

Our Next Future:

An Action Plan for Building a Smart, Sustainable and Resilient Pioneer Valley



Produced by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission with the support
of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Sustainable
Communities Initiative Regional Planning Grant Program.

January / 2014



Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

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Prepared by

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The Connecticut River and Mount Holyoke Range
from the top of Mount Sugarloaf. Photo: Chris Curtis

01

Introduction

An Action Plan for Building a Smart, Sustainable, and Resilient Pioneer Valley

This report was created to chart a course for a more vibrant, competitive, sustainable and equitable region. This is a regional plan, designed to achieve success through promoting collaboration of communities on a regional basis. With this plan, we are seeking to build a sustainable prosperity in the Pioneer Valley. This involves creating more livable communities, with opportunities for rewarding work and business growth, affordable and available housing, a clean environment, safe and walkable neighborhoods, options for healthy exercise and play, and viable transportation alternatives. The plan contains place-based strategies to enhance and support our region's vibrant sense of place. This plan also seeks to promote sustainability of the world at large, through reducing our reliance on foreign oil, increasing our energy efficiency, cutting our greenhouse gas emissions and preventing water and air pollution.

"My community is sustainable when we work together for the same purpose."

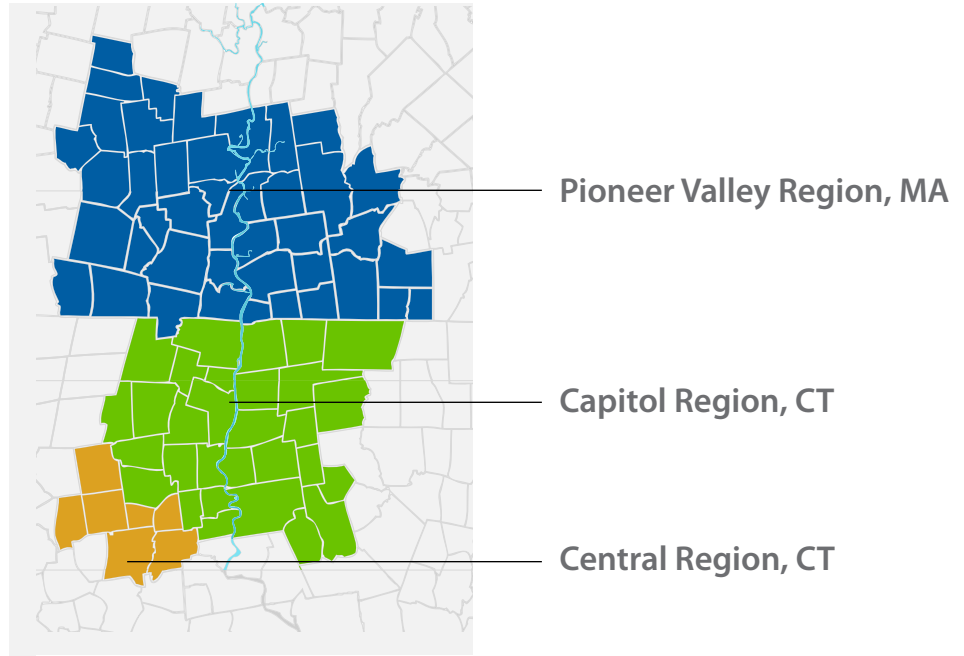
Eneida Garcia
Florence, MA



Note: This is the executive summary of our plan. To obtain or view a copy of the full plan, visit pvpc.org.

Our Mission for the Sustainable Knowledge Corridor:

To preserve, create and maintain a sustainable, economically competitive, and equitable bi-state region.



The 43 cities and towns of the Pioneer Valley are part of the Sustainable Knowledge Corridor, which links the Springfield and Hartford metropolitan regions. The Knowledge Corridor is stitched together by several large regional systems such as the Connecticut River, the Interstate 91 corridor and the Northeast Rail Corridor. Together, the region has over 80 communities and 1.6 million residents. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the Capitol Region Council of Governments, acknowledging the links that tie their regions together, applied jointly for a Sustainable Communities grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Our plan is designed to meet the many challenges in the region's growth, development and economic prosperity. The plan is organized around the following issues and goals:

- **Climate Action and Clean Energy Plan:** Moving toward a carbon neutral future. Adapting to create resilient communities.
- **Food Security Plan:** No one goes hungry. We grow our own food.
- **Housing Plan:** Expanding housing choice. Creating communities of opportunity.
- **Environment Plan:** Protecting greenways and blueways. Growing vibrant communities in our watershed.
- **Green Infrastructure Plan:** Promoting clean water. Greening our streets and neighborhoods.
- **Sustainable Transportation Plan:** Improving Mobility. Promoting alternative modes of transportation.
- **Regional Brownfields Plan:** Cleaning up our industrial legacy. Building stronger neighborhoods and communities.
- **Valley Vision 4 , The Pioneer Valley Land Use Plan:** Growing smarter to reduce sprawl. Revitalizing our community centers.

The plan also describes catalytic projects undertaken in three urban core communities, that provide models of how place-based activities can work to enhance the livability of urban centers and villages. Each of these projects address specific issues relating to sustainable community development ranging from transit oriented development, to greenway development and downtown redevelopment:

- Holyoke: Depot Square Redevelopment and Revitalization
- Springfield: Court Square
- Chicopee: Connecticut Riverwalk

The Sustainable Knowledge Corridor has adopted the six livability principles established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which are:

- 1. Provide more transportation choices:** Develop safe, reliable and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health.
- 2. Promote equitable, affordable housing:** Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
- 3. Enhance economic competitiveness:** Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers as well as expanded business access to markets.
- 4. Support existing communities:** Target federal funding toward existing communities—through such strategies as transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling—to increase community revitalization, improve the efficiency of public works investments, and safeguard rural landscapes.
- 5. Coordinate policies and leverage investment:** Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.
- 6. Value communities and neighborhoods:** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Sustainability:

Sustainable communities are urban, suburban or rural communities that have more housing and transportation choices, are closer to jobs, shops or schools, are more energy independent and help protect clean air and water. These are the types of communities that we are working toward as we carry out the activities of the Sustainable Knowledge Corridor project.



Civic engagement session in Chicopee with an Adult Basic Education class.

Meaningful community & civic engagement.

A key challenge of any sustainable development effort is meaningful community and civic engagement. That challenge is particularly evident in the Pioneer Valley with its geographic, class, racial, and ethnic diversity. Our civic engagement strategy for this project was designed as a collaborative learning and decision-making process that broadened the range of communities engaged—with a specific emphasis on engaging underrepresented communities—and expanded the definition of sustainability. The following goals, to measure the success of our participatory planning process, were identified:

1. **Broaden the Conversation:** create civic dialogues and participatory platforms that restore the social dimension of sustainability and allow everyday stories to define what sustainable development means locally.
2. **Be Inclusive:** Develop engagement strategies that engage underrepresented populations (immigrant, migrant, people of color, low-income and geographically isolated) who are often excluded from planning processes.
3. **Be Accessible:** Use common language and clear graphics to explain the goals and strategies of this regional planning process and create a public education campaign that increases the awareness of sustainability through out the region.
4. **Build Capacity:** Facilitate mutual learning and develop long-term strategies for participants to be active in developing local visions for healthy and sustainable communities long after the project timeline.



Civic engagement session at the Springfield YCMA

Our strategies for engagement recognized the need to not only engage a broad range of communities, but to also to create a unifying vision for the region—responsive to real differences, but creating a context to overcome the “silos” of planning and community concerns. A key strategy in addressing the challenges of engagement for this project was recognizing the importance of the social and community aspects of sustainability, and supporting the full participation of all residents in order to create a context for transformative engagement. With this insight, we framed our conversations on housing, transportation, jobs and the environment with a keen interest in increasing local communities’ investments in sustainability, and building the social capital that could support civic capacity and future action.

University of Massachusetts Amherst Architecture + Design program collaborated in the design and implementation of the civic engagement plan, and UMass architecture students participated as facilitators, researchers and designers of the community dialogues and its products. In addition, our key partnership with local United Way affiliates—United Way Pioneer Valley and United Way Hampshire County—was essential to our evolving engagement strategy. United Way’s participation allowed us to better involve, collaborate with, and empower the public in the development of this regional sustainability plan—and in making significant progress up the ladder of citizen participation. Through these key collaborations we were able to consistently engage with underrepresented communities as they articulated a vision of sustainability for their communities—and for our region. This is particularly important in Western Massachusetts as demographic trends show that population growth in the region is happening among the very underrepresented communities the we have engaged through this process—a population that will play an increasingly important role as agents and advocates for sustainability in the region.



The four themes that were created to make the goals of the project clear to the public.

Public Participation Methods

All of our public participation methods grew out of research on best practices in civic and community engagement. The following are the primary engagement methods that were used for this project. Detailed civic engagement reports and findings are available on the project website at: <http://www.sustainableknowledgecorridor.org/site/participate>

Communication Strategy

One of our key strategies to make the many issues of sustainability more accessible to the general public (and particularly underrepresented communities) was to avoid planning jargon and present the project issues in everyday language. Our primary way of addressing this was to develop four “themes” to organize and unite the disparate “element” plans that were at the center of the planning process. These four themes were “Live” (focus on housing), “Connect” (focus on transportation), “Grow” (focus on food and the environment) and “Prosper” (focus on jobs and education).



What makes your community sustainable?

DID YOU KNOW: Not surprisingly, given our current economic situation, the rate of hunger is rising in the region, with low-income families and communities of color most affected. Since income is directly linked to the ability to purchase sufficient food, the root causes of poverty must be addressed in order for food security to be achieved. Increasing the availability of grocery stores and farmers markets can alleviate some of the transportation and access issues that typically prevent communities from accessing affordable, nutritious food.

FOOD SECURITY

Food security means that every resident has enough nutritious, culturally appropriate food to eat every day to meet their health and nutrition needs. It is a basic human right. In addition, food security means identifying, developing, and implementing a plan to nurture and create a sustainable regional food system. Both of these definitions are intricately connected.

Why is this topic important? Planning towards food security is critical to the overall sustainability of the region. Without reliable, healthy food, our residents live lives that are less rewarding and productive. Limited food access and food insecurity are inextricably linked to poverty and injustice. Community members who are struggling to feed themselves and their families can rarely find the resources or energy to address other needs, children who are hungry have difficulty learning, and communities without access to healthy food suffer from elevated levels of obesity and ill health.

New England's Sustainable Knowledge Corridor
www.sustainableknowledgecorridor.org



What makes your community sustainable?

ENVIRONMENT

DID YOU KNOW: A clean and healthy environment is vital for everyone's quality of life, yet the quality of the environment can vary between different areas and communities. People who are socially and economically disadvantaged often live in environments that have greater levels of environmental degradation and have less access to green space. These conditions can affect people's health and well-being and can add to the burden of social and economic deprivation. Tackling environmental inequalities and ensuring that all people have access to a good quality environment in the future is critical to sustainable development.

A healthy planet can be defined as one in which the ecosystems involved in maintaining the relationships between land, water, air, light, and energy are complete, connected and stable. This includes the natural diversity of biological species and communities, and the ability of ecosystems to be resilient. The human impact on our environment often creates an imbalance in nature disrupting ecological integrity, and human enjoyment of our landscape. A sustainable environment plan strives to correct the imbalances created by humans to restore and or protect ecological integrity, and identify strategies for enhancing community character and quality of life.

Why is this topic important? We all depend on the Earth's environment to provide clean air, drinkable water, healthy food and a stable climate. However, these environmental systems are impacted by the choices we make as we develop our built environment. Balancing environmental impacts while meeting the needs of society in an economically efficient way is an on-going challenge, but it is one we have to face in order to sustain our lives and our future.

New England's Sustainable Knowledge Corridor
www.sustainableknowledgecorridor.org

Discussion Briefs

Four examples of the discussion briefs used during engagement sessions.

This set of graphic documents was based on the element plans described in this report and were designed to familiarize the general public on the primary issues of sustainability in the region. Engagement facilitators and community organizers also used them to prepare participants for in-depth community dialogues. Downloadable PDFs of these briefs are available at: <http://www.sustainableknowledgecorridor.org/site/content/sustainability>



Video Case Studies

Stills from the "Sustainable Voices" video portraits

Three short video case studies were produced that highlighted grassroots success stories. Each video profiled a person in the region who was already doing something sustainable within their community and served to make the solutions feel more personal and realizable, and aid in the brainstorming that was part of the engagement sessions. One video highlighted a community initiated farmers market, another a tale of re-building "green" after the 2011 tornado, and the another on the potential for the green economy to offer broad support for a community. The videos can be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/newenglandskc>

Community Dialogues

Community dialogues were the key engagement method we used throughout this project. Most dialogues were arranged with United Way partner agencies, and almost all of them took place at a time and space convenient to the convening community partner. This allowed for a high level of participation from underrepresented groups and was a key success for the project. Dialogues in the first year of the project were focused on identifying key issues important to local communities. The dialogues in the second year focused on prioritizing the actions necessary to constructively respond to the issues identified earlier—and to increase social capital and build capacity for future actions by participants.

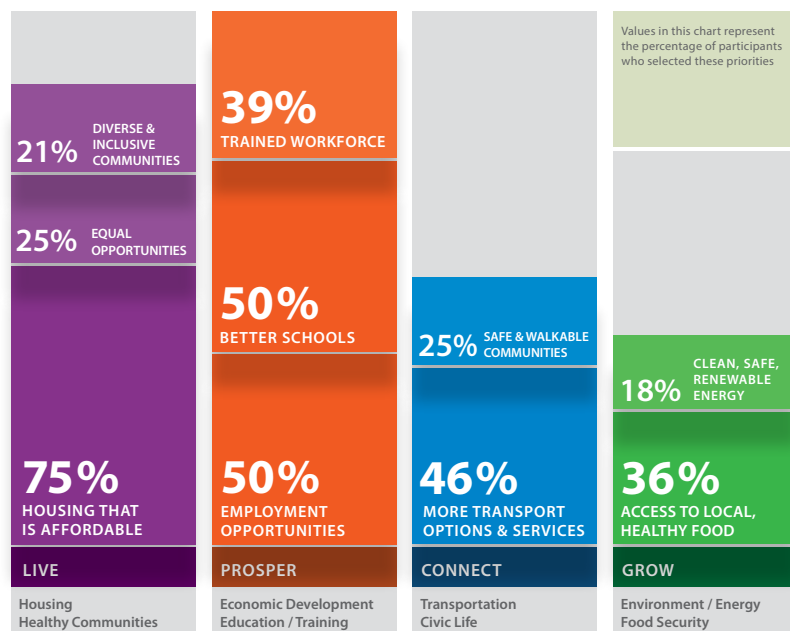
Results of engagement sessions in the first year that were distributed to participants.

OUR COMMUNITIES ARE SUSTAINABLE WHEN....

ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS' RESULTS

SUSTAINABLE KNOWLEDGE CORRIDOR COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The Sustainable Knowledge Corridor is an exciting project to encourage healthy and sustainable communities. This summary presents the results of a series of community dialogues focused on housing, education, transportation, employment, health, and the environment. This participatory effort aims to create a sustainable future for Hampshire and Hampden counties and throughout the bi-state region.



OBSERVATIONS + CONNECTIONS

IMPORTANT "WRITE-IN" PRIORITIES

HEALTH SERVICES:
Equal access to affordable health care—particularly in local communities

COMMUNITY BUILDING:
Connecting with neighbors and families to promote healthy communities

LOCAL CONTROL:
Provide more opportunities to participate and contribute to local planning decisions

ADDRESSING RACISM:
Develop local strategies to combat racism in all its implicit and explicit forms

LIVE: While "Diverse & Inclusive Communities" was not always selected as a top priority, many participants mentioned that diversity in communities is often dependent on access to affordable housing.

CONNECT: Many people noted how poor bus service was keeping people from accessing jobs and healthy foods. Solving transportation issues are key to improvements in personal health & the local economy.

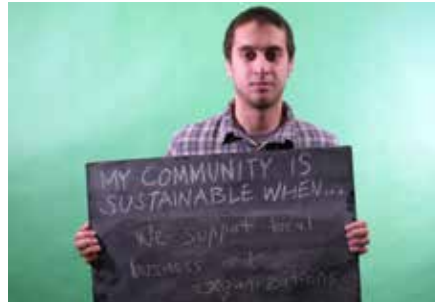
PROSPER: Nearly everyone saw the issues in this category as connected, explaining that better schools lead to a more trained workforce, which will hopefully mean more people can access good jobs.

GROW: Community gardens and youth development were important parts of the Food Security conversation. Many participants also noted how successes in the other categories would have positive impacts on the environment.



Community dialogues across the region.





Eight of nearly one hundred Sustainable Portraits captured at community engagement sessions.

Sustainable Voices Portraits

These voluntary portraits, which were taken at the conclusion of every community dialogue, showed participants with a chalkboard sign where they had completed the sentence “My community is sustainable when...” Each portrait gives a “face” to issues and ideas that grew out of the engagement sessions, and act as a powerful documentary tool to communicate the project’s message.

