

The Pioneer Valley

# plan for **progress**

ECONOMIC STRATEGIES FOR THE REGION

Designer:

van Schouwen Associates, LLC  
Longmeadow, MA

**THE PIONEER VALLEY  
PLAN FOR PROGRESS**

**ECONOMIC STRATEGIES FOR THE REGION**

**September 2004**



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The Plan for Progress is made possible in large part by a grant from the  
U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

**Additional support came from the following:**

- Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield
- Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce
- Andrew M. Scibelli Enterprise Center, Springfield Technical Community College
- Baystate Health System
- Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts
- Frank Stanley Beveridge Foundation
- Franklin County Chamber of Commerce
- Holyoke Community College
- Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation
- Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company
- Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame
- Northampton Area Chamber of Commerce
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- Pioneer Valley Regional Competitiveness Council
- Smith College
- Western Massachusetts Electric Company
- Western Massachusetts Small Business Development Center
- Western New England College
- WGBY

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**T**he 2004 Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress maps out a vision for success based on an understanding of the region's assets and opportunities, as well as past accomplishments, ongoing initiatives of the 1994 Plan for Progress, and current challenges.

The 1994 Plan was created as a blueprint for growth and development of the regional economy, but this new Plan for Progress reflects a broader concept of regional development—one that capitalizes on the dynamic interaction of people, place, and work. This Plan incorporates the opinions, ideas, and perspectives of countless people within the Pioneer Valley region, in the belief that those who live, work, and play here are knowledgeable about existing conditions, and aware of subtle changes at local levels that can affect the region's realization of its potential for sustained growth and economic prosperity.

The 2004 Plan for Progress envisions a strong, vibrant regional economy that fosters sustainability, prosperity, and collaboration—and that attracts national recognition. This vision is expressed through seven cross-cutting themes that form the guiding principles of the Plan for Progress. In practice, thirteen strategic goals guide the implementation of these principles, and present tangible action steps for realizing the vision.

In the course of researching and writing the 2004 Plan for Progress, several themes emerged as crucial to maintaining and supporting sound regional economic development strategies. These themes do not have specific action steps associated with them, but are tied to benchmarks — questions that can be answered with data in order to discern positive or negative trends. The seven cross-cutting themes contained in this plan are:

**Cross-border collaboration** — partnering with the greater Hartford region to promote a globally competitive cross-border regional economic identity;

**Diversity** — appreciating and encouraging diversity throughout our region;

**Education** — taking advantage of the region's significant higher education assets and creating cross-sector partnerships to improve on weaknesses;

**Industry clusters** — supporting those industries that show great promise (education and knowledge creation, health care, hospitality and tourism, life sciences, medical devices and pharmaceuticals, and plastics) and sustaining those that already exist (agriculture and organic farming; building fixtures, equipment, and services; financial services; metal manufacturing and production technology; and printing and publishing);

**Sustainability** — promoting responsible land development patterns that are economically sound and considerate of social and environmental needs;

**Technology** – leveraging technology to improve socio-economic outcomes across the region and building the business community’s technological capacity;

**Urban investment** – promoting economic growth and prosperity in the region’s urban central cities and a high quality of life for their residents.

Each of the thirteen strategic goals that make up the core of the Plan relates to one or several of these overarching themes, and includes steps that identify key players to implement the actions. Some strategic goals carry on work that started with the 1994 Plan for Progress, while others are brand new initiatives that have only become the concern of economic development professionals in recent years.

The strategies listed below are born out of a dedication to growing the people, companies, and communities that grow our region. The action steps attached to each strategic goal are organized into short-term and long-term items, and provide structure and a concrete direction for advancement.

Strategic goals of the 2004 Plan for Progress:

- Attract, retain, and grow existing businesses and priority clusters
- Promote small business and generate flexible risk capital
- Advocate efficient regulatory processes at all levels of government
- Integrate workforce development and business priorities
- Improve and enrich preK to 12 education
- Support higher education and retain graduates
- Recruit and train a new generation of regional leaders
- Market our region
- Revitalize the Connecticut River
- Enhance high-tech and conventional infrastructure
- Develop an array of housing options
- Endorse a regional approach to public safety
- Champion statewide fiscal equity

Taking advantage of the strategies laid out in this 2004 Plan for Progress will require teamwork, dedication to long-term economic development work, and a pledge to nurture a new crop of effective leaders.

