building, Sweetheart Inn, Railroad Salvage building	X					FRCOG, Towns
Support activities that revitalize and more intensely use downtowns and village centers						
Support rezoning of the village centers for mixed use development, encompassing commercial, light manufacturing, artisan, and residential uses	X					FRCOG, Towns

Table 4: Recommendations and Strategies for Economic Development	Implementation					Partnering Organization(s)
	In Progress / Ongoing	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	
Target investment expansion or upgrades of water, sewer and/or stormwater management systems in village centers		X	X			Towns
Maintain an inventory of vacant commercial and retail spaces (for lease or purchase) to be used by business associations when entrepreneurs are seeking locations to start-up businesses	X					Greater Shelburne Falls Area Business Association (SFABA), Greenfield Business Association (GBA), Montague Business Association (MBA), Orange Business Association (OBA)
Support for enhancements to downtowns to make them attractive to residents and visitors, such as streetscape improvement projects, or events/activities to enjoy	X					FRCOG, Towns, Franklin County business associations, FCC of C
Support development of the Olive Street parking structure in Downtown Greenfield to serve the revitalized Bank Row area and accommodate intermodal transportation connections	X					Town of Greenfield, FRCOG
Support a coordinated revitalization effort for Downtown Orange, such as through the creation of a Downtown Master Plan and/or creation of an Orange Redevelopment Authority		X				Town of Orange, North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce, FRCOG
Support revitalization in the Millers Falls and Erving side shared village center, including supporting the reuse of the vacant and underutilized properties.						Town of Erving, Town of Montague, FRCOG
Support activities to develop planned industrial park properties in suitable locations						
Increase land for industrial park development that is near existing infrastructure, appropriately zoned, and accessible to transit services, and not impacting sensitive environmental areas	X					FRCOG, Town of Greenfield, Town of Montague, Town of Orange
Continue to monitor the availability of developable industrial park land in Franklin County	X					FRCOG
Conduct freight rail siting inventory to determine current locations of underutilized access	X					FRCOG

Table 4: Recommendations and Strategies for Economic Development	Implementation					Partnering Organization(s)
	In Progress / Ongoing	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	
Support the preparation of existing industrial park parcels to become "shovel ready"	X					FRCOG, Town of Greenfield, Town of Montague
Support the redevelopment of sites for planned industrial park purposes at the Bendix site in Greenfield and Turnpike Road in Montague	X					Town of Greenfield, Town of Montague
Support the expansion of Randall Pond Industrial Park in Orange		X				Town of Orange, Orange Economic Development and Industrial Corporation
Support the development of a new planned industrial park in Bernardston at the designated Chapter 43D site, adjacent to I-91 and the village center			X			Town of Bernardston
Support the re-use of disturbed land for the purpose of new planned industrial park development in Northfield				X		Town of Northfield
Support agricultural, forestry and fisheries sector in Franklin County						
Support for North Quabbin Woods to sustain their activities to promote forest-based recreation and woodworking businesses	X					NQCC
Support agricultural business infrastructure - such as processing and storage facilities	X					Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), Franklin County Community Development Corporation (FCCDC), FRCOG
Agriculture sector workforce training, such as sustainable agriculture, food systems, and animal first aid		X				FCCDC, FHREB, GCC, Seeds of Solidarity, North Quabbin Food Coop
Implement initiatives identified by Pioneer Valley Grows	X					Pioneer Valley Grows
Develop a Forest Wood Products institute or center of higher education to enhance the skills of local woodworkers and wood product manufacturers					X	Massachusetts Forest Alliance (MFA)