RESOURCES

Varipool Transportation in Western Massachusetts
<http://www.varipooltransportation.com/index.html>

National Complete Streets Coalition
<http://www.nationalcompletestreets.org/>

The Center for Transit-Oriented Development
<http://www.ctod.org/portal/>

Reconnecting America
<http://reconnectingamerica.org/>

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)
<http://www.rggi.org/>

PVTA - Question/Comment/Suggestion
<http://www.pvta.com/contact.php>

MassBike Website
<http://massbike.org>

MassDOT Bike Paths Website
<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/bikepath.asp?pgid=content/bikepath&id=about>

MassRides Commuters Website
<http://www.massrides.com/commuters>

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission "Encouraging Bicycling" Website
http://www.pvpc.org/activities/encouraging_bike.shtml

Pioneer Valley Bike and Trail Trails Website
http://www.pioneervalleybiketrails.org/about/bike-paths/bike-paths-rail-trails_id-16

United Rail Passenger Alliance Website
<http://www.unitedrail.org/>

Varipool Ludlow to Boston
 Contact: S. Parker, sparker@ludlow.ma.us

Ride Buzz
www.RideBuzz.org

Zippor - Car Sharing Website
<http://www.zippor.com>

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 Andover Chairman of Board of Selectmen Kenneth Eaton
 Belchertown Mayor Michael J. Bessone
 Chicopee Mayor Richard A. Bailey
 Shelburne (Dana Bennett) Chairman of Board of Selectmen Mark Bell
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 Holyoke Chairman of Board of Selectmen Robert Jones
 Haverhill Mayor Alex Moran
 Holden Chairman of Board of Selectmen Rich Bessone
 Longmeadow Chairman of Board of Selectmen Mark Gail
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 Palmer Mayor Scott Henderson
 Pittsfield Chairman of Board of Selectmen Paul E. Barnes
 South Hadley Chairman of Board of Selectmen Robert Jones
 Springfield Mayor Dennis J. Dery
 Sunderland Chairman of Board of Selectmen Scott Bergeron
 Ware Chairman of Board of Selectmen Henry Hunt
 Westfield Mayor David Hough
 West Springfield Mayor Gregory Hedges
 Williamstown Chairman of Board of Selectmen Patricia Smith
 Chairman of Board of Selectmen Jeffrey Claff

PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

RESOURCE GUIDE



SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Having a diversity of transportation options in an area opens up the doors of opportunity. However, transportation choices in the United States—and especially in the Pioneer Valley—are geared to toward the private automobile. Many people cannot afford to own a car and therefore can become isolated without public transportation. Furthermore, single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel as the main form of transportation is not equitable or cost-effective. It also has negative effects on our environment. Sustainable transportation seeks to reduce adverse impacts to the environmental while promoting social and economic resilience. It offers underprivileged communities more choices for transportation so they have equal access to resources and a better ability to participate in civic and economic activities.

Learn How To Ride Your Bike Safely

Ride on the road not the sidewalk
 Ride with traffic
 Use a front light
 Stop at red lights
 Stay left on right turns
 Merge before turning left
 Do not ride in the door zone



LOCAL CONTEXT

Many towns in Eastern Massachusetts are fortunate to have reliable public transportation that improves access to housing, employment, education, and shopping. But many communities within the Pioneer Valley struggle because there is a lack of transportation choice. Advocating for increased services and sustainable developments in your area that limit sprawl and provide access to goods, services and jobs in close proximity to residential areas can help increase opportunities for yourself and your community. This guide has been produced to help community residents in our region make their voices heard to stand up for livable communities with better transit systems to improve the social and economic health of our region.

ACCESS AND PROMOTE ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

There are many ways to travel without driving yourself—depending on your destination and daily needs. In our region, carpooling and ride sharing (www.RideBuzz.org) is a common alternative. Walking and biking are also popular, thanks to a growing network of trails and bike lanes. Some employers operate van pools and car sharing arrangements.

Be Ready to Pay to Drive/Park

One of the best ways to reduce the use of single occupancy vehicles is to increase the cost of using them. Advocating for more expensive parking or higher taxes on gas that could be reinvested in sustainable developments is an easy way to improve transportation in your area. This means that you would also have to be willing to pay.

Live Close to Transportation Options

Choosing to live in a central location with access to mass transit can reduce your transportation costs, provide more options for travel, and reduce energy consumption. New York City produces 1% of the United States Green House Gas Emissions with 3% of the population because most people do not have to drive to access resources and employment.

Mobility Assistance for People with Disabilities

As our population ages, more people need mobility assistance because they are not able to drive, walk or ride the regular bus. Sometimes known as "paratransit," accessible vans like those operated by PVTA and local senior centers are a critical service for people with disabilities—helping them to remain active members of their communities.

Identify Small Ways to Drive Less

Reduce your driving by 5% a year by finding a different mode of transit for just one out of every 20 trips. When you do drive, find ways to take care of as many tasks in one trip.

Bicycle!

Bicycling is convenient, good for the environment, and good for your health. It also saves you money. When you travel by bike, you don't have to make extra time for exercise—and you are helping reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. Join the biking community using sites like <http://massbike.org> to find local trails and bicycle routes, biking events, shops, tips, and tricks.

Create a Car Sharing Program

Car-sharing services, like "Zip Car," provide 24/7 self-serve access to a car. Vehicles can be stationed near your home and reserved by the hour or day via smart phone, website or telephone. Car sharing is a green business idea that works: people save money and skip the hassles of car ownership—yet still enjoy the benefits of a car when they need one. Car sharing makes great sense in a region like the Pioneer Valley, where there are tens of thousands of college and university students—and limited parking. Smith College and Amherst College have already implemented these kinds of programs.

Use Car Pooling Programs

Do what you can to never be the only person in a car. Create your own car-pooling programs with coworkers and friends. Or use sites like www.RideBuzz.org where everyday people list the trips they are going on and offer to share the ride locally and long distances.

Vacation Locally

Instead of driving five hours away to spend your long weekend find local activities or vacation resorts. This will reduce the amount of emissions you expend, increase the amount of time you spend relaxing instead of traveling, invest your money locally, and decrease the cost of travel.

Be a Sustainable Traveler

ADVOCATE FOR ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TRANSPORTATION

Support Transit Oriented Development

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) promotes a balance of jobs, housing, and retail development in a way that promotes the use of bus and other transit opportunities that reduce the use of single occupancy vehicle trips. This kind of development limits sprawl, improves air quality, and provides access to goods, services, and jobs. For more information look into The Center for Transit-Oriented Development <http://www.ctod.org/portal/W>

Support Complete Streets

Complete Streets (<http://www.completestreets.org/>) is a national coalition that is working to transform our roads so that they support multiple forms of transit. 72% of trips are one mile or less are driven because many people do not feel safe crossing the road or riding the bike in their community. Designing streets to encourage the use of less carbon intensive travel will improve safety, health, economic growth, lower emissions, provide choices, and reduce isolation/dependence.

Create Walkable Communities

A "walkable" community is a place where residents have access to goods, services, and employment without driving. Homes, shops and businesses are close together. There are nice parks, sidewalks and street improvements that make it easy and enjoyable to stroll. People who live in these areas generally have safer transportation choices, are more likely to be socially engaged, have better health and an improved quality of life. Walkable Communities are pedestrian friendly; they respect the fact that every trip begins on foot!

Form a Group

Find others who are interested in promoting public transportation, such as better bus service, passenger rail or car-sharing. Or you can support walkable communities. Gather in your community and start planning special meetings to discuss how you can support alternatives to the car. Encourage people to bring food and drinks to make your events more social and draw others to join you. Groups already existing in this region include Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance (<http://me-smartgrowth.org/>), Pioneer Valley Advocates for Commuter Rail (<http://loyalite.verizon.net/kzoozvgk/>), and MassBike (<http://massbike.org/>).

Attend Public Meetings and Events

Improving transportation choices might require changes in regulations and additional funding. Your organization can be a voice for transportation at select board meetings, city council hearings, town meetings and other forums. Let local decision-makers know what you want. It's true what they say about the squeaky wheel!

Contact the PVTA Advisory Board or PVTA Administrator

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) is the largest regional transit authority in Massachusetts, with 174 buses, 144 vans and 24 participating member communities. The PVTA is governed by an Advisory Board that consists of a representative from each of the 24 municipalities in which PVTA operates (usually the Mayor, City/Town Manager or Select Board Chair). Advisory Board members approve the policies and budget of the PVTA. Daily operations are handled by the PVTA Administrator (Mary MacInnes) and her staff. Therefore, if you want to advocate for a major change in service, like adding a transit line in your community or concern about a change in bus fares, it is best to contact an Advisory Board member. But if you have an operational concern, such as a late bus or damaged bus stop, it is best to contact PVTA's Administrator.

DID YOU KNOW?

- US motorists drive 3 trillion miles per year, more than 2/3 by passenger car.
- That's 1/10 of the way to the nearest star
- That's a round trip to Neptune and back everyday
- That's 40 miles/day (US average)
- Up to one-half of all US Green House Gas (GHG) emissions are from cars and trucks



Resource Guides

Through the community dialogue process it was apparent that there was a need for clear resources and information that would allow participants to continue to be active in working towards sustainable communities in their region. These resource guides cover Housing, Transportation, Education, Economic Development, Food Security, the Environment and Civic Engagement. The guides are specifically designed for easy access and use by resident/citizen. They are available on the project website at: <http://www.sustainableknowledgecorridor.org/site/participate>, and will also be available at local offices of United Way and affiliated organizations who participated in the project.

above and below: Resource Guides





"My family and I regularly boat and swim in the Connecticut River. We recognize the river and its tributaries for the tremendous assets they are – for recreation, tourism, business, health, and more. Better managing stormwater flows through green infrastructure will not only help make these resources cleaner, but make our streets and communities more attractive too."

Kathleen Anderson, President, Holyoke Chamber of Commerce

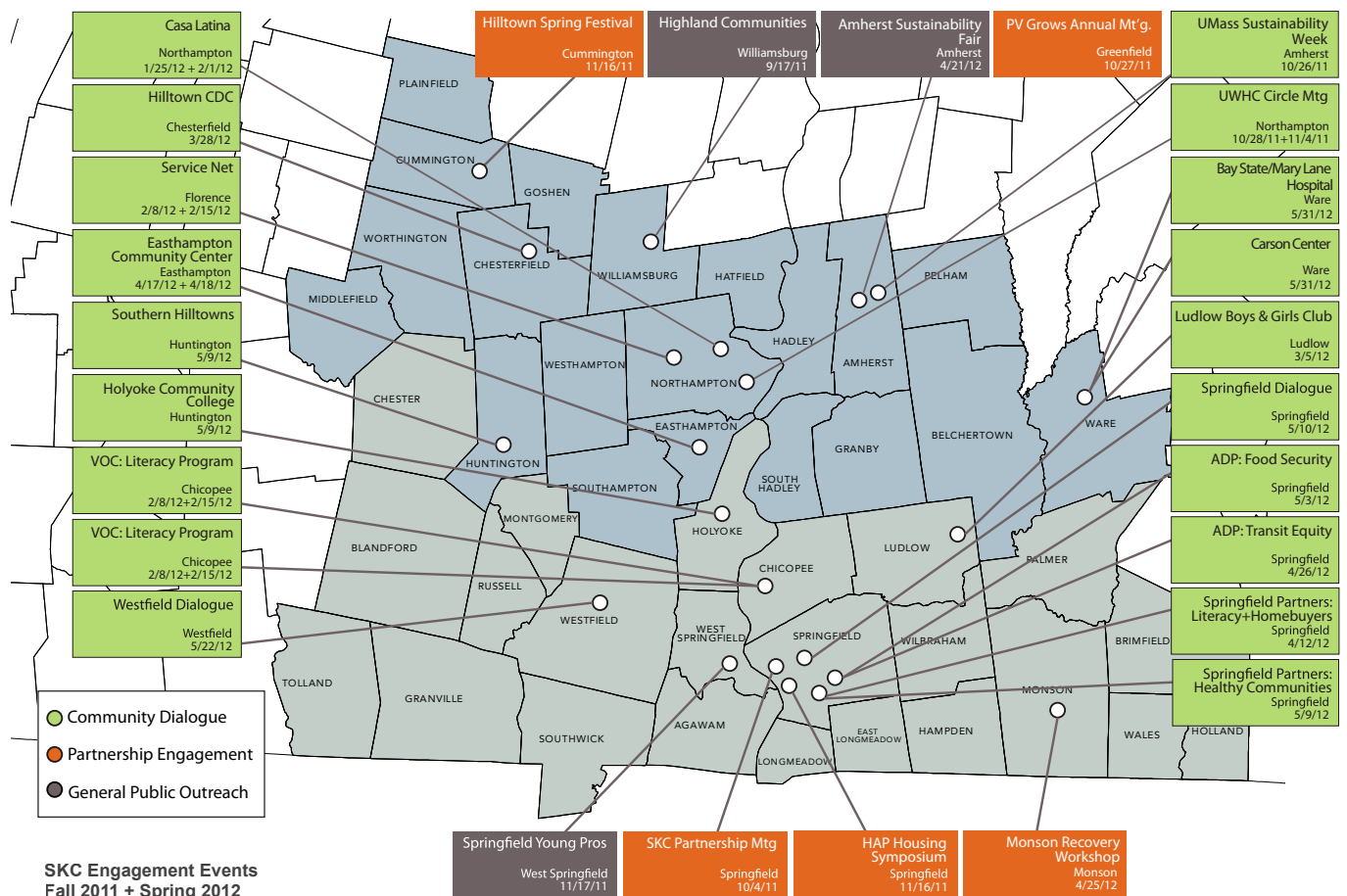
"We don't have the ability to predict the future resources for our transportation system; however we do have the means to create them. This is where a Sustainable Transportation Plan is important to ensure that we strive to create a continuous revenue stream to maintain and enhance mobility through the Region in a cost effective manner. This will provide the framework for enhancing the Region's goals making best uses of our existing resources."

Jim Czach,
Senior Project Manager, West Springfield
and Chair of the Joint Transportation
Committee



Advisory Groups

An advisory group was convened for each topic area of this plan. The groups were made up of community leaders with expertise in the specific area. Advisory groups met on a quarterly basis and provided oversight and review on all areas of this report.



Regional Community Events

Community partners involvement in Hampshire and Hampden Counties.

PVPC staff members set up information tables at a variety of area events from cultural to regional fairs and provided opportunities to learn about the project and participate in MetroQuest surveying.

Web-based Outreach

The project website (www.sustainableknowledgecorridor.org) was an important resource throughout the project. It provided links to the project's Facebook and YouTube pages as well as project updates and draft reports. The site also provided access to important elements of the project's Bi-state plan. These included the SKC dashboard of sustainability indicators and the on-line survey tool "MetroQuest," which allowed participants to set priorities, make choices and see project outcomes. For details of these features see the Bi-state plan which will be available in 2014.

Our climate is already changing, and severe weather events are increasingly affecting the lives of Pioneer Valley residents.

Photo: Chris Curtis



02

Climate Action & Clean Energy Plan

Moving toward a carbon neutral future.
Adapting to create resilient communities.

The purpose of this Climate Action and Clean Energy Plan is to promote greater understanding of the causes and consequences of climate change in the Pioneer Valley. The plan is intended to help the people of the region respond to climate-related changes in their communities by creating workable strategies for local and regional actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including greater use and production of clean and renewable energy, and protect their communities from climate-related damage.

This plan identifies the amounts and sources of the Pioneer Valley's greenhouse gas emissions; offers regional targets for GHG reduction; and recommends strategies for both mitigating climate change impacts and actions to adapt our communities and infrastructure to the climate-related changes that are occurring and will continue to take place.

"My community is sustainable when most of its energy comes from sources other than fossil fuels and land use is consistent with the long-term conservation of natural resources and protection of ecological integrity.."

Scott Jackson
Whately, MA



OUR GOALS

Mitigate: Promote municipal and regional actions to mitigate the impacts of our region's greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), conserve energy and move toward a carbon neutral future. Mitigation strategies include: focus on land use and zoning strategies to reduce GHGs by promoting more compact development; reducing auto trips; and planting and producing more trees; and clean energy.

Adapt: Adapt to the consequences of a changing climate and work to increase the resilience of the region's communities to withstand and recover from extreme weather events. Identify and prepare for likely impacts to the region's critical infrastructure, and prepare vulnerable people for floods and extreme heat.

Act: Seek municipal action on climate and clean energy strategies in the near term, because our climate is already changing.



Damage after tornado in Monson.

Photo: Tom Retting, Worcester Telegram



Village Hill, Northampton, an example of a compact, mixed-use energy efficient development

Photos: Chris Curtis



“Climate change is the challenge of our time, and we in Massachusetts are rising to that challenge.”

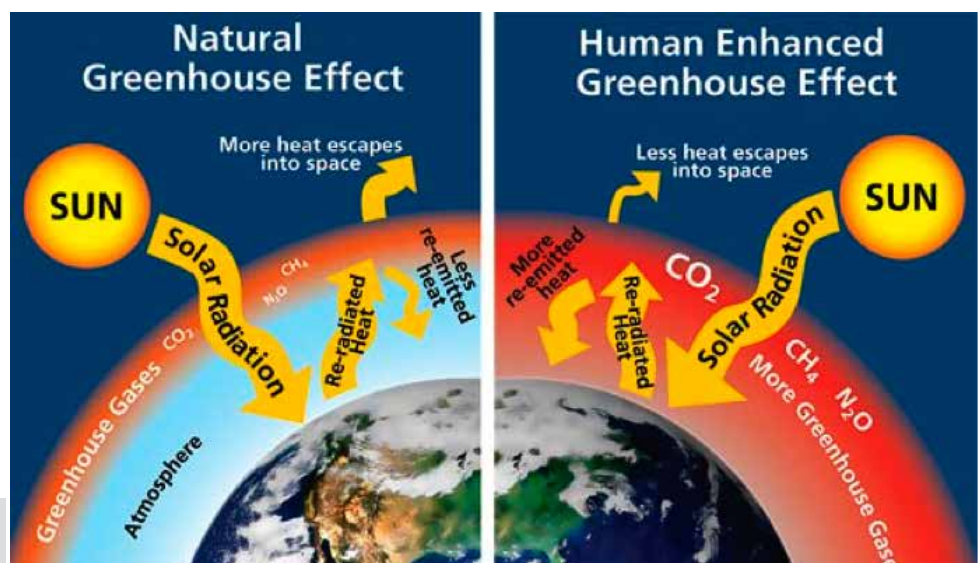
Massachusetts Governor
Deval Patrick / July 2, 2008

Our climate Is already changing.

Scientific evidence is overwhelming that our climate is changing. According to the 2010 Massachusetts Climate Adaptation Report, “climate change is already having demonstrable effects in Massachusetts”.

In 2010, the National Academy of Sciences concluded that “there is a strong, credible body of evidence, based on multiple lines of research, documenting that climate is changing and that these changes are caused in part by human activities”.

Even if global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are reduced, some climate change is now inevitable. Because climate change is a global problem, no individual government can unilaterally solve the problem, and effective solution will require the cooperative participation of federal, state, regional and local governments, as well as individuals and businesses.



Source: US National Park Service



In August, 2011 Tropical Storm Irene caused severe flood damages to Shelburne Falls and other areas in the region.

Source: H. Knox www.city-data.com

Warming and severe weather trends have been documented.