It is with great hope and expectation that we release the 2004 Plan for Progress as a compelling and positive plan for a healthy and prosperous future in the Pioneer Valley.





## Preamble to the Future

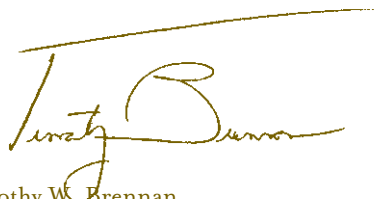
**T**he 2004 Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress combines a vision of the region's assets and opportunities with the reality of past successes, ongoing initiatives promoted by the 1994 Plan for Progress, and current challenges. The purpose of the Plan is to create a roadmap to the region's future. The landmarks are existing resources, the routes are through new and established public and private programs and collaborations, and the destination is an economically competitive, prosperous, and sustainable region.

This Plan is an effort to think broadly and boldly about the region and the factors affecting its success, and presents strategies that can enhance current ventures and promote new and emerging opportunities. The success of these strategies depends on how carefully they are tailored to capitalize on the region's existing assets.

The 1994 Plan for Progress was created as a blueprint for the growth and development of the regional economy. The new Plan reflects a more encompassing concept of regional development, one that capitalizes on the dynamic interaction of people, place, and work.

The heart of the Plan is seven cross-cutting themes that articulate the values or principles that will guide the prioritization of projects, resources, and tasks. The Plan's head is the thirteen strategic goals identified as key to the region's future. You may notice that some of these strategic goals relate to those of the 1994 Plan—their repetition is not an indication of failure, but a reflection of the reality that some are inherently ongoing. For example, our region is exceptionally rich in institutions of higher education; therefore, efforts must continually be made to further integrate these resources into our communities and economy.

The 2004 Plan for Progress has incorporated the opinions, ideas, and perspectives of countless people within the Pioneer Valley region, in the belief that those who live, work, and play here are knowledgeable about existing conditions, and aware of subtle changes at local levels that can slow or block the region's realization of its potential for sustained growth and economic prosperity.



Timothy W. Brennan  
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September 2004

## An Introduction to the Pioneer Valley

By geographic definition, the Pioneer Valley consists of the 69 cities and towns composing the Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire county areas of western Massachusetts. Although these boundaries define the borders of the region, various factors identify the Pioneer Valley as an economic unit.

The Connecticut River, which bisects the region along a north-south axis, is the dominant physical feature of the Valley, and has been central to its economic development and history. The river's flood plain provides some of the most fertile farmland in the United States; the agricultural history of the region was built on its foundation. At the same time, the energy of the River powered the mills of Holyoke and Chicopee.