Table 4: Recommendations and Strategies for Economic Development	Implementation					Partnering Organization(s)
	In Progress / Ongoing	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	
Support growth of creative economy cluster						
Support initiatives that advance the creative economy sector across the region, such as the Fostering the Arts & Culture in Franklin County Project and Partnership and their activities such as Creative Economy Summit, trip itineraries, Buzz on Biz, workshops, etc	X					FCCDC, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce (FCCC), Greenfield Business Association (GBA), GCC, Turners Falls RiverCulture, SFABA, NQCC
Sustain Turners Falls RiverCulture	X					Town of Montague, Turners Falls RiverCulture
Encourage artists, craftspeople and others employed in occupations and businesses in the creative economy to participate in the New England Foundation for the Arts' CultureCount database		X				Fostering the Arts & Culture in Franklin County Project and Partnership
Create shared artist studio and creative business work spaces in downtowns and village centers		X				Towns
Support for North Quabbin Woods to sustain their activities to locally crafted wood products and fine arts		X				NQCC, NQC of C
Support growth of educational services cluster						
Better connect independent education institutions and institutions of higher education to local businesses and locally produced products	X					FCCC, FCCDC, Independent Schools
Support growth of green economy cluster						
Support the implementation of programs that promote skill development and access to green sector jobs, such as the Northern Tier Energy Sector Training Partnership and Workforce Development Transformation	X					FHREB, FHCC, GCC, Community Action Youth Programs
Increase participation in the Green Communities program and formal designation of Franklin County municipalities as Green Communities	X					FRCOG, Towns

Table 4: Recommendations and Strategies for Economic Development	Implementation					Partnering Organization(s)
	In Progress / Ongoing	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	
Increase support for networks and groups promoting the green economy sector and that is helping to build the market for this sector, such as the Western Mass Green Consortium and Pioneer Valley Sustain Network	X					Western Mass Green Consortium, Pioneer Valley Sustain Network
Support for the assessment of the energy grid to determine potential increases in renewable generation capacity and explore the potential for innovative energy systems in communities		X				FRCOG, Local Utility Companies
Support the engagement of businesses in implementing energy efficiency practices to reduce their own costs and help build a market for this cluster	X					Business Associations, GCC, Town Energy Committees
Support growth of information and technology infrastructure cluster						
Support the establishment of an Interconnection Facility and Data Center in Greenfield	X					FRCOG, Town of Greenfield
Support investment in "last mile" infrastructure that connects the Massachusetts Broadband Institute's AXIA MassBroadband 123 network to homes, businesses and institutions		X				Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), Service Providers and Network Builders, FRCOG
Establish Innovation District designation to promote a geographic area's commitment to fostering business development in information and technology intensive businesses		X				FRCOG, Towns
Provide technical assistance to help businesses to leverage advanced services available from the creation of a robust, high capacity broadband infrastructure		X				MBI, FCCDC
Provide technical assistance on zoning updates to support the provision of broadband services to businesses, institutions, and home-based business	X					FRCOG, Towns
Develop business incubator and shared enterprise space that promote innovation and information technology businesses	X					Orange Innovation Center, FCCDC

Table 4: Recommendations and Strategies for Economic Development	Implementation					Partnering Organization(s)
	In Progress / Ongoing	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	
Support the growth of natural and cultural -based tourism cluster						
Implement the Western Massachusetts Scenic Byway project’s marketing plan	X					FRCOG, Scenic Byway Committees
Assess tourism services infrastructure, such as current marketing programs, service providers, and existing collaborations		X				FCCC, FRCOG, SFABA, North Quabbin Woods, GBA, Turners Falls RiverCulture
Coordinate marketing of natural resource based tourism opportunities, attractions and events for a broader market, including visitors using the future passenger rail service		X				FCCC, SFABA, North Quabbin Woods, GBA, Turners Falls RiverCulture
Develop tourism infrastructure assets, such as parking, public bathrooms, boat ramps/put-in areas, and signage		X				FCCC, FRCOG, Towns
Develop a shuttle service to access outdoor recreation opportunities from public parking areas and/or the John W. Olver Transit Center		X				<i>To be determined</i>
Establish a regional performing arts center space for use by Greenfield Community College, Pioneer Valley Symphony, and others			X			GCC, FCCDC, FCCC, FRCOG
Enhance promotion of region for bicycle touring based tourism.		X				FCCC, SFABA
Coordinate tourism information at John W. Olver Transit Center for use by transit and passenger rail travelers.		X				FCCC
During the federal re-licensing process for FirstLight Power’s hydropower facilities, encourage greater access to the Connecticut River for outdoor recreation purposes	X					Connecticut River Watershed Council (CRWC), FRCOG
Support activities that promote access to sustainable transportation						
Expand public transit for workers to access job opportunities, such as through new northern and southwestern routes and expanded evening and weekend hours for services		X				FRCOG, Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA), Community Transit Services (CTS)