Long-term observed climate warming trends in our region include:

- The Northeast has been warming at a rate of nearly .5 degrees F per decade, and winter temperatures are rising at an even faster rate of 1.3 degrees F per decade;
- There are more frequent days with temperatures above 90 degrees;
- Snow packs are being reduced, with earlier spring snow-melts;
- Sea-surface temperatures and sea levels are rising;

One of the most significant predicted affects of climate change for our region is an increase in severe weather events. In 2011, a series of three severe weather events affect the Pioneer Valley region:

- On June 1, a series of category EF-3 tornadoes struck Springfield and nine other communities, the region's worst outbreak of tornadoes in a century, causing \$90 million in damages in Hampden County alone;
- On August 28-29, Tropical Storm Irene dumped as much as 10 inches of rain on the region, causing extensive flood damages totaling over \$1 billion across the Northeast;
- On October 30, a record early snowstorm of 8-24 inches snapped branches and downed power lines, leaving 3 million people without power for up to 2 weeks, and causing \$3 billion in damages across the Northeast

Also in July, 2012 a brutal heat wave across the United States wilted crops, shriveled rivers, and fueled wildfires, and officially set the record for the hottest single month ever in the continental United States. In addition, the first seven months of 2012 were the hottest of any year on record, and drier than average as well.

Public perception of climate change impacts is also changing. A poll released in April, 2012 found that most Americans believe that global warming has played a role in a series of unusual weather events over the past year.

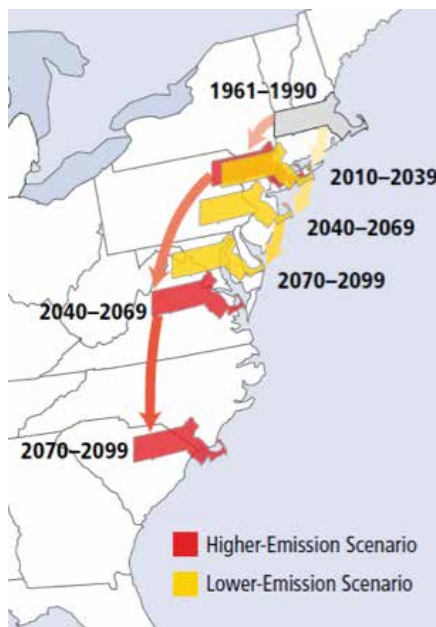
On June 1, 2011, a tornado did substantial damage to Springfield and 17 other communities from Westfield to Charlton.



“Although Massachusetts would not likely be the place in the world to suffer most from a changing climate, the potential negative impacts here are many and serious”.

Rising to the Challenge / MassINC / 2012

How Our Climate Will Change



At current rates of greenhouse gas accumulation and temperature increases, the climate of Massachusetts will become similar to those of present-day New Jersey or Virginia by 2040-2069, depending on future GHG emissions. By the end of the century, Massachusetts' climate will feel like Virginia or South Carolina.

Source:
Northeast Climate Impact Assessment 2006

Further climate change impacts are expected.

The Pioneer Valley faces significant climate changes moving forward. These impacts include:

- By 2050, average temperatures will rise by 3-5 degrees Fahrenheit, with increases of 5-10 degrees possible under higher emissions scenarios.
- More days of extreme heat in the summer, by century's end we will have 30-60 days per year with temperatures above 90 degrees, compared to 5-20 now.
- The occurrence of 100-year floods will increase to one every two to three years.
- Massachusetts is expected to experience a 75% increase in drought occurrences, which could last 1-3 months.
- Precipitation is projected to increase, but the increase will likely all occur in winter as rain, with more extreme downpours.
- Health impacts, including heat stress, poor air quality, extreme weather events, and increase in infectious and waterborne diseases including those transmitted by insects and rodents.
- Economic losses, including the price, affordability and availability of insurance coverage, and the losses to the New England ski industry.
- Losses of wildlife species, as animal species are forced to migrate to new, cooler areas in order to survive.
- Agricultural impacts, including changes to growing seasons, frequency and duration of droughts, increased frequency of extreme precipitation events, and heat stress will make some areas unsuitable for growing popular varieties of produce (e.g., apples, cranberries), and increase irrigation needs.
- Changes in landscape, as temperature increases could affect New England's brilliant fall colors as trees migrate north or die out, and maple syrup production may be jeopardized.



We need to think globally.

The Great Barrier Reef in Australia is threatened by global warming.

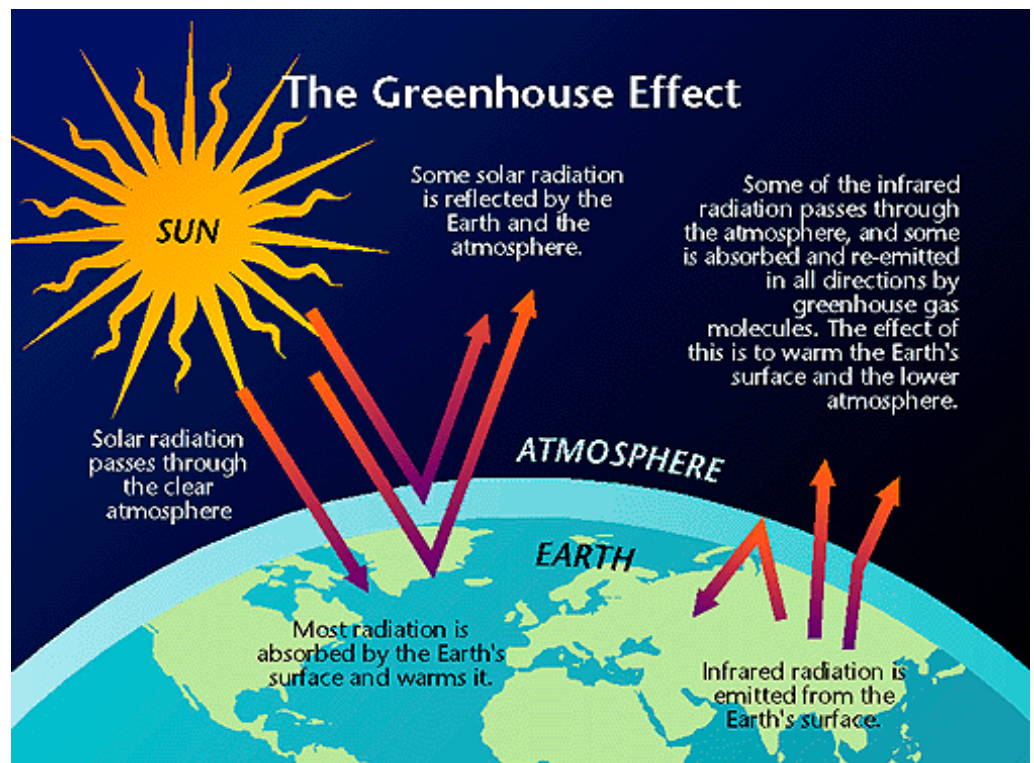
In considering local and regional actions to address climate change, it is important to understand not only the potential impacts to our region, but to our world. This is a classic case where communities and individuals must “think globally and act locally.” Among the many parts of our Earth that are threatened by global climate change are:

- **Antarctica:** During the past 50 years, temperatures in parts of the continent have jumped between 5 and 6 degrees F, rate five times faster than the global average. Including Antarctica’s rapid ice melt, researchers believe sea levels could shoot up 3-6 feet by the end of the century.
- **The Great Barrier Reef:** Coral cover alone has been reduced by half in the last 50 years, and the GBR as a whole only has a 50% chance of survival if global CO₂ emissions aren’t cut by at least 25% by 2020.
- **The Alps:** Increased carbon dioxide emissions are causing glaciers in the Alps to melt rapidly.
- **The Himalayas:** In 2010, 95% of the Himalayas’ glaciers were shrinking, affecting one-sixth of the total global population-that depend on glacial melt to stave off drought and starvation.
- **The Amazon Rainforest:** At current deforestation rates, 55 % of the Amazon’s 1.4 billion acres of rain forests could be gone by 2030. The rain forests contain up to 140 billion metric tons of carbon, which helps stabilize the global climate.

Massachusetts has set ambitious state GHG reduction goals.

Massachusetts has set goals to reduce our statewide GHG emissions to 25% of 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% of 1990 levels by 2050. Massachusetts has taken important and innovative steps to address climate change, including:

- **Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI):** A region wide, market-based program to reduce emissions from all power plants larger than 25 megawatts and to create an active carbon market and an auction that generates energy efficiency funding.
- **Green Communities Act:** The Green Communities Act of 2008 required utilities to undertake all investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy generating facilities, and established a Green Communities Program and net metering (a policy allowing customers to receive credit at retail rates for electricity they generate on-site).
- **Global Warming Solutions Act:** The Global Warming Solutions Act established a statewide legislative goal of reducing emissions to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.
- **State Climate Plan:** The Massachusetts Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2020 contains the measures necessary to meet state GHG goals.



“Climate change is the challenge of our age. For the obvious reason – failing to respond could alter the environment with profound and dire consequences – but also because it is a critical test of government’s ability to accomplish something complex for the common good. As this report shows, Massachusetts has been a true laboratory of democracy on this issue. Working across agencies, across levels of government, and across state and national boundaries, we have put in place an array of sophisticated programs and policies to curb our greenhouse gas emissions without inhibiting economic growth or degrading our quality of life. Our progress to date is truly astounding.”

From “Rising to the Challenge: Assessing the Massachusetts Response to Climate Change” 2012

Our region can help meet state GHG goals.

Our region and our communities have a key role to play in meeting state wide GHG reduction goals, as our region’s share of Massachusetts’ emissions is estimated at 10% of the state total, or about 9.2 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. Federal and state governments alone cannot solve the climate crisis. Success will require efforts from local and regional governments, and indeed individuals and businesses, to reduce our carbon footprint

Taking strong action to address climate change and adopt cleaner energy sources will benefit the Pioneer Valley region in ways that go far beyond reducing share of global carbon emissions. Some of these benefits include:

- **Energy Independence:** transitioning to clean energy sources, to achieve independence from the high economic, environmental, and political costs of fossil fuels.
- **Savings on Individual Energy Bills:** investment in building energy efficiency or renewable energy sources will result in significant direct savings in monthly energy bills.
- **Regional Economic Benefits and Jobs:** with clean energy sources, we can produce our own power here in the region, create jobs, and keep our dollars in the region as well.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Stabilizing the climate and reducing emissions from burning fossil fuels will have enormous global and regional environmental benefits.
- **Health Benefits:** Climate action will reduce illness and deaths due to diseases, heat waves, extreme weather events, poor air quality and reduce overall health care costs.

Transportation leads our region's GHG emissions inventory.

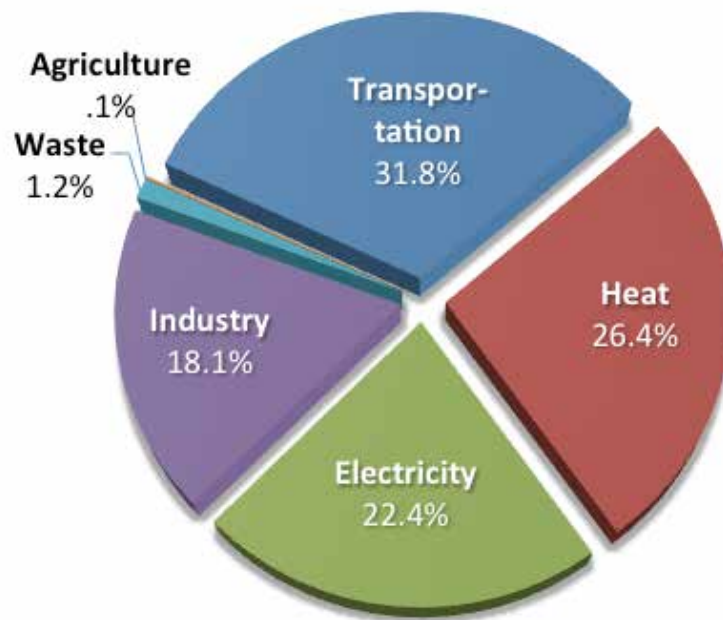
A regional greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) inventory was completed for the Pioneer Valley region, which showed that the region produces 9.2 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. The region's largest sources of GHGs were transportation, followed by heat for buildings.

Carbon Emissions by Sector

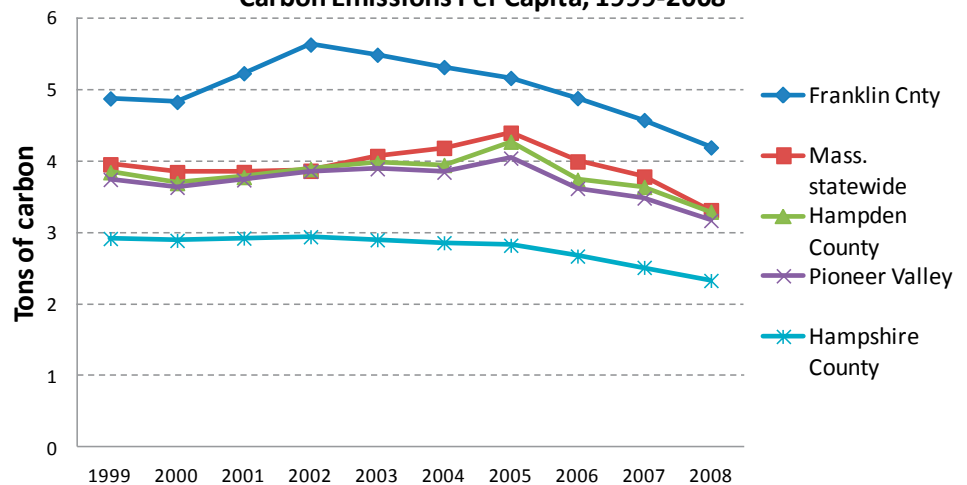
Sector	MTCO ₂ e
Transportation	2,922,382
Heat for buildings	2,428,076
Electricity consumption	2,064,432
Industry	1,663,689
Waste	110,547
Agriculture	12,806
TOTAL	9,201,933

MTCO₂e = million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent

Sources Of Carbon Emissions



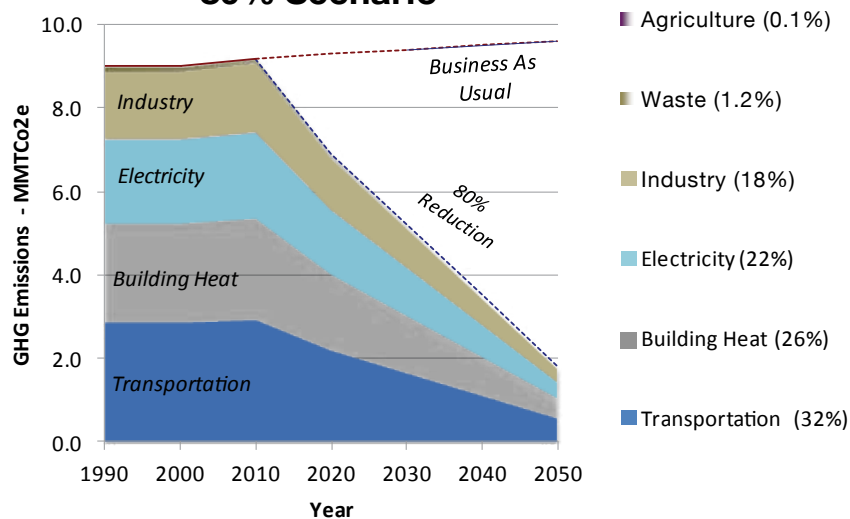
Carbon Emissions Per Capita, 1999-2008



We have work to do.

The Pioneer Valley region faces a steep task in meeting our share of the state's 80% GHG reduction target, as shown in the figure below.

Pioneer Valley GHG Reduction Target 80% Scenario



We must work on two tracks: mitigation and adaptation.

The Pioneer Valley region must address climate change on two tracks simultaneously: mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions; and adaptation to protect communities from damage due to a changing climate.

Mitigation:

Strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and slow climate change.

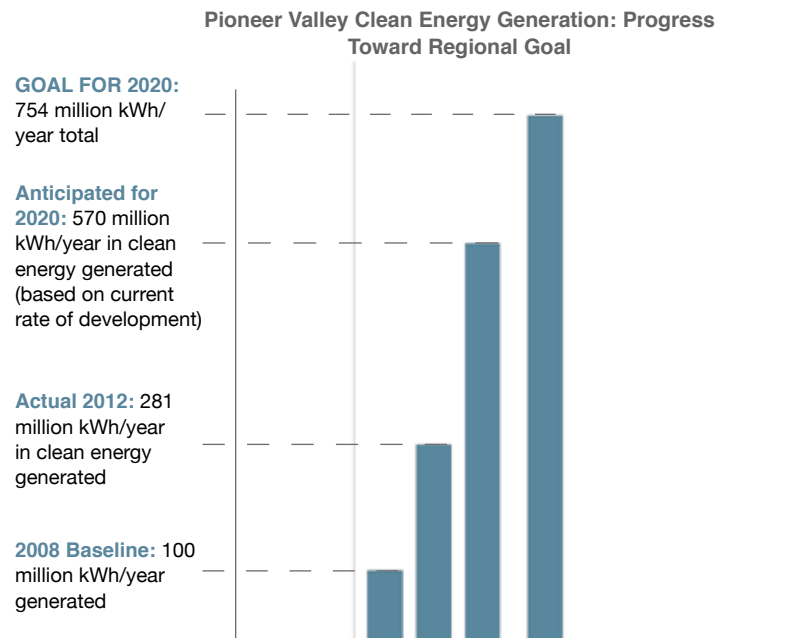
Cross-cutting

Strategies that benefit both mitigation and adaptation.

Adaptation:

Strategies to protect communities from the damage that climate change is causing.

OUR FINDINGS



We are making progress toward clean energy goals.

In 2008, PVPC released the Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan, which outlined strategies to promote energy conservation and use of renewable clean energy sources. The Clean Energy Plan set a goal to develop a 6-fold increase by year 2020 in new clean energy facilities, with the capacity to generate an additional 654 million kilowatt hours per year (kWh/yr) of clean energy in the region (Hampshire and Hampden Counties) for a total of 754 million kWh/year total (including 100 million kWh/yr already being generated in 2008).