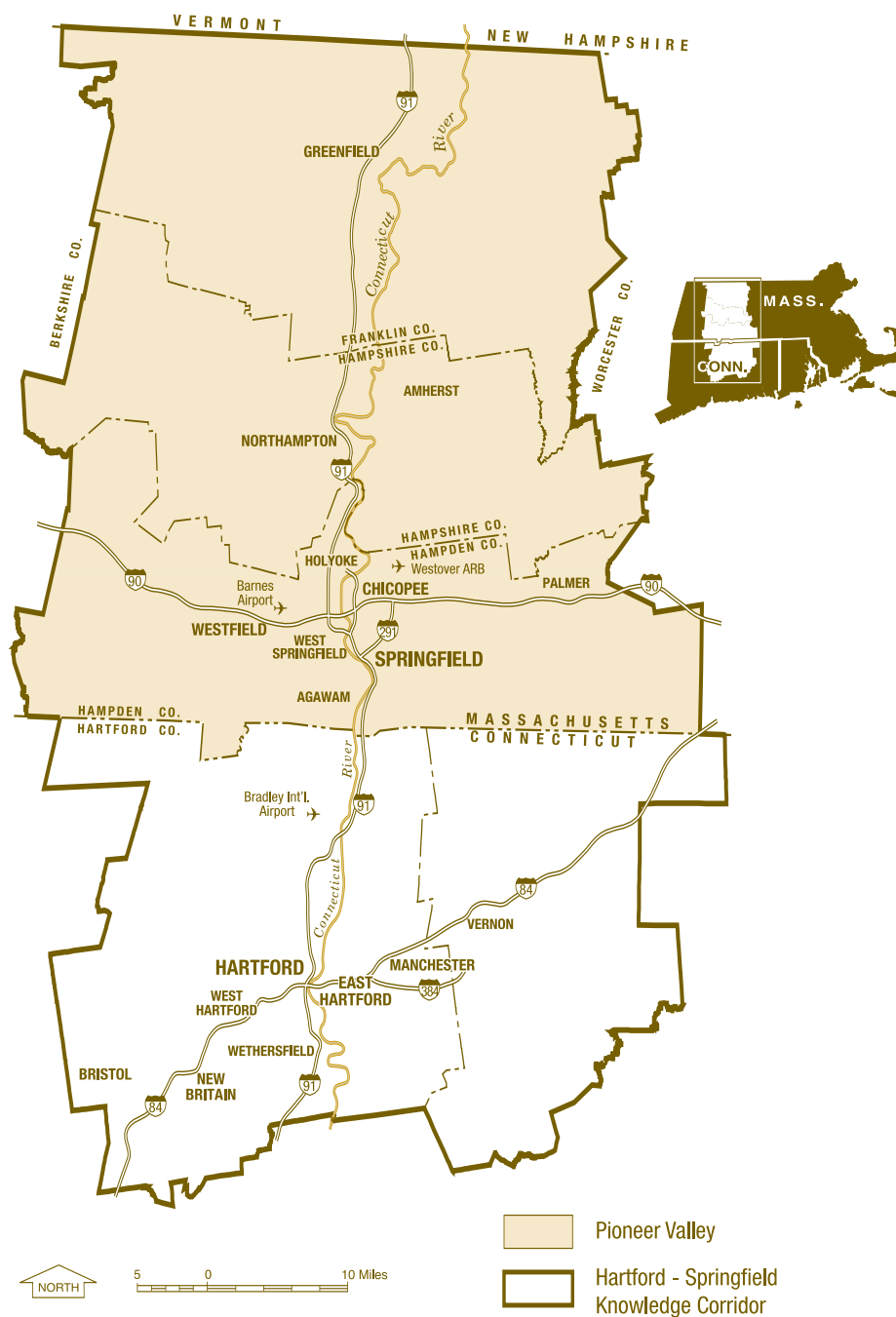
Today, Interstate 91, which follows the course of the river, is the Pioneer Valley's most significant agent of growth and change. It is the focal point for economic activity and job growth, and provides a catalyst for the revitalization of the Valley's major urban centers.

The Pioneer Valley is also linked economically to northern Connecticut, which shares the Connecticut River, Interstate 91, and Bradley International Airport. This relationship, long evident in the daily commute of the thousands of people who cross the border for work, has in

	Pioneer Valley	Knowledge Corridor
Population (2003)	688,495	1,704,991
Land Area (square miles)	1,904	3,072
Employment (2002)	285,064	811,430
Number of Businesses (2002)	18,505	45,303
Adults with Bachelor Degrees (2000)	110,204	310,453

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

the last five years been formalized as a combined region marketed in economic development circles as the Knowledge Corridor. Collaboration and partnership that cuts across traditional boundaries is critical in a global economy for both the Pioneer Valley and northern Connecticut to reach maximum economic potential.



## An Navigational Aid for the 21st Century Pioneer Valley Economy

As of March 2004, the Plan for Progress launched an interactive website displaying the framework of the new Plan, and incorporating frequent additions as the Plan evolved. Public comments received during the drafting phase of the Plan for Progress were considered in the final development of the Plan. Public participation, including numerous focus groups, built the 2004 Plan from the bottom up.

The current site allows viewers to navigate through the Plan according to their interests. Each component is linked to corresponding text, to other relevant components of the Plan, and to key implementers involved in a particular goal or strategy. There will be no “final” version of the Plan online; frequent updates will provide the most current data pertaining to the region’s economy, information regarding implementation, and qualitative assessment of how successful specific strategies are in accomplishing stated goals.