Table 4: Recommendations and Strategies for Economic Development	Implementation					Partnering Organization(s)
	In Progress / Ongoing	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	
Continue to implement transportation planning projects that promote the safe and efficient transportation of goods and people, and encourage bicycle, pedestrian and multi-rider modes of transportation	X					FRCOG, FRTA, CTS
Support the development and growth of locally-owned businesses, cooperatives and non-profit organizations that offer job opportunities and provide goods and services for residents						
Continue to support and to expand the FCCDC's business technical assistance and lending programs that support entrepreneurship, business development and growth, such as provided by the FCCDC and other entities	X					FCCDC
Continue to support and to expand the offering of workshops and other educational opportunities that target small businesses	X					FCCDC, FCCC, North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce (NQC of C), Business Associations
Provide support to help locally-based cooperatives and worker owned businesses to start and grow		X				FCCDC
Continue to support the Young Entrepreneur's Society, Inc. (YES, Inc.) and their development of the YES BizLoft project to create micro-business incubator space	X					YES, Inc.
Support the development of business incubation facilities that target specific industry clusters, such as the creation of a woodworking and wood products business incubator with a shared workshop facility			X			FRCOG, North Quabbin Woods
Support buy local efforts at personal, institutional, and business to business level						
Encourage participation in regional and statewide "buy local" initiatives, such as CISA's and North Quabbin Woods' programs, and the statewide MassItsAllHere.com and BuyMass.org programs	X					CISA, NQCC, FCCC, North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce, Business Associations
Develop and implement a branding campaign for products produced at the FCCDC's Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center		X				FCCDC

Table 4: Recommendations and Strategies for Economic Development

	Implementation					Partnering Organization(s)
	In Progress / Ongoing	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	
Support application of sustainable business practices						
Support expansion of the Shelburne Falls Village Center Composting Collaborative model	X					SFABA, Franklin County Solid Waste District (FCSWD)
Support the distribution of education materials on sustainable business best practices, on topics such as recycling, use of environmentally friendly materials and processes, and implementing energy efficiency improvements		X				FCCC, SFABA, NQCC, MBA, OBA
Identify shared needs and the cooperative use of resources and facilities, such as a shared forklift at an industrial park to a shared vegetable cold storage facility for use by farms and food producers	X					FRCOG, FCCDC, FCCC

BENCHMARKS

The goals of the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development are long-term outcomes toward which programs or activities are directed. In order to ensure that the economic development goals of this Plan are implemented, the following benchmarks are suggested as milestones to measure progress towards making Franklin County a more sustainable place. The benchmarks are data-driven and can be evaluated in various contexts over time. To do this, data on the benchmarks will be collected and evaluated by FRCOG staff at regular intervals to establish trends.

TABLE 2. Economic Development Benchmarks

Performance Measure	Unit of Measurement	Desired Trend	
Reinvest in existing commercial and industrial centers	Sites	Increase	↑
Change in the share of commercial and industrial facilities constructed on vacant or underutilized infill sites	Sites	Increase	↑
New job opportunities created as a result of reuse of existing commercial and industrial centers	Jobs	Increase	↑
Investment in existing commercial and industrial facilities	Dollars	Increase	↑

Map 6-1: Economic Development Priority Areas