Between 2008 and 2012, an additional 181 million kWh/yr in clean energy generating capacity was created in the region, bringing total clean energy generation to 281 million kWh/yr in 2012. Assuming this rate of clean energy development continues, it is anticipated that by 2020 the region will achieve 72% of its original goal: a total of 570 million kWh/yr of clean energy generated.



Solar energy is gaining ground.

Solar panels at solar farm in Holyoke.

In the last five years, the amount of solar energy in Massachusetts has increased almost thirty-fold, from less than 4 megawatts in 2007 to 110 megawatts in 2012. Western Massachusetts communities and in particular Holyoke, Amherst, Springfield and Northampton are on the forefront of the solar energy movement in the state.

Holyoke is second in the state, only behind Boston, in total solar energy produced by photovoltaic panels, followed by Pittsfield in third and Springfield. Holyoke's solar energy capacity is 4,527 kilowatts, while Boston's is 5,647. In terms of the number of solar installations, Northampton and Amherst are tied for fourth, with 81 arrays each. Greenfield is tied with Framingham for 12th place, with 44, and Hatfield and Montague are 38th in the state with 28 installations each. The report was compiled using the most recent data available, but does not reflect the impact of new solar arrays that have gone online in the past few months, such as Easthampton's 2-megawatt solar array on the capped Oliver Street landfill.

Western Massachusetts is the region of the Commonwealth with the most solar energy installations and the largest amount of solar generating capacity, while the Cape and Islands lead Massachusetts in per capita measures of solar energy deployment.

Top Municipalities for Total Solar Photovoltaic Capacity

City/Town	PV Capacity	Statewide Rank
Boston	5,6471	1
Holyoke	4,527	2
Pittsfield	4,326	3
Springfield	2,959	4
Dartmouth	2,808	5

Source: Mass. DOER

A key east-west Massachusetts highway corridor, Route 2, was washed out during Tropical Storm Irene.



We have significant vulnerabilities to climate change.

Two critical areas of vulnerability to climate change in the Pioneer Valley are transportation and wastewater treatment. Transportation infrastructure, including roads, highways, bridges, stream crossing structures, railroads and airports, is vital to the daily functioning of the Pioneer Valley. There are 4,364 miles of road in the region, 74% of which are maintained by city and town governments. Significant adaption to climate change is necessary to maintain transportation facilities in safe and usable operating conditions.

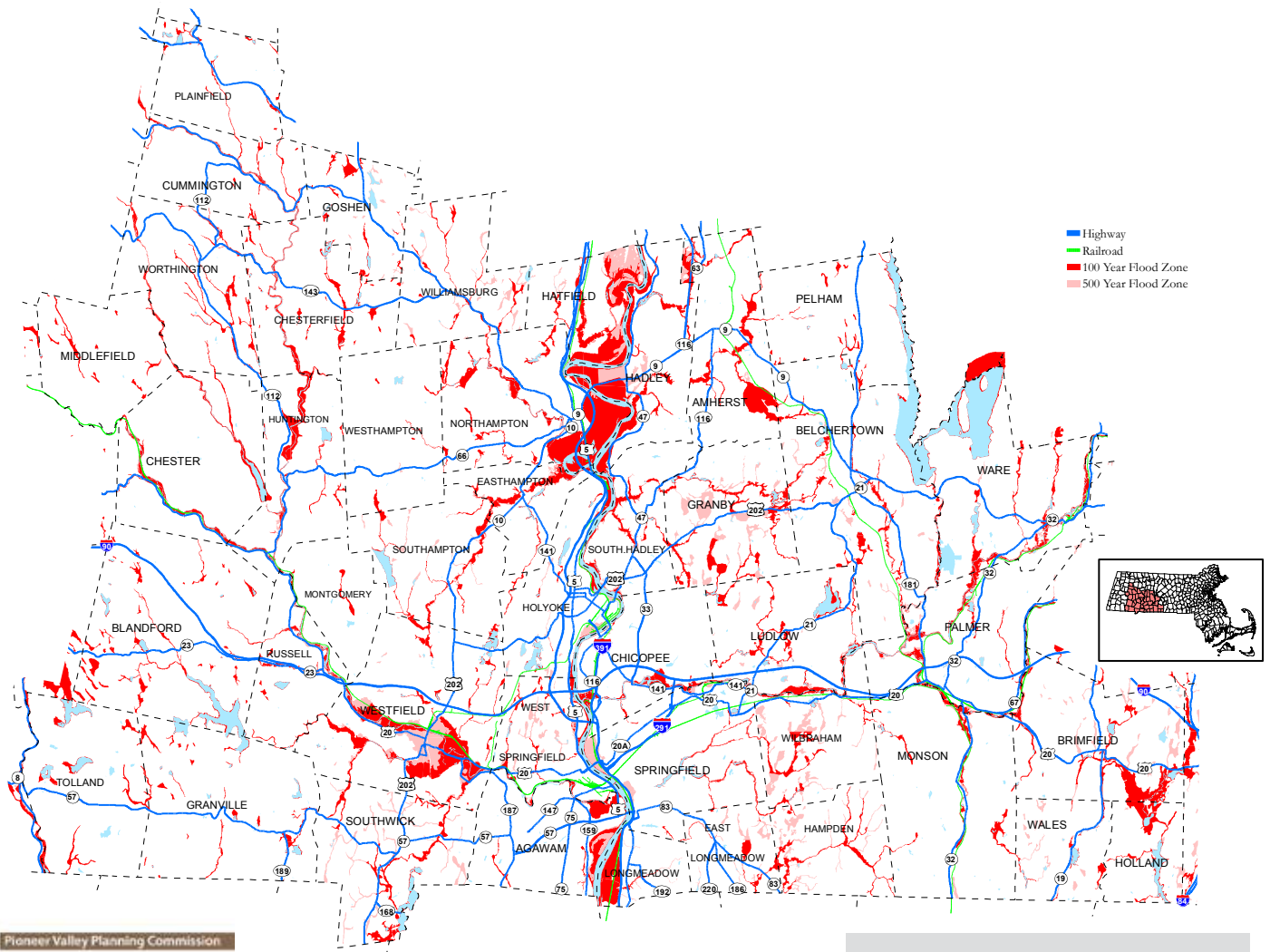
A primary threat to the region's transportation infrastructure is from flooding. Major roadways and railroad lines within and immediately adjacent to the 100-year and 500-year flood zones are considered to be at greatest risk.

Climate change poses a series of threats to wastewater infrastructure, including:

- Flooding of wastewater treatment plants, with resulting release of raw sewage to waterways.
- Flood-related erosion and damage to sewer lines, pump stations and related wastewater infrastructure.
- Electrical failures knocking out critical wastewater treatment functions, lack of back-up generators for many electric pump stations.
- Increased storm flows in combined sewers result in large-scale overflows of raw sewage to waterways.

Tropical Storm Irene demonstrated the severity of damages that can occur with catastrophic flooding due to major weather events in the region. The Greenfield wastewater facility was inundated by floodwaters, knocked off line, and discharged raw sewage to the Connecticut River for several days, sending it downstream into the Pioneer Valley, with estimated total infrastructure damage of approximately \$16 million.

Flood Plains and Highways Vulnerable to Flooding

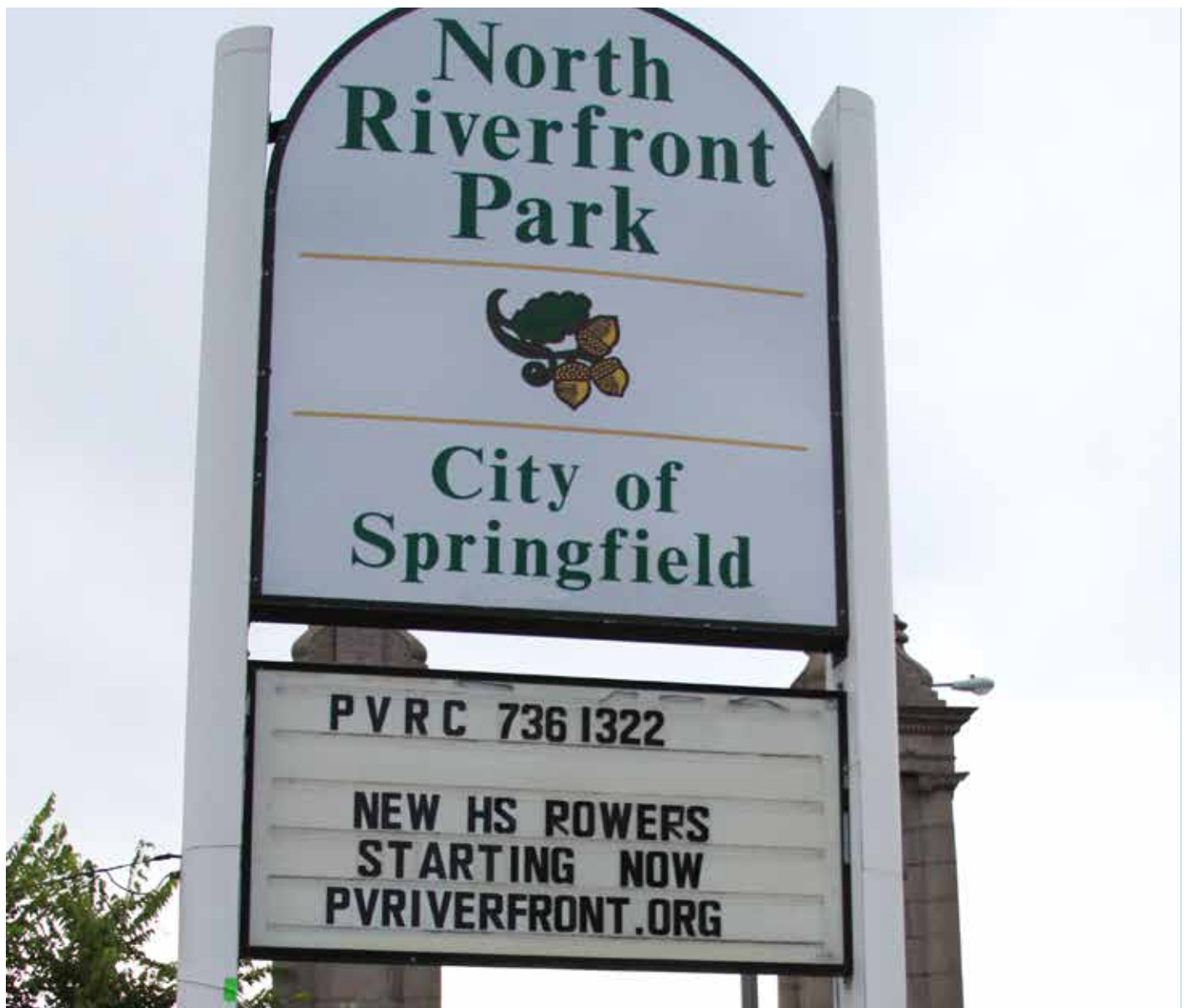


Key regional transportation routes, including interstate 91, Route 20, 5, and 9 and the region's north south rail corridor are vulnerable to flood impacts.

There are other key areas of vulnerability.

Other key areas of vulnerability include:

- **Dams and Flood Control Infrastructure:** The region has 268 state-regulated dams. Of these, 43 are rated as high hazard. There are also more than 22 miles of levees, most constructed in the 1940's to meet flood needs of that era.
- **Energy and Electrical System Failures:** Overhead electrical transmission lines are particularly vulnerable to high winds, falling trees, and heavy snows, as occurred in the October, 2011 snowstorm.
- **Drinking Water Supply and Infrastructure:** Surface water reservoirs provide virtually all of the water supply for three of the region's largest cities, Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke, all of which are vulnerable to dam or pipeline failures in severe weather .
- **Agriculture:** Crops will not only be affected by warmer temperatures but also variations in rainfall and flood damages;
- **Buildings and Structures:** Flooding is the region's potentially most expensive natural hazard threat, with 10% of the region's area in the 100-year floodplain, much of which includes high density urban development.
- **Human Health:** A changing climate will have direct impacts on human health, including heat waves, insect-borne illnesses, and storm damages.
- **Fish and Wildlife:** Animals will be affected by a reduction in their natural habitats, due to changes in aquatic habitats, tree species and forest composition, and temperature increases.



Reducing auto travel is a key element in addressing the region's GHG emissions



Mitigation Strategies

The Climate Action and Clean Energy Plan includes strategies to mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapt to the consequences of climate change that are already happening. These are summarized below.

REVIEW

Zoning for GHG Reduction Practices

1

Undertake zoning conformance reviews of existing municipal zoning and provide a technical assistance program to help communities adopt their zoning to improve GHG reduction in the built environment.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, Municipalities
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



CREATE

Municipal Policies & Intergovernmental Compact on Climate Action

2

Seek approval from all 43 Pioneer Valley communities for municipal policy statements and an intergovernmental compact on climate change committing communities to specific actions to help regional GHG reduction targets.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, Municipalities

ADOPT

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Zoning

3

Promote transit-oriented development by adopting new TOD zoning districts that promote more walkable compact development near transit station.

PARTNERS:
Planning Boards
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



TRACK

GHG Emissions Reductions

4

Reduce and track greenhouse gas emissions to meet regional targets

PARTNERS:
PVPC
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



CREATE**Sustainable Transportation Project Criteria**

5

Work with MassDOT and the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to support efforts to adopt sustainable project review criteria for use in review and ranking of all transportation projects in regional TIPs.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, MassDOT, MPO
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**PROVIDE****Regional Funding for TODs**

6

Provide regional funding for infrastructure to support development of Transit Oriented Development districts (TODs).

PARTNERS:
MassDOT, MPO
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**REDUCE****Methane Emissions from Landfill Waste**

7

Communities with landfills should install methane recovery systems to reduce the release of methane into the atmosphere from landfills by more than half. Also, reduce food waste in landfills, which is the largest generator of methane.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**SUPPORT****Green Communities Designation**

8

Encourage the region's municipalities to seek designation under the state Green Communities Act to promote greater energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities, PVPC
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:
\$

CREATE**Livability Program**

9

Create a regional Livability Program, which is a funding initiative using transportation funding streams that support community- and land use- oriented transportation projects, such as pedestrian, streetscape, mixed-use infill, transit-oriented development and transit improvement projects.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, MPO, MassDOT
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



Adaptation Strategies

SUPPORT

Fuel Efficient Vehicles and LED Traffic Signals and Lights

10

Support municipal purchase of fuel efficient vehicle fleets and LED traffic signals and lights.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



FORMALIZE

Emergency Intermunicipal Water Connections

12

Formalize agreements creating emergency water supply inter-connections with neighboring communities.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



UPDATE

Flood Maps and Zoning

13

Work with municipalities, state agencies, and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to update 100-500 year FIRM flood zone boundaries.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, FEMA, MEMA
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



INVENTORY AND

Storm-proof Infrastructure

14

Inventory, conduct vulnerability assessments and stormproof critical infrastructure, including energy generation, electrical transmission and distribution, drinking and wastewater facilities, roads and highways, dams and flood dikes to better withstand extreme weather.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



ASSIST

Vulnerable Populations, Provide Cooling Shelters

15

Educate the people who are most likely to be vulnerable to extreme weather about what they can do during severe weather events, including floods, storms, heat waves. Seek funding for a network of notification procedures for vulnerable populations, "check your neighbor" programs and new cooling shelters.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities, PVPC
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



ESTABLISH**Extreme Weather Warning System**

16

Consider establishing a public warning system for extreme weather events, to send emergency alerts to residents by email, text message or telephone.

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**UPGRADE****Stream Crossings, Bridges and Culverts**

17

Pro-actively prioritize and replace under performing culverts and bridges with structures that are correctly designed to accommodate floods and allow wildlife passage.

PARTNERS:

Municipalities, MDOT

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**CONDUCT****Dam Inspection and Removal or Repair**

18

Inspect dams and remove or repair poor condition dams that are rated as significant or high hazard.

PARTNERS:

Municipalities, Mass Office of Dam Safety

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**RE-LOCATE****Powerlines Underground**

19

Investigate costs and feasibility of re-locating powerlines underground, on a long-term phased basis.

PARTNERS:

Utilities

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**PLAN****For Municipal Hazard Mitigation**

20

Include climate adaptation strategies, inventories of vulnerable infrastructure and updated flood mapping in all municipal Hazard Mitigation Plans. Seek funding for improved preparedness, including funding for dam inspection, maintenance and removal.

PARTNERS:

Municipalities, MEMA, FEMA

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



UPGRADE**Aging Water/Wastewater Infrastructure**

21

Protect and upgrade aging water and wastewater infrastructure, with particular attention to wastewater treatment plant flood damages, similar to those experienced in Greenfield, MA, and provide emergency backup equipment.

PARTNERS:
Municipal water and sewer departments, DPWs
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**SUPPORT****State Loans for Green Infrastructure**

22

Support changes in the State Revolving Fund (SRF) Program, which provides \$100 million in low-interest loans to water and wastewater projects, to address climate vulnerabilities, and promote green infrastructure.

PARTNERS:
State Legislature, DEP, Municipalities
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**PREPARE****For Severe Droughts**

23

Prepare municipal water supply systems for severe droughts, including repairing leaks, installing water efficient fixtures, and installing greywater re-use systems for lawns and gardens.

PARTNERS:
Municipal water departments
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



Energy Conservation & Clean Energy

ACHIEVE**Greater Energy Efficiency**

24

- Assist homeowners with completing energy assessments through Mass Save program, and in making recommended energy efficiency improvements such as insulation, air sealing, boiler and hot water heater replacements.
- Assist businesses and industries in new cost-saving energy efficient strategies, such as electrical demand management.
- Support municipal energy committees in producing and updating their local energy reduction plans as part of the Green Communities program.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities, PVPC, Utility
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**GENERATE****More Clean Energy, Greener Power**

25

Reduce the carbon intensity of our electricity supply by investing in solar, wind, and hydro projects.

PARTNERS:
Utilities, municipalities
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



ADOPT

Solar and Wind Zoning

26

Adopt local bylaws for solar and wind zoning to streamline permitting for renewable energy sources and promote passive solar access in citing of new buildings.

PARTNERS:
Planning Boards, PVPC
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



ADOPT

The “Solarize Mass” Program

27

Assist municipalities in joining the Mass Department of Energy Resources Solarize Mass Program, which assists homeowners in purchasing photovoltaic solar systems, by reducing costs through bulk purchasing, tax incentives and rebates.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



RETROFIT

Municipal Buildings for Energy Efficiency

28

Conduct energy assessments and upgrade energy efficiency in older leaky municipal buildings. A municipality can partner, with an Energy Service Company (ESCO) with assistance from various agency programs.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities, utilities
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



CREATE

Clean Energy Financing Districts

29

Adopt state legislation to enable local programs for clean energy financing (also known as PACE, Property Assessed Clean Energy) programs to set up a revolving loan fund that can pay for energy efficiency retrofits or renewable energy systems.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



CROSS CUTTING STRATEGIES ICONS: The following icons are used in reference to issues and strategies related to other element plans of this report.



TRANSPORTATION



ENVIRONMENT


GREEN
INFRASTRUCTURE


LAND USE


ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

CLIMATE
ACTION


HOUSING



FOOD SECURITY



BROWNFIELDS



Healthy food event at Nuestras Raices farm in Holyoke. Photo: J. Krupczynski

Food Security Plan

No one goes hungry.
We grow our own food.

03

The Pioneer Valley is blessed with a robust, highly functioning and well integrated regional food system. The key entities and organizations involved in local food production and hunger relief programs cooperate effectively, communicate well and share many goals.

Dozens of successful small and medium sized farms cultivate some of the most fertile agricultural soils in the world. Our many grocery stores and co ops stock as many local products as possible, and residents can take advantage of an ever expanding number (over 50 in 2013) of seasonal farmers markets and an increasing number of winter markets—many of which now accept Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. There is good access to major transportation routes that allow growers and manufacturers to move products to market efficiently. Local food advocates and hunger relief organizations have a history of success providing food to hungry residents, helping them take advantage of food assistance programs, and facilitating the adoption of progressive food security-related policies at the state and local levels, including urban farming ordinances, municipal “right-to-farm” bylaws, as well as regulations that prohibit unhealthy foods in schools. There is a well-established commitment among institutional food providers, particularly schools, to supporting local farmers and producers. And a variety of organizations are active in efforts to develop and expand organic waste composting programs as well as developing waste to energy and other clean energy sources, on farms.

And yet, our region continues to lose farmland to development and farmers to other careers. We import the vast majority of the food we consume and have only just begun developing regional food processing facilities. We have increasing numbers of food insecure households due to poor access to healthy food, economic injustice and poverty. And we compost or recover energy from only a tiny percentage of our food waste. Today, we have a unique opportunity to catalyze existing food planning efforts so that we can do more, and do it faster, to improve food security at both the household and regional scales—which are the goals of this strategic plan.

“My community is sustainable when we have access and knowledge to have a safe food supply.”

*Michele Klemaszewski
Chester, MA*



Note: This is the executive summary of our plan. To obtain or view a copy of the full plan, visit pvpc.org.

OUR GOALS

No one goes hungry

- Further integrate emergency food systems and programs into the overall regional food system.
- Expand consumer outreach, education and advocacy to enhance use of healthy, local and culturally appropriate food.
- Increase access to healthy food.
- Make sure that as many people as possible who are eligible for food assistance receive it (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Women, Infants and Children; other programs).

We grow our own food

- Collaborate with organizations across New England and within our region to work toward the goal of producing 50% of all food that is consumed in the region.
- Preserve farmland and work to convert available land that may not currently be used as farmland to agricultural purposes.
- Invest in food system infrastructure.
- Provide training and resources to build the capacity of people growing the regional food system.

This 50% goal is drawn from the New England Good Food Vision 2060 for the six New England states produced by Food Solutions New England, most recently updated in April 2012.
<<http://www.foodsolutionsne.org>>

This plan was produced by the Pioneer Valley Food Security Advisory Committee, which is staffed by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in partnership with Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), the region's leading organization working to strengthen local agriculture by building connections between farmers and community, and The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, the region's primary hunger relief agency. The planning process included both qualitative and a quantitative assessments of food security issues in the Pioneer Valley. This included extensive interviews with farmers, advocates, planners, and others working in the various components of the food system, and the analysis of federal, state, and local data. The process also included research on best practices in regional food security across the United States to identify potential solutions to local needs. It also involved the engagement of members of the general public, as well as the community of people and organizations associated with PVGrows, a collaborative network dedicated to enhancing the ecological and economic sustainability and vitality of the Pioneer Valley food system, to assist in the identification of issues and prioritization of solutions.



Cows at a dairy farm in Cummington
Photo: Chris Curtis



The Holyoke Farmers Market, one of 45 seasonal farmers markets in the Pioneer Valley.

Photo: S. Okolita



Hunger is a widespread and persistent problem.

According to the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, one in every 8 residents in the agency's service area (which includes Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire Counties), or about 110,000 people, go hungry each year—including 22,000 children.

At the household level, food security is generally understood to mean that people cannot regularly obtain a sufficiently diverse selection of foods for a healthy diet because food is not accessible or affordable. "Food insecurity" describes households that do not have enough money to make sure there is enough food for every meal. In the Pioneer Valley, the rate of food insecurity is 14.3% in Hampden County, 10.2% in Hampshire County and 11.5% in Franklin County, which translates to approximately 90,900 people in the region—of which nearly 35,000 are children—who cannot regularly buy the food they need for a healthy diet (Feeding America 2011).

Food Insecurity in the Pioneer Valley

	Hampden County	Hampshire County	Franklin County ¹	Region	Mass. statewide
Food insecurity rate	14.3%	10.2%	11.5%	12.0%	11.2%
Food insecure population	66,880	15,780	8,240	90,900	727,530
Child food insecurity rate	24.3%	16.3%	20.2%	20.3%	18.1%
Child food insecure population	27,530	4,470	2,910	34,910	262,650

Franklin County data is also included, as it is part of the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts' service area and considered by many residents to be part of the Pioneer Valley.

More than 16,000 people live in “food deserts.”

“Food desert” describes specific geographic areas where healthy food from a full-line grocery store is not regularly available. The U.S. Department of Agriculture finds that a person’s ability to access and purchase healthy, affordable food is substantially reduced in low-income and racial and ethnic minority neighborhoods that do not have a full-line grocery store, as well as rural areas where people may live more than 10 miles from a full-line grocery store and not have the means to travel there. According to USDA and the Centers for Disease Control, 3,515 people (2.2%) living in the urban areas of Hampden County and 12,580 people (2.7%) in urban Hampshire County do not have access to a car and live more than 1 mile from the nearest full-line grocery store. PVPC’s 2012 analysis found that a total of 24,627 residents in the rural areas of these counties live more than 10 miles from a full-line grocery store. Compounding the lack of accessible nutritious and healthy foods is the high quantity of unhealthy food choices, especially low-priced fast food. Lower-income food desert areas often have substantially higher concentrations of fast food establishments. Areas such as this where there are few, if any, alternatives to high-calorie food with low nutritional value are sometimes known as “food swamps.”

Nutritional assistance is not fully utilized in the region.

In the Pioneer Valley, the USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps) is an important source of help for low-income residents fighting food insecurity. There are 54 providers of SNAP and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) child and adult food programs in the region: 40 in Hampden County, 8 in Hampshire County, and 6 in Franklin County. The number of people participating in SNAP alone in these counties rose from 37,436 in 2000 to 137,464 in 2011—a 367% increase—while the population grew less than 5%. The value of SNAP benefits disbursed in the region rose from \$25 million in 2000 to \$143 million in 2009.

SNAP is designed to expand the number of people who receive benefits during tough economic times. Like the rest of the nation, the Pioneer Valley continues to experience the effects of the economic downturn that began in late 2008, and so the number of SNAP participants remains high. However, many families who are eligible for SNAP benefits do not use them for a variety of reasons, including stigma about accepting government assistance and a lack of awareness of available benefits. In recent years, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts and other anti-hunger advocates have worked to increase awareness of eligibility for SNAP to increase the number of people who receive food. This includes outreach to local farmers markets and food businesses about accepting SNAP benefits from their customers.



The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts provides community training about SNAP eligibility to improve consumer use of this and other nutrition assistance benefits.

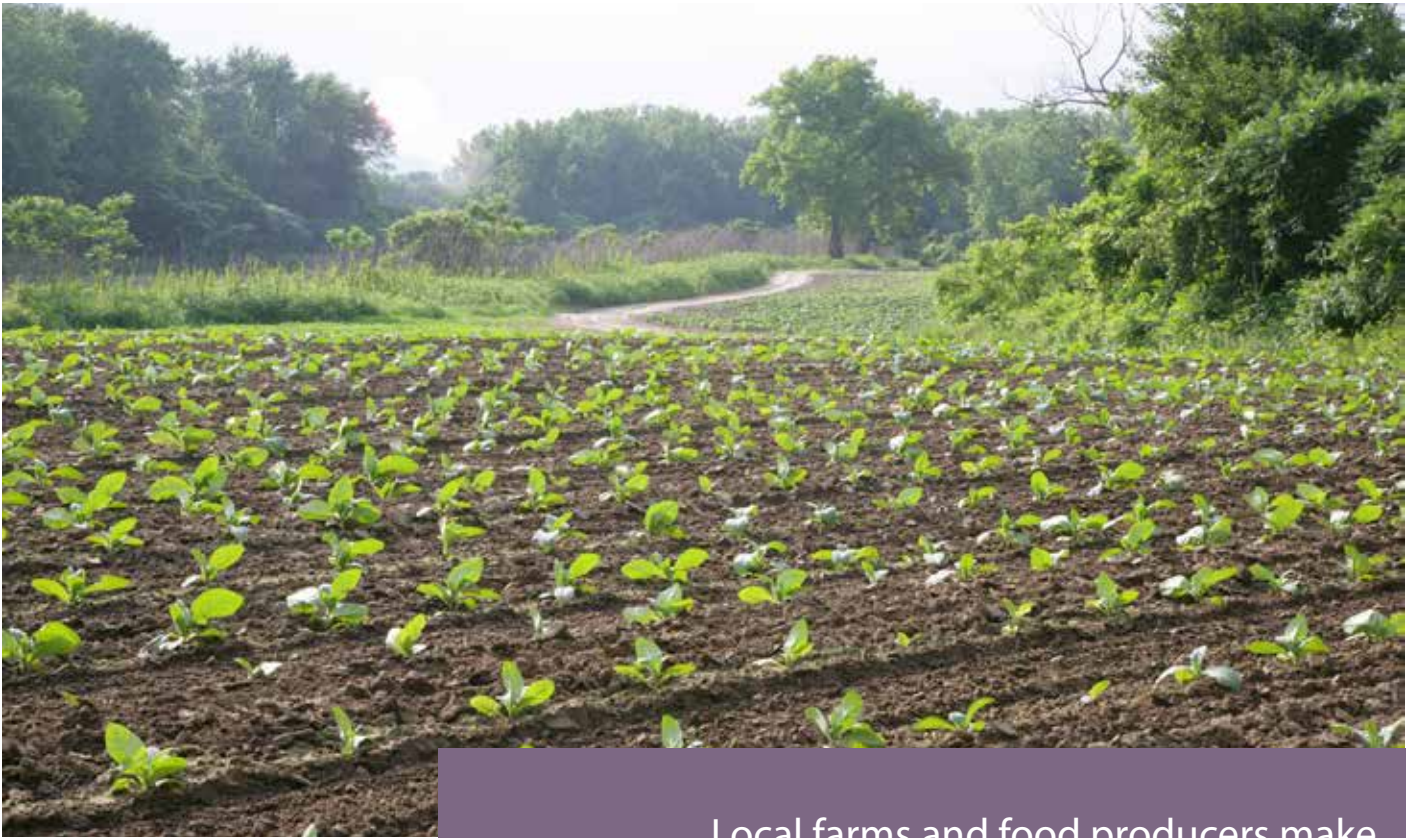


Photo: Chris Curtis

Local farms and food producers make significant contributions to the regional economy.

In many respects, regional food systems function as a loop, like the one illustrated below.

This plan finds that within the food system of the Pioneer Valley, there are several points along this loop where new opportunities and potential exist for greater economic growth and improved sustainability.





There is economic development potential in more local food production and processing.

A 2008 study estimated that current Pioneer Valley farms and food production could satisfy about 16% of the demand for food consumed in the region. Current estimates suggest that Massachusetts as a whole is producing enough agricultural products to meet 4.0% to almost 6% of its food needs, and that our region could produce 5.6% of all of Massachusetts' total food need. In Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties, approximately 13% of household food budgets are spent on local food (not including purchases made by restaurants, retailers, and institutions). Therefore, the total value of agricultural products produced and consumed within our region is actually likely to be slightly higher.

There are at least 62 food processing facilities in the region (approximately half are commercial and retail bakeries), and sales from food manufacturing totaled \$2.13 million in 2009. However, Western Massachusetts today lacks sufficient food processing facilities to meet demand for local consumption and exports. This shortcoming limits the amount and variety of processed foods created from local ingredients available in local markets—and economic growth.

One of the region's greatest production facility needs is for additional value-added processing facilities to where locally grown food can be processed and packed for distribution and sales. Many local food businesses have used the Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center (FPC), a business incubator and shared-use commercial kitchen operated since 2001 by the Franklin County Community Development Corporation. In some cases, the center provides co-packing services, allowing farmers to supply ingredients and obtain a finished product for sale without providing the labor or recipe development. Also, additional slaughtering facilities, both mobile and fixed, are needed for animal products; currently, many farmers in the region must transport their animals long distances for slaughter, reducing the financial return.



John Waite, executive director of the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, displays frozen vegetables packaged at the Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center in Greenfield. Other products made there include pickles, hot sauce, jams and salsa.

Photos: Cori Urban, Masslive 2012.

For details on how the region can expand food production, processing, and distribution systems, see CISA's 2012 Report, "Scaling up Local Food."



Farms are integral to the economy and culture in the region.

The soils of the region are considered among the most fertile in North America and provide nearly ideal conditions for a variety of agricultural production.

Photo: Chris Curtis

Pioneer Valley farms sell \$181 million dollars worth of agricultural products and employ 2,260 people annually. This represents 0.4% of all economic activity in the region and approximately 7.4%, of all agriculture sales.

There are approximately 1,960 farms in the Pioneer Valley, which is one-fourth of all farms in Massachusetts. The region contains about 169,000 acres of farmland, which is 14% of the total land area of the region and one-third of all agricultural land statewide. The region's farms produce 13% of all Massachusetts agricultural products by value (see chart).

Pioneer Valley Agricultural Product Sales 2007

Product(s)	Amount
Vegetables	\$16,185,000
Dairy	\$8,955,000
Fruits	\$3,597,000
Meats	\$2,640,000
Grains and beans	\$779,000
TOTAL:	\$32,156,000

Nearly 500 farms sell their products directly to individuals, with total sales of \$8.9 million annually (as of 2007). This includes sales at farm stands and the region's 58 community supported agriculture, or "CSA" share farms. A total of 86 farms produce certified organic products, with sales of \$4.4 million, or about 4% of total agricultural sales in the region—even though total farmland in organic production is less than 2,000 acres.

In 2007, there were 470 farms that employed workers, with total employment of about 3,800 workers earning a total \$27 million. This total includes paid family members but excludes contract laborers. In 2007, a total of 86 farms hired migrant farm workers.

Since 1972, about 23,000 acres of cropland and pasture land in the region have been lost to development. In 1997, American Farmland Trust listed the Connecticut River Valley in Massachusetts and Connecticut as one of the 20 "most threatened agricultural regions in the United States."



There is a strong consumer demand for local food.

Another major strength of the Pioneer Valley food system is the strong consumer demand for locally grown and produced foods—both for cooking at home and dining out. CISA along with its 340 local hero farms and food-related businesses and other vital community-based organizations and businesses have developed a strong local food culture. They have also created a local food infrastructure that supports economic growth, as well as addressing the need to combat hunger. There are now approximately 300 businesses in the region that sell and market local food, including new food cooperatives and restaurants that emphasize their use of local produce, and direct farm sales through farm stands. The number of farmers markets continues to increase—now 45 with some selling during the winter months—and member share-supported farms now total 58. Throughout the region, there is recognition of the value of local farmers and encouragement for new value-added food businesses.



It's a farmers' market on wheels! Enterprise Farm in Whately bought a 1995 Chevy Bluebird RV that was once used by a military traveling band. The bus brings organic produce to urban areas without access to fresh food; it is outfitted with a SNAP machine to accept food assistance benefit cards.

Purchases of local food for schools and other Institutions benefits local producers and brings fresh food to children.

New opportunities for local food sales are on the way, thanks in part to the Massachusetts School Nutrition Law enacted in 2010, which makes it easier for school districts to buy fresh produce directly from local farmers. The law also requires the establishment of a School Wellness Advisory Committee for school districts. The intent is that the committee will encourage development of a program that actively promotes wellness in schools and to maximize the school district's opportunities for grant awards. Also, the recently formed Massachusetts State Food Policy Council supports agriculture and local food consumption in Massachusetts through increased production and sales, including to institutional buyers.

Much more food waste could be recovered for composting.

Food disposal is a critical part of the regional food system. As more landfills in the region reach their capacity and must close, new solutions are needed for disposing of food. A 2010 study by PVPC estimated that Hampshire County alone (which has roughly one-third of the region's population) produces more than 51 tons of organic food waste a day—and of this, nearly 36 tons per day (70%) can be recovered for compost. However, the capacity of existing composting facilities in the county is just 15 tons per day, which means an additional 21 tons per day of organic food waste is available for composting. Applying similar assumptions in Hampden County, another 40 to 45 tons per day of compostable food is likely available, resulting in a regional total of 60 to 65 tons of waste food generated per day that is available to be composted. This compost could be available for farms, home gardens and commercial landscaping—and play a much greater role in the regional food cycle.



Fresh greens display at Nuestras Raices farm in Holyoke.

Photo: J. Krupczynski



A total of 30 strategies for improving food security in the Pioneer Valley have been developed and refined through ongoing work with the Pioneer Valley Food Security Advisory Committee and many other stakeholders.

No One Goes Hungry: Hunger Relief Strategies

SEEK

Inter-organizational Collaboration

30

Continue and expand ongoing communication and collaboration between hunger relief organizations, such as the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, with Buy Local food organizations, such as CISA, via the regional food system network in the Pioneer Valley, PVGrows.

PARTNERS:
Food Bank of W. Mass., CISA,
PV Grows, PVPC
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



SUPPORT

Emergency Food Systems Programs

31

Facilitate wider acceptance of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP-formerly food stamps), WIC coupons and other programs at farmers' markets and CSA farms to assist more people in accessing healthy food.

PARTNERS:
Hunger relief organizations,
state agencies,
farmers market organizers
CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



SEEK

Consumer Education

32

Continue to educate consumers about proper nutrition and food safety through community outreach, education and advocacy. Focus on healthy, local and culturally appropriate foods.

PARTNERS:
Hunger relief and food community
organizations, local food
policy councils

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



ACCESS

Information About Where to Buy Healthy Food

33

Address food access issues by creating "feedability guides" that connect consumers with healthy food retail locations and availability information.

PARTNERS:
Local food policy councils

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



SEEK**New Retail Outlets for Healthy Food**

34

Support, expand and replicate initiatives that increase the number or neighborhood retail outlets selling healthy food, such as the healthy bodega program in Springfield.

PARTNERS:
Local food policy councils

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

\$

INCREASE**Neighborhood Access to Fresh Food**

35

Work to bring full-line grocery stores with a full line of fresh produce and meats to neighborhoods that do not have one.

PARTNERS:
Community-based organizations, local food policy councils

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

\$

PROVIDE**Access to Sources of Healthy Food**

36

Provide free or reduced-fare bus passes to low-income riders for trips to garden plots, farmers' markets and other community food sources.

PARTNERS:
Community-based organizations, PVTa

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**PROVIDE****Training and Technical Assistance**

37

Provide ongoing technical assistance and training to community based organizations working to feed hungry people, such as volunteer recruitment/retention, management training, organizational development, strategic planning and fund-raising.

PARTNERS:
Hunger relief organizations, Community Foundations, Leadership Pioneer Valley

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

\$

EXPAND**Access to Healthy Food for Low-income Residents**

38

Expand the number of low-income Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) models to increase access to fresh food in low-income areas by improving access for seniors, increasing the use of SNAP for CSA membership payment, and similar efforts.

PARTNERS:
Hunger relief organizations and agencies, CISA

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

\$

PROVIDE**Zoning and Regulatory Assistance**

39

Work with member municipalities to assess how local zoning and other regulations may help or hinder residents' access to healthy food, and develop solutions to fix problems that are identified. This may include easing restrictions on vegetable gardens and livestock in residential districts, facilitating adoption of right to farm bylaws and similar actions.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, local planning officials

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**SUPPORT****Retail Best Practices for Healthy Food**

40

Support retail policies and practices, such as in-store displays requirements and signage that promote healthy food. Work to implement these at all levels of government and community, such as healthy locally grown snacks at public meetings.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities, Local Food Policy Councils, Community-based Organizations

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**ENCOURAGE****More Local Food Purchases by Schools and Other Institutional Meal Providers**

41

Support, incentivize and facilitate purchases of local food for lunches by schools, as well as elder care facilities, senior meals programs (i.e., Meals on Wheels). Includes developing contract requirements and incentives to increase private contractor purchases of local foods and services.

PARTNERS:
School boards and districts, senior centers, care facilities, CISA, MA Farm to School

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**ASSURE****Food Assistance Benefits are Fully Used**

42

Work to assure that all people eligible for SNAP, WIC and similar program benefits are enrolled in the program.

PARTNERS:
Hunger relief organizations, social service agencies

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**OVERCOME****Assumptions and Stereotypes**

43

Work to de-stigmatize poverty in general and the use of hunger assistance benefits. Provide information about the nutritional needs of low-income residents of the region and the public health benefits of a healthy population, especially to growing children.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, Hunger relief organizations, public officials

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



ASPIRE**To Produce 50% of Food Consumed in the Region**

44

Collaborate with organizations throughout the Commonwealth and within the Pioneer Valley to work toward the goal of producing 50% of the food that is consumed in the region.

PARTNERS:
CISA, PVPC, Food producers and distributors, MA Food Policy Councils

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**SHARE****Information About Food Production**

45

Create an online electronic platform for food-related data to enable food organizations to share existing data and describe future needs. This service could also provide training and education about food data collection and use, and technical assistance for farm business operators, food distributors and retailers.

PARTNERS:
CISA, Food Bank of W. MA., PVPC

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**PROMOTE****Local Food Businesses**

46

Support local policies and regulations that address food insecurity and promote local agriculture, such as "Right-to-Farm" bylaws, local agriculture commissions, and municipal laws to regulate fast food establishments.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, municipalities

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**Protect****Prime Agricultural Lands**

47

Continue incentives and programs to keep agricultural land in production. Support regulations that direct new development to urban and suburban infill areas with the existing infrastructure to support it. Use Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APRs) and other regulatory/policy means to preserve prime farmland and convert available land that may not currently be used as farmland to agricultural purposes. Work with land owners and land protection organizations to develop new, innovative strategies for protecting agricultural lands. Utilize local funds from Community Preservation Act (CPA) and transfer of development (TDR) rights to leverage and match state APR funds. Actively outreach to farmers to encourage APR applications. Produce a brochure about the benefits of the APR program.

PARTNERS:
Land owners, MA Dept of Agriculture, PVPC, municipalities

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



We Grow Our Own Food: Local Food Economy Strategies

OUR PLAN

CONNECT

Farmers With Land Owners

48

Connect land owners with farmers to facilitate agricultural production. Actively participate in Hampden County pilot project collaboration with the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project and its partners.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, MA DAR

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



ENCOURAGE

Urban Agriculture

49

Support urban agriculture, including livestock ordinances, GIS mapping of available parcels, and foster partnerships among property owners and businesses to develop and expand community gardens and commercial urban agriculture projects.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities, PVPC, MA DAR

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



GROW

School Gardens

50

Support on-site vegetable gardens at schools, day care facilities, adult care facilities and other similar entities.

PARTNERS:
School districts,
care facility operators

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



CREATE

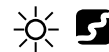
Renewable Energy and Efficiency

51

Support development of on-farm clean and renewable energy sources and systems. Help improve the efficiency of existing energy systems. Includes participation in Massachusetts Clean Energy Center municipal pilot program for community renewable energy development.

PARTNERS:
MA Farm Energy Program (MFEP),
PVPC, municipalities

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



GROW

Year-round Food Production

52

Facilitate and expand year-round food production capacity in the region, including hydroponic greenhouses.

PARTNERS:
Farmers, DAR, CISA

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



INVEST**Financial Resources in Local Food Businesses**

53

Provide flexible capital for innovative local farm and food businesses, particularly those to improve food system infrastructure.

PARTNERS:
Common Capitol, PV Grows,
Financial Institutions

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:
\$

INCREASE**Large-scale Composting Opportunities**

54

Develop new and expand existing large-scale composting of food waste generated by retail food stores, businesses, institutions. Support and/or establish waste source separation programs and hauling routes. Help strengthen the composting market with greater incentives (i.e., landfill tipping fees) to divert organic wastes to composting and develop stronger consumer demand for finished compost products.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, municipalities,
food businesses and institutional
meals providers

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:
\$  

CREATE**More Residential Composting**

55

Expand residential composting by encouraging sales of in-home and outdoor bins by municipalities and local businesses. Widely distribute easy-to-understand information about how to compost at home.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities, DEP

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:
 

CONNECT**Farmers and Institutional Meal Providers**

56

Help develop and expand the capacity of farmers to sell produce directly to institutional meal providers, such as colleges, universities, schools, hospitals, day-care, senior meals programs and nursing homes.

PARTNERS:
MA Farm to School, CISA, DAR, AFT

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:
\$ 

SCALE UP

Local Food Production

57

Implement recommendations from CISA food system infrastructure report, Scaling Up Local Food. Key steps include facilitating working relationships between meat producers and slaughter, processing and marketing outlets; improving the capacity of dairy processing in the region; establishing a temperature-controlled regionally shared root cellar facility; expanding capacity for local value-added processing, freezing and co-packing; logistical support for ordering; and grain processing.

PARTNERS:
CISA, state agencies, municipalities, food businesses, Common Capitol, PV Grows, MA Workforce Alliance

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



SUPPORT

Business Needs of Local Food Producers

58

Provide technical assistance and business development support to local farms and food businesses, including compliance with food safety requirements. This may include enterprise development, marketing and financial management. Initiatives could include creation and staffing of a Valley-focused agricultural business support center, and greater collaboration with new Greenfield Community College's Farm and Food Systems degree and certificate program. A designated municipal point person could serve as liaison between local farmers and these services.

PARTNERS:
CISA, financial institutions, municipalities, Common Capitol, PV Grows

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



CREATE

More Jobs Throughout the Local Food System

59

Work to fill gaps in all sectors of the local food system with local jobs, especially in the food production and waste/compost sectors. Provide education and training to increase the skills and capacities of food system workers through formal programs, such as the GCC Farm and Food Systems degree and certificate programs, as well as apprenticeships and internships at local farms and food businesses.

PARTNERS:
Community college academic and training programs, MA Workforce Alliance, Regional employment agencies, CISA

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



CROSS CUTTING STRATEGIES ICONS: The following icons are used in reference to issues and strategies related to other element plans of this report.



TRANSPORTATION



ENVIRONMENT

GREEN
INFRASTRUCTURE

LAND USE

ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENTCLIMATE
ACTION

HOUSING



FOOD SECURITY



BROWNFIELDS



Fresh Produce at a Farmer's Market



Cold Spring Common Development in Belchertown
Photo: Dietz & Co. Architects



04

Regional Housing Plan

Expanding housing choice for all.
Creating communities of opportunity.

The purpose of this Regional Housing Plan is to identify opportunities related to housing market stability, housing affordability and fair access to housing in the Pioneer Valley in order to create a region in which all residents are able to choose housing that is affordable and appropriate to their needs. The plan is intended to assist municipal officials, state government, and fair housing associations in creating a sustainable region that empowers our urban, suburban, and rural places.

"My community is sustainable when economic development investments are leveraged to revitalize neighborhoods and address the region's housing needs."

*Charles Rucks
Springfield MA*



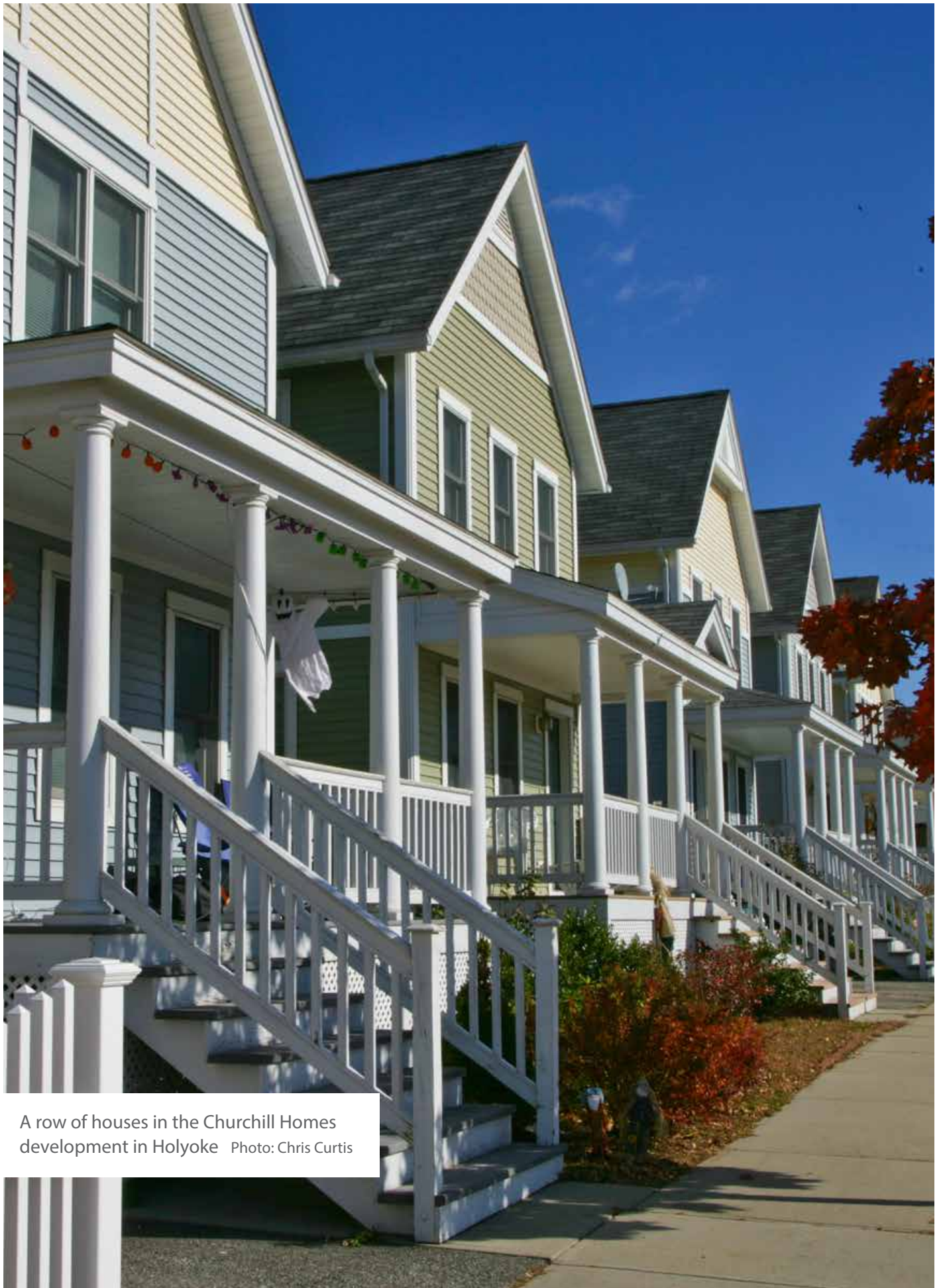
Note: This is the executive summary of our plan. To obtain or view a copy of the full plan, visit pvpc.org.

OUR GOALS

- **Enhance housing choice** by enabling a full range of housing opportunities that are affordable to households of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, abilities, and income ranges and that are integrated with our region's employment and transportation networks.
- **Transform economically distressed areas, which are often racially and ethnically segregated areas**, into communities of opportunity so all have access to quality jobs, schools, affordable housing, transportation, and cultural and physical amenities.
- **Promote fair housing opportunities** by ensuring equal and free access to housing regardless of race, religion, national origin, age, ancestry, military background or service, sex, sexual preference, marital status, familial status, disability, blindness, deafness, or the need of a service dog.
- **Integrate housing investments** in a manner that empowers our urban, suburban, and rural places to undertake the interdependent challenges of: 1) economic competitiveness and revitalization; 2) social equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity; 3) energy use and climate change; and 4) public health and environmental impact.
- **Encourage collaboration** by developing multi-jurisdictional planning efforts that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments to direct long-term development, reinvestment, and address issues of regional significance.



Granby Heights—a new Granby Housing Authority development.
Source: PVPC



A row of houses in the Churchill Homes development in Holyoke Photo: Chris Curtis



Weak housing market in our central cities challenges revitalization.



286 Main St/11 Spring St, Holyoke.
This vacant building includes 15 units
and has been on the market for over a
decade at \$600,000.
Source: City of Holyoke

The main revitalization challenge facing our cities is a weak housing market. Weak demand for homes, created chiefly by concerns over crime and safety and the quality of public education, has led to low property values and high vacancies. Low property values create a disincentive for homeowners and landlords to make capital or maintenance improvements to their properties because the cost of these improvements can be greater than the overall value of the property or does not increase the value of the property. Divestment from low property values has led to vacant or deteriorating housing, which creates neighborhood blight and makes for unsafe living conditions.



Silvio O. Conte corner - 345 Dwight
Street, Holyoke. Located across from
the future passenger rail platform in
Depot Square, this vacant building
originally had retail on the first floor
with hotel/boarding rooms above.
Source: City of Holyoke

The depressed housing market also makes it financially difficult to develop new housing on infill lots or within existing mill and commercial buildings or renovate existing multi-unit residential buildings for households that would pay market rent. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are young professionals, empty-nesters, or two person households who desire to rent apartments or buy condominiums in our cities but are unable to find housing that suits their tastes in areas they find safe and that have ready access to goods and services. Housing developers point to the problem that current market rents are typically insufficient to support the cost of new construction or significant rehabilitation of multi-unit housing. The limited state or federal public subsidies that exist to help developers fill the financing gap require income-restricted housing as a condition of receipt of these funds. These restrictions are good practice in many instances but can also serve as one more barrier to attracting an economically diverse population to urban neighborhoods and to increasing home-ownership rates.

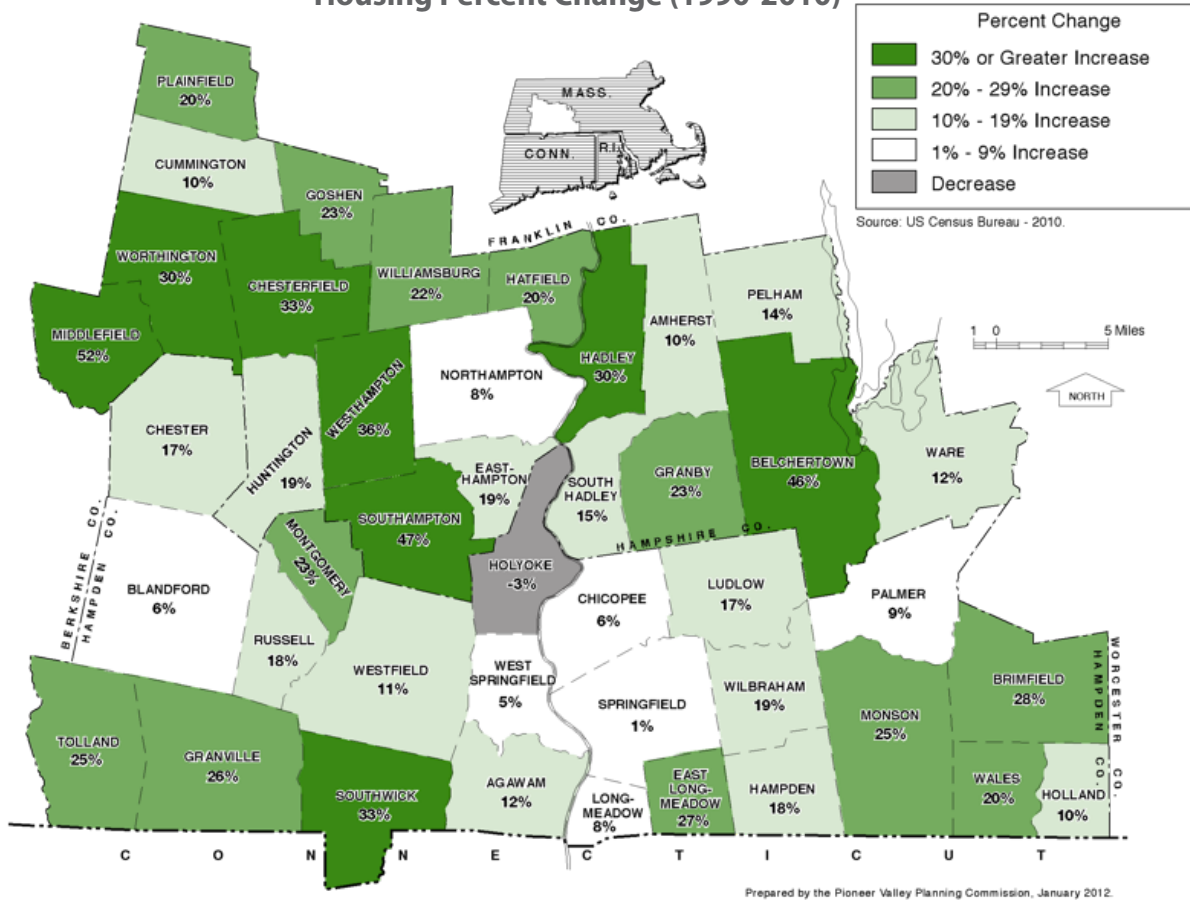


A variety of household types live in our region.

The region continues to have a variety of household types in terms of size, age, income, and ability, which results in the need for a variety of housing options. Region-wide, we are seeing much smaller households than in decades past as more people choose to live alone, have no children or have fewer children. Consistent with national trends, over 60 percent of all households in the region consist of one or two person households. Our rural communities, in particular, have seen a great decrease in families with children and an increase of older, childless households.

It is anticipated that the general trend toward smaller households may create new demands for smaller, more efficient housing options over larger single family homes. Many of our cities and towns are working toward improving the overall quality of life in their downtowns and neighborhoods to capture this potential demand. At the same time, there remains a need, particularly in communities outside of the central cities, for rental units with three or more bedrooms to accommodate families with children.

Housing Percent Change (1990-2010)



Most housing unit production occurred outside of the region's major cities and urbanized areas.

Most housing unit production occurred outside of the region's more urbanized areas.

Our fastest growing communities include many of our small towns as well as a few of our rural and suburban communities. Many of the communities that saw an increase in the number of housing units also saw negative or minimal population growth. This phenomenon reflects local, regional and national trends towards smaller household sizes.

Our small towns and suburban communities have become attractive to those seeking easy to moderate commuting distance from the region's major job centers and desiring "rural" character. Anecdotally, our rural communities have become attractive to empty-nesters and retirees as well as to people who can afford and do not mind long-distance commuting or who telecommute.

Housing production in our fastest growing communities has almost exclusively been single-family homes, which is a reflection of what is allowed to be constructed under municipal zoning in these communities. Housing production outside of the region's more urbanized areas also occurred despite the surplus of vacant homes in our central cities.



Municipal zoning restricts housing choice and mobility in the region.

Laurel Road Condominiums in Haydenville is an example of a “higher” density residential development in a rural community. Source: PVPC

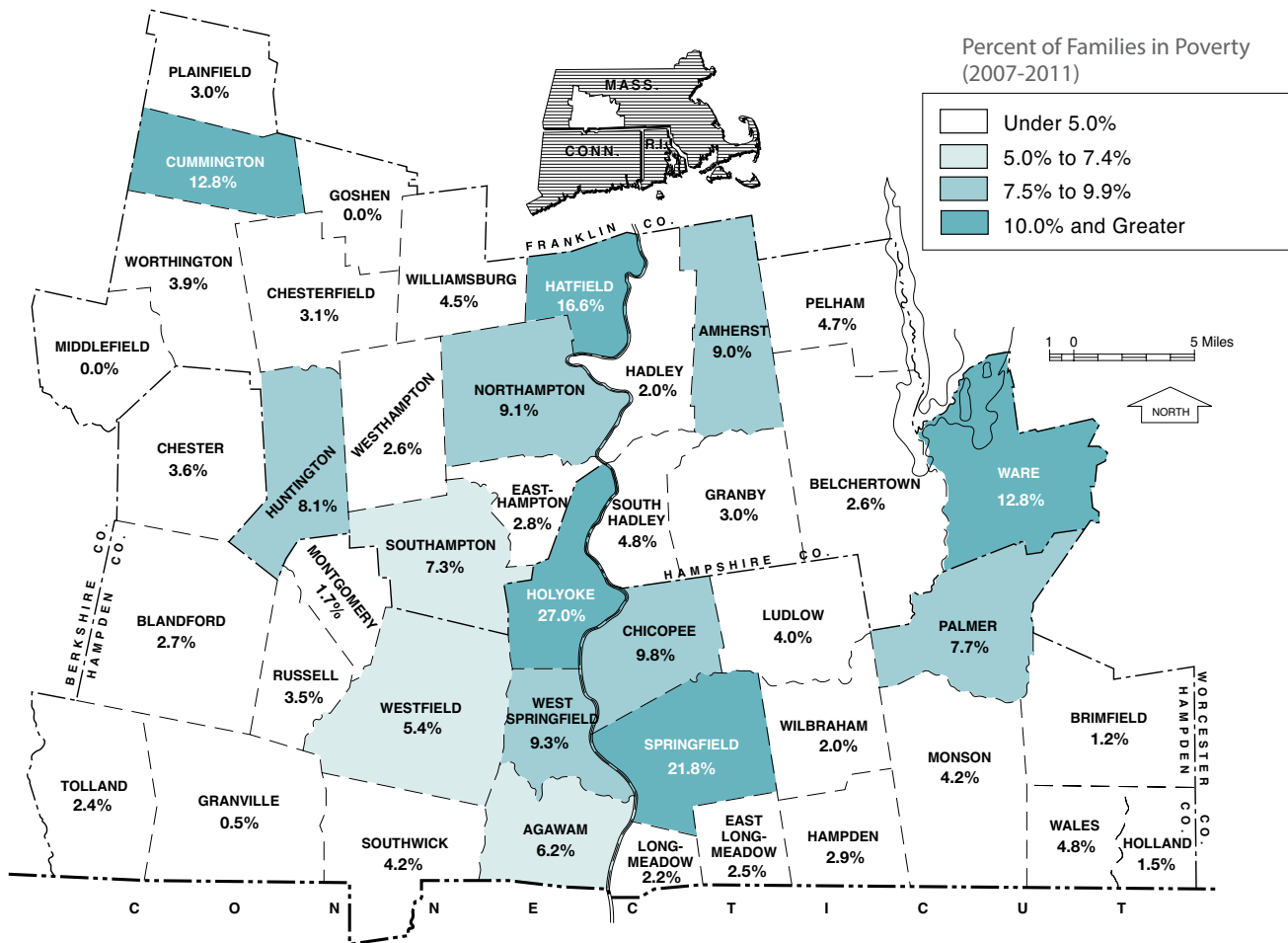
Communities are legitimately concerned about maintaining community character, protecting natural resources and keeping up with demand for municipal services. However, housing choice and mobility in our region is limited by the fact that:

- 19 of our communities do not allow for multi-family housing,
- 12 of our sewered communities require minimum lot sizes greater than $\frac{1}{4}$ acre, and
- 14 of our communities require minimum lot sizes of one acre or more.

Zoning that promotes large-lot single family homes favors larger households and higher-income households to the disadvantage of all other households in the region. Multi-family housing, two-family housing, and smaller single family homes on smaller lots tend to be more affordable to a wider range of households than larger single family homes on large lots.

In general, communities with public water, public sewer, good soils and flat topography can more easily accommodate residential development at higher densities than those communities that lack these characteristics. Municipalities without public water and public sewer can still allow multi-family housing or smaller lot sizes. State building, health, and environmental regulations offer minimum standards—regulations for permeable soils, adequate depth to groundwater, setbacks to property lines, drinking water wells and wetlands, and bedrooms per acre—that municipalities can use as a starting point for permitting more housing choices. There are also a number of technological opportunities to address these challenges such as shared systems (multiple homes on one septic system), alternative septic systems, and small private wastewater treatment plants.

Families in Poverty (2007-2011)



A high percentage of families in poverty is one indicator of an economically distressed area.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007-11 5-Year Estimates

Note: This data is derived from a survey of a sample of the population and there are margins of error associated with it. Margins of error can be found on the U.S. Census Bureau's website.

Our economically distressed areas need expanded opportunities.

Many of our residents live in racially, ethnically, and economically segregated areas in the Pioneer Valley—both rural and urban—that lack access to quality jobs, schools, affordable housing, transportation, and cultural and physical amenities. The “Families in Poverty” map highlights the communities with the highest instances of economic insecurity in our region. In areas or neighborhoods within these communities, housing quality can be distressed and substandard. There is a regional need to transform these areas into communities of opportunity through good schools, healthy and safe environments, decent housing, and access to financially stable employment to reduce social disparities and allow all residents to succeed, thrive and excel in society.



The former Church Street School in Ware was redeveloped into a barrier free senior housing project with 29 units. All are single-story apartments and are accessible by elevator.

Source: HAPHousing, Inc.

There is a shortage of accessible and barrier-free housing throughout the region.

There is a great shortage of housing units that are accessible to people with physical disabilities including mobility impairments, sight impairments, hearing impairments, environmental sensitivities and other disabilities. Approximately 43,000 residents age 18 to 64 (10 percent of all residents age 18 to 64) and 30,000 elderly residents in the region (40 percent of all elderly) had one or more disabilities in comparison to the estimated 330 accessible/adaptable units and 270 ground floor /elevator accessible units in our region. Accessible and barrier free housing enables people with physical disabilities to live independently in the community. The number of people with physical disabilities within the region suggests the need for more concerted efforts to integrate accessible housing and housing with supportive services into our planning for market-rate and affordable housing development.



Home with barrier free entry at Tree House Development in Easthampton.

Source: PVPC

The region has too many households that pay more than they should to own or rent a home. An indicator of this problem is the fact that more than 30 percent of homeowners and 50 percent of renters in the Pioneer Valley spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing related costs, which means they are “cost-burdened” and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care as well as saving for their future. Bolstering the supply of housing that is affordable to all income levels is critical to building and retaining talent for the innovation economy and improving the region’s overall economic competitiveness.

Housing costs exceed ability to pay for many households.

A variety of housing cost challenges exist in our region depending on the household’s level of income. For our middle-income households, the problem is that household incomes have not kept pace with increased housing costs, making it difficult for some families to enter the homeownership market. Communities that currently have housing that is affordable to middle income families should consider strategies to preserve this supply.

For our low-income households, homeownership is generally out of reach or unsustainable with today’s lending market. Rents can be unaffordable to the working poor, especially for those households without a housing subsidy. Even households with housing subsidies face challenges finding decent, safe, and affordable housing. The high cost of rent in the greater Amherst-Northampton area rental market has pushed lower income households into lower-cost communities such as Holyoke, Chicopee, and Springfield. In turn, this perpetuates the concentration of lower-income households in these communities.

For our very low-income households—those who make less than \$20,000—finding a decent, safe and affordable place to live is most challenging. Households without subsidies are either spending significantly more than 30 percent of their income on rent, living in substandard housing, or are situationally homeless and may be living with a friend or relative. In general, the demand for income-restricted housing (also known as “affordable” or “subsidized” housing) in the region is greater than the supply. See Chapter Three of the Regional Housing Plan for more information on this complex topic.

Our upper-income households have the most housing choices and can to afford to live in our region’s most expensive communities. Anecdotal evidence suggests a need for more high-end housing—homeownership and rentals—to recruit and retain executive-level professionals.



No community in the region is immune from homelessness.

Paradise Pond in Northampton is a 12-unit apartment development, four units of which are reserved for people who have been homeless or have a disabled family member.

Source: PVPC

Homelessness affects every community in the Pioneer Valley. The causes of homelessness are complex, including both societal factors—such as housing costs that have outpaced income growth, the loss of manufacturing jobs, and housing discrimination—and individual factors—such as domestic violence, divorce, chronic illness, and substance abuse. While our image of homelessness is often that of chronically homeless people, the reality is that most people who experience homelessness have a single episode of homelessness and then recover to regain housing stability. The number of households that experience this type of housing crisis is very high—estimated to be over 2,000 households per year in our region.

The region's plan to end homelessness, "All Roads Lead Home: A Regional Plan to End Homelessness", and the work of the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness provides a regional approach to homelessness that is proactive and committed to solving this difficult problem. In addition, the City of Springfield has been implementing its own 10-Year Plan to End Long-Term Homelessness, "Homes Within Reach." The purpose of all these efforts is to reduce chronic homelessness, reduce street homelessness, and reduce the need for emergency shelter for individuals. They emphasize permanent supportive housing, provided through what is known as a "Housing First" approach, as a better response to homelessness than emergency shelter.



*This historic home in Springfield's Old Hill neighborhood was ready to be torn down. **HAPHousing**, one of the region's community development corporations, with public and private support renovated it into an attractive, owner-occupied, energy-efficient home as part of a strategy to revitalize this neighborhood and preserve its historic character.*

*Source: **HAPHousing***

Older homes can be costly to update, maintain, and adapt.

Well-maintained older homes are an important part of a community's local history and help preserve historic character; however, older houses can be costly to maintain due to the increased need for maintenance and repairs and outdated heating, cooling, and insulation systems that can result in higher associated utility costs. Since the cost to rehabilitate and achieve code compliance in older houses can be extremely high, some landlords and homeowners cannot afford to make these improvements or, in the case of our weak market areas, some have not invested in their properties because low home values do not justify the cost of capital or maintenance improvements. Older homes can also be expensive to retrofit for people with mobility impairments.

Many older homes may still contain lead-based paint, which can create personal health risks, particularly in children. Massachusetts' lead paint law requires owners of properties built before 1978 to abate any property in which a child under the age of six resides in accordance with the state's lead paint requirement. Some landlords in the region have tried to avoid renting to families with young children because of the presence – or the perceived presence – of lead paint in their units and the associated expense of lead abatement and disposal, even though doing so is prohibited by law. This has the effect of limiting the supply and availability of housing, especially for families with young children.

RESOURCES

Resources for Housing Discrimination:

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (617) 994-6000
Lead Paint Removal:
Department of Public Health Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
 (617) 624-5757; Toll Free: (800) 532-9971

Face-to-Face Mediation:
 For the program in your area call: Attorney General's
 Consumer Hotline 617-727-8400; www.mass.gov/ago
Housing Consumer Education Center:
 (800) 224-5124 www.masshousinginfo.org

To Obtain Legal Assistance:
 Massachusetts Bar Association Lawyer Referral Program
 (617) 654-0400; Toll Free in MA: (800) 392-6184

Resources for Taking Action Against Discrimination:

John Fisher, HAP Housing Fair Housing Counselor, 413.233.1609

Massachusetts Fair Housing Center, 413.539.9796

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination

Springfield Office 413.739.2145

HUD Online: www.hud.gov/complaints/housediscrim.cfm

Hotline: 800.669.9777, Toll-free: 800.827.5005

Hearing impaired, call TTY 800.927.9275

E-mail: theo_webmanager@hud.gov

Resources for Keeping Your Home:

Springfield No One Leaves / Nadir Se Mude

<http://www.springfieldnooneleaves.org/>

CHAPA http://www.chapa.org/housing-policy/foreclosure_browse

Homeownership Preservation Foundation

<http://www.995hope.org/understanding-foreclosure/>

Massachusetts Consumer Affairs Foreclosure Resources:

<http://www.mass.gov/ocabr/consumer/housing/foreclosure-resources/>

The Homeowner's HOPE™ Hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week,

365 days a year, in English and 170 other languages: 888-995-HOPE

Rental Help:

HUD

<http://www.hud.gov/local/index.cfm?state=ma&topic=renting>

Homeownership: <http://www.hud.gov/local/index.cfm?state=ma&topic=homeownership>

Avoid Foreclosure: <http://www.hud.gov/local/ma/homeownership/foreclosure.cfm>

Mass.gov

<http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/dhcd/how-to-obtain-housing-assistance.html>

MassHousing <https://www.masshousing.com>

Massachusetts Housing Consumer Education Centers

<http://www.masshousinginfo.org/>

Mass Legal Help <http://www.masslegalhelp.org/housing>

MassResource.org

<http://www.massresources.org/foreclosure-prevention-links.html>

EXPAND
HOUSING
OPPORTUNITIES

RESOURCE GUIDE

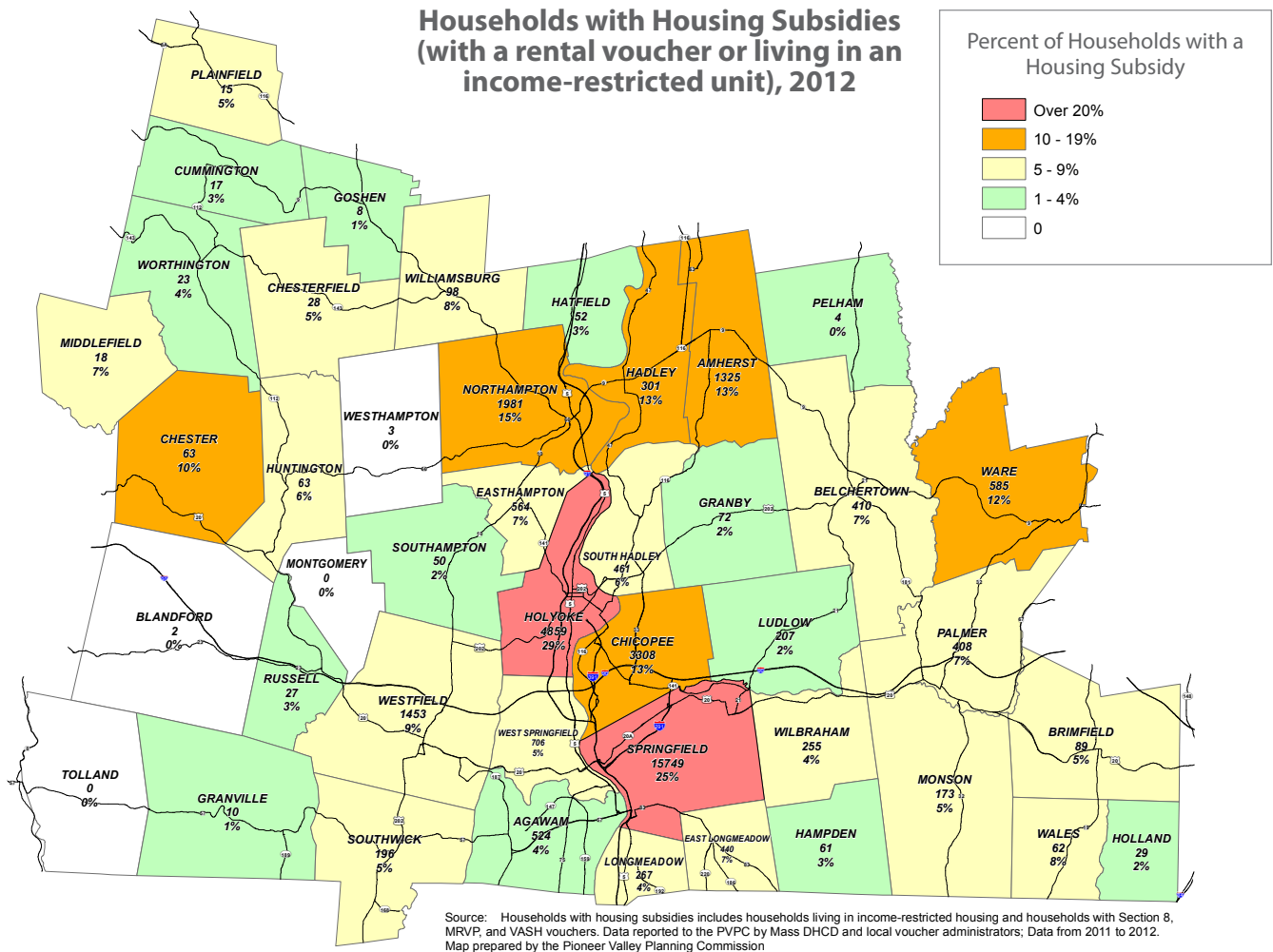


Resource guides created after community dialogues. These guide help people take action to expand housing opportunities in their region.

Discriminatory housing practices limit housing choice and equal opportunity.

Discrimination, in addition to the structural issues such as economic insecurity and poverty, can hinder mobility and residents' abilities to obtain stable housing situations, especially for persons of color. Despite the existence of state and federal laws that protect specific categories of people from housing discrimination, the following are prevalent forms of housing discrimination in our region:

- Predatory lending, redlining and other housing discriminatory practices.
- Active steering towards certain areas of a community and/or the region based on race/ethnicity, economic characteristics, and familial status.
- Rental discrimination against families with minor children.
- Rental discrimination against families with young children due to the presence or potential presence of lead-based hazards.
- Linguistic profiling in both the rental and homeownership markets, especially against persons of Latino origin.
- Landlords who refuse to make reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities.
- Landlords who refuse to accept housing subsidies as a source of rental payment such as Section 8 housing vouchers.



Affordable housing primarily exists in the region's core cities. There is significantly less affordable housing in suburban/rural communities that have seen the majority of new housing unit production.

An inadequate supply of income-restricted affordable housing units outside of our central cities.

The region has a limited supply of income-restricted affordable housing—public and private—outside of our central cities, which reduces housing choices and concentrates poverty. Besides our three central cities, only Amherst, Hadley, and Northampton have surpassed the 10 percent income-restricted affordable housing goal set by M.G.L. Chapter 40B—the Comprehensive Permit Act. Housing production of new income-restricted units has not kept up with demand for these units nor with the loss of existing income-restricted units due to their term of affordability expiring. In addition, the lack of affordable rental housing outside of the region's central cities limits rental options for housing choice rental voucher holders. All of these factors serve to reduce housing choices and concentrate poverty in cities such as Springfield, Holyoke and Chicopee.



The challenges of affordable housing development in a “higher opportunity” community: Butternut Farm in Amherst.

A renovated farm house is part of the Butternut Farm housing project development in Amherst.
Source: **HAPHousing**

Amherst is one of the most expensive communities in the region to buy or rent a home. Although the town has more than 10 percent of its share of income-restricted affordable housing, there was and continues to be a significant need for affordable housing units, particularly for people who may work in town but cannot afford to live there. **HAPHousing** proposed a 26-unit housing development near Hampshire College in the early 2000s to provide more housing options in the community.

This development took almost 10 years to complete because of neighborhood opposition and the complexity of assembling funding for new affordable housing projects. This housing project received a Comprehensive Permit (Chapter 40B) from the Amherst Zoning Board of Appeals in the early 2000s, but local neighbors then filed a series of legal challenges to prevent its construction. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ultimately affirmed a Land Court ruling that the Amherst Zoning Board of Appeals did not exceed its authority when it granted a Comprehensive Permit for affordable housing. During the period of these legal challenges, the project lost its initial investors as a result of the economic downturn. **HAPHousing** was finally able to assemble financing for this project from a multitude of public and private entities and the project broke ground in 2010.

Today, Butternut Farm is a 26-unit development that includes one, two, and three-bedroom apartments within a restored farmhouse and three new townhouse-style buildings on a total of four acres of land. The facility also includes an indoor public area with a kitchen, children’s play area, basketball court, and laundry area. To be eligible to live in the development, tenants must earn 60 percent or less of the area median income.

The full Regional Housing Plan recommends 55 strategies to initiate, maintain or improve market conditions; local, regional, state and federal policy; and the delivery of housing services to enable people to access the housing that they desire. The 55 recommended strategies are framed around the following 13 organizing objectives:

- Promoting Regional Action
- Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing
- Supporting Revitalization and Stabilization Efforts of Our Central Cities
- Addressing Vacant, Abandoned or Foreclosed Properties
- Maintaining Quality Housing
- Increasing Homeownership Opportunities
- Supporting Public Housing and Tenant Services
- Increasing and Preserving the Supply of Private Income-Restricted Housing Outside of the Central Cities
- Ending Homelessness
- Creating Elderly Housing Opportunities
- Producing and Integrating Accessible Housing
- Enabling More Housing Choices Outside of Central Cities Through Regulatory Action
- Strengthening Local and Regional Housing Program Capacity

Our recommended strategies can take a variety of forms, from the sharing of ideas and best practices to the full sharing of housing services, to policy changes enacted at the local, state, or federal level. Many of the communities in the region are already pursuing these strategies and have demonstrated a long-standing commitment to provide housing choices for a diverse population.

For some communities in the region, the strategies presented here may be new ideas or may provide goals around which a future community consensus could be reached. The following pages highlight a selection of the Regional Housing Plan's strategies. For more details about any of the strategies listed below or to view all 55 strategies, please see the full Regional Housing Plan.

ENCOURAGE**Employer Assisted Housing Programs**

60

Meet with area employers to understand their employment needs and propose strategies that employers can use to invest in workforce housing solutions. These strategies may include public support of a new housing development, providing on-site home buyer education classes, down payment assistance, loan guarantees, and in some cases, rental assistance or new housing development.

PARTNERS:
Municipal staff, PVPC

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**USE****M.G.L. Chapter 40B, M.G.L. Chapter 40R, and Compact Neighborhoods Program to Create New Income-Restricted Housing**

61

Municipal officials and staff can utilize three state programs —M.G.L. Chapter 40B, M.G.L. Chapter 40R and Compact Neighborhoods—to locally initiate income-restricted housing development projects in areas they self-identify for such development. Municipalities could use more information on how to plan and produce under these three programs.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, DHCD, Municipal officials and boards, CPTC

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**PLAN****Regionally for New Senior Housing**

62

Although each city and town in the region might prefer to provide senior housing for its residents within its borders, this may not be financially possible. Federal funding for senior housing is very competitive and state resources have been very limited. In recognition of limited resources new senior housing should be planned to serve a number of communities in a sub-regional area.

PARTNERS:
Municipal officials, Councils on Aging, PVPC

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**ENCOURAGE****“Over 55” Senior Housing to Have Universal Design, Adaptable or Accessible Features**

63

Municipalities that allow “over 55” developments as a residential use may want to consider creating incentives or mandating that all or a high percentage of units in these developments include universal design, accessible, and/or other adaptable features.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities, PVPC

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**FORM****A Shared Housing Office**

64

It may not be feasible for smaller communities to have their own staff with expertise in affordable housing, but a model for shared staff by using inter-governmental agreements may be a viable means of building local capacity of the smaller communities in the region. This strategy may work for some of the sub-regional areas within the larger region.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities, PVPC

Selected Municipal Strategies

OUR PLAN

ENCOURAGE

Zoning that Allows for Multifamily Housing

65

Zoning that allows multifamily attached dwellings, either townhouse-style condominiums or apartments, can increase the supply of housing affordable to a wider range of households. Municipalities can amend local zoning to allow multifamily housing by-right or by special permit. Municipalities also need more technical assistance on how to plan for multifamily housing.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities, PVPC, DHCD

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



APPOINT

A Local Housing Committee

66

A municipally-appointed committee for housing is a first step in addressing local housing concerns. This committee studies community needs, recommends appropriate actions, and advocates for action.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities

FORM

A Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (MAHT)

67

The formation of a MAHT under M.G.L. c. 44 sec. 55C, allows local governments greater flexibility in managing funds and engaging in real estate transactions for affordable housing purposes. A MAHT can receive CPA funds as well as funds from other sources such as private and public donations and use them to implement affordable housing projects or programs.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities, MHP

DEVELOP

A Local Housing Plan

68

Develop a local housing plan, drawing on findings of the Regional Housing Plan, to lay out specific approaches for meeting local and regional needs and/or as a guide for spending CPA housing funds.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities, PVPC

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



STRENGTHEN

Code Enforcement Activities

69

Municipal enforcement of building codes, health and safety codes and other local regulations is essential to address issues of overcrowding, tenant safety and neighborhood stability. Local code enforcement could be strengthened by licensing and inspection programs, regionalization of inspection services for smaller municipalities, and/or coordinated technical assistance on legalities and other issues from DHCD, DPH, DOR, and AGO.

PARTNERS:
Municipalities, PVPC, DHCD, DPH,
DOR, and AGO

SUPPORT**Efforts of Local Housing Authorities to Share Ideas, Programs, and Staff**

70

The executive directors of the local housing authorities (LHA's) in all four counties of western Massachusetts meet regularly to share ideas and best practices about operations and needs. The LHA'S should be encouraged to examine the potential for combined operations for programs, maintenance, and staffing.

PARTNERS:
Municipal officials, LHA's, PVPC

ENSURE**Compliance with Existing Accessibility Requirements**

71

Local building inspectors can have a tremendous effect on making sure existing accessibility requirements are being met when new housing units are created or when housing is modified. Code enforcement staff as well as landlords may need training in laws and practices related to accessibility.

PARTNERS:
Municipal staff, MA Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), Landlords, LHA's and housing providers

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**DISTRIBUTE****Funding for Housing Rehabilitation & Modification Loan Programs at the Regional Level**

72

DHCD should consider making CDBG funds available to income eligible owners and investors with income eligible tenants by distributing funding at the regional level instead of making individual communities compete for limited funds, which leaves homeowners or tenants in the unfunded communities without potential assistance.

PARTNERS:
DHCD

FUND**Maintenance and Capital Repairs in Order to Bring Empty but Inhabitable Housing Units Back Online**

73

The DHCD formula funding program has improved predictability for capital improvement planning and funding for housing authorities. However, local housing authorities still need additional funding to make a dent in the backlog of deferred maintenance and capital improvements at housing authority properties that are keeping many units offline.

PARTNERS:
DHCD, HUD

DEVELOP**A More Robust Program for Mobility Counseling for Housing Choice Voucher Holders**

74

Landlords who illegally refuse to accept housing choice vouchers or rent based on a person's language prevents residents from fully maximizing their location options under the Section 8 and Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP). Residents should receive counseling on their tenancy rights under state and federal law.

PARTNERS:
HUD, DHCD, LHA commissioners

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



Selected DHCD (MA) & HUD (U.S.) Strategies

OUR PLAN

CREATE

Smaller Fair Market Rent Areas that More Accurately Reflect Local Market Conditions

75

The Springfield MSA Fair Market Rent (FMR) area includes all 43 communities in the region and, for this reason, does not reflect the asking rents within our strong and weak housing market areas in the region. This hinders the 'choice' that the housing vouchers were designed to promote. Two or more FMR areas would better serve the goals of the Section 8 program.

PARTNERS:
HUD

SET ASIDE

Funding for Smaller-Scale Income-Restricted Affordable Developments

76

The suburban, exurban and rural communities would be more likely to produce affordable housing if DHCD and HUD made funding specifically available for smaller projects. In the past, larger developments have had an advantage when competing for state funding.

PARTNERS:
DHCD, HUD

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

FUND AND COORDINATE

Rapid Rehousing and Prevention Programs

78

Our region has developed effective and efficient rapid rehousing programs over the past several years, and we must continue to ensure that homelessness funding is directed toward these programs.

PARTNERS:
DHCD, Western Mass Network to End Homelessness Municipal, Foundation & Faith-Based Communities, PVPC, CoCs

SUPPORT AND FINANCE

The Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness

79

The Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness has played a key role in coordinating housing and services; supporting prevention, diversion and rapid re-housing efforts; and collecting data on the homeless population for the region. The original funding for this Network is no longer available, but the need for this collaborative approach remains critical.

PARTNERS:
DHCD, Municipal, Foundation & Faith-Based Communities

FUND

Programs That Aim to Attract Middle-to-Upper-Income Households to Targeted Areas

80

Almost all public funds made available from DHCD or HUD for neighborhood revitalization requires income-restricted housing as a condition of receipt of these funds. In many instances, this may be good practice, but in our cities it serves as one more barrier to attracting an economically diverse population to urban neighborhoods and to increasing home-ownership rates.

PARTNERS:
DHCD/HUD

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

\$

ENHANCE**Available Technical Assistance**

81

PVPC will coordinate or offer more technical assistance in the form of workshops, trainings, publications and direct assistance on a wide range of housing issues, from context sensitive design to housing development on public land that can assist municipalities in carrying out their housing agenda.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, State/DHCD

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**LEVERAGE****Major Public and Private Investments to Create Market-Rate Housing Opportunities**

82

Municipal officials can work to leverage market-rate housing and other neighborhood improvements from major public and private investment such as investments in commuter rail and high speed rail, upgrades to our medical centers, and funding for brownfield redevelopments.

PARTNERS:
Develop Springfield, Mass Development, PVPC, elected officials of cities and towns

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**RESEARCH****And Implement as Appropriate – Various Tax, Incentive, and Financing Strategies to Revitalize Housing Markets**

83

Research various tax mechanisms such as the Land Value Tax, Neighborhood Improvement Zone and Tax Increment Financing in order to determine which would be an appropriate option for Massachusetts to revitalize its more urbanized areas.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, Plan for Progress, Pioneer Institute, CHAPA, Lincoln Land Institute

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**DISCUSS****Development Obstacles and Opportunities of Larger-Scale Housing Projects and Work Toward Solutions**

84

Hold annual, semi-annual, or quarterly meetings during which developers, builders, real estate professionals and municipal officials discuss development challenges and opportunities.

PARTNERS:
PVPC, RHC, PFP

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:

**CONTINUE****The Regional Housing Committee**

85

The establishment of an on-going group to continue the work begun with this Regional Housing Plan and to assist in the implementation phase to advance plan goals and improve communication and coordination across the region.

PARTNERS:
RHC, PVPC

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES:



Other Selected Strategies

REVISE

Lead Paint Abatement Program Requirements and Conduct Outreach on Existing Program Requirements

86

Landlords who illegally refuse to rent to a family with children based on the presence or perceived presence of lead paint in the home is a leading form of housing discrimination in the region. Education should be required for landlords and housing providers about abatement requirements under Massachusetts law. As there has been no significant revision of state lead paint regulations since 1993, it might be useful to reevaluate certain aspects of these regulations in light of recent studies and the experience of neighboring states.

PARTNERS:
HAPHousing, MFHC, DPH, DHCD,
HUD

SUPPORT

Advocacy, Monitoring, Reporting and Enforcement of Fair Housing Laws

87

Strong enforcement of fair housing laws is a deterrent to abuse and legal violations. Increased funding to the Mass Fair Housing Center and Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination would enhance existing efforts.

PARTNERS:
MCAD, DHCD, MFHC, HUD

SUPPORT

Mortgage/Down Payment Assistance Programs for First-Time Homebuyers

88

Continue financial support for programs that assist first time homebuyers with mortgage assistance and below market mortgage products. Educate CPA communities about use of CPA funds for down payment or closing cost assistance programs.

PARTNERS:
MassHousing, MHP, PVPC

STRENGTHEN

Education to Landlords, Tenants, Banking and Lending Institutions, and General Public about Fair Housing Laws

89

The lack of knowledge of fair housing laws can often lead to illegal discrimination. Property owners and managers need to be informed of fair housing laws and know that enforcement mechanisms are in place. Renters and homebuyers should also be aware of their fair housing rights and responsibilities.

PARTNERS:
MCAD, DHCD, HAPHousing,
MFHC, HUD

CROSS CUTTING STRATEGIES ICONS: The following icons are used in reference to issues and strategies related to other element plans of this report.



TRANSPORTATION



LAND USE



HOUSING



ENVIRONMENT

ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

FOOD SECURITY

GREEN
INFRASTRUCTURECLIMATE
ACTION

BROWNFIELDS



Cold Spring Common Development in Belchertown has 14 units in seven buildings for a residential density of approximately 4 units an acre.

Source: ©Margot P. Cheel / Damianosphotography.com



Connecticut River with the Mount
Holyoke Range in the background

Photo: Chris Curtis