In particular, those portions of the Plan addressing long-range objectives will be continually refined and supplemented as new ideas emerge and more information becomes available. The Plan for Progress is a living document mirroring the complex evolution of the region through time. Ten years hence, the cumulative product, representing the shifts and changes that have occurred in the Pioneer Valley region, will form the basis for the next Plan for Progress.







## The Economic Context of the New Plan for Progress

**T**he original Plan for Progress of 1994 was developed in response to the particularly harsh impact of the early 1990s recession on the Pioneer Valley's economy. Extensive job loss and resulting labor force exodus produced a downward spiraling economy in the region that mirrored the pattern for the rest of the nation. The Plan's purpose was to unite the Valley's various stakeholders around a common agenda for improving the economic vitality and sustainability of the region. The diligence and commitment of numerous people and businesses across the region, prompted by the Plan, produced a much-improved picture during the second half of the 1990s. Job growth returned and, with it, the region's labor force. By 2001, the employment and labor force losses of the early 1990s had been erased.

Like the original, this Plan for Progress is shaped by the social and economic context in which it was crafted. This chapter presents an overview of ten significant trends we believe summarize that context. Some of these are opportunities to be seized, while others are threats to be addressed:

- A new regional economy producing more services than goods
- Small businesses growing in importance
- A hidden economy of home-based and non-employer businesses
- A growing "creative economy" centered in arts-based businesses
- An evolving and connected interstate economic region
- A higher education knowledge base to grow on
- A population expanding through new arrivals
- New state support for sustainable economic development practices
- Rapid consumption of land coupled with relatively flat population growth
- A widening gap between rich and poor

### **A new regional economy producing more services than goods . . .**

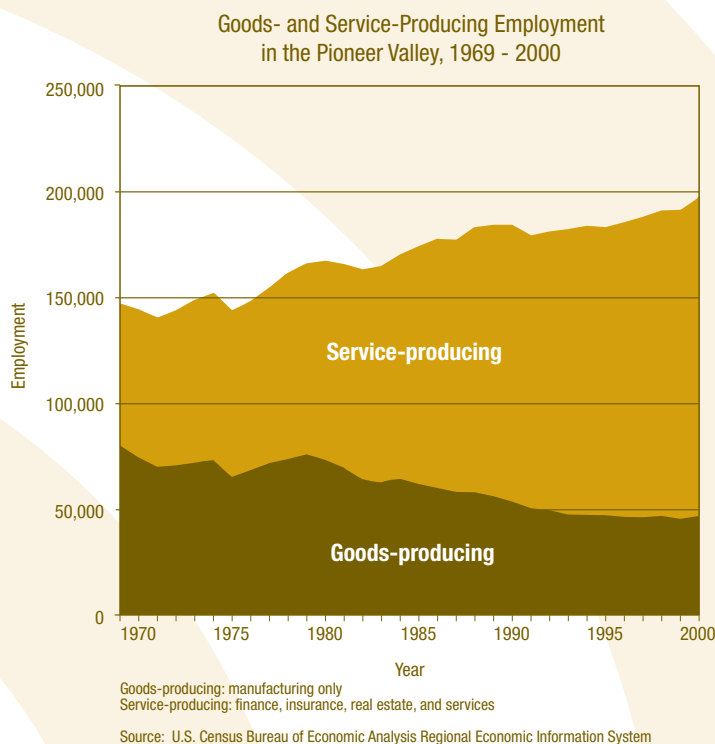
It is not recent news that the number of manufacturing jobs in the Pioneer Valley is decreasing. This has been the case since the Springfield Armory closed in the 1950s. It is a pattern that reaches far beyond the Valley; for much of the last three decades, the number of manufacturing jobs nationwide has been in decline. In some cases, that decline is the result of jobs being sent overseas, while in others it is attributable to advances in automation and increases in efficiency that have allowed greater output from fewer workers.

In fact, in the 32 years between 1969 and 2000, the number of manufacturing jobs has increased, year-to-year, only eight times, and then incrementally, while steep declines in manufacturing employment have routinely occurred during the first several years of each decade, each time corresponding to a downward economic cycle.

“...it continues to be important for the Pioneer Valley to retain its share of the nation’s goods-producing positions.”

Employment losses in manufacturing have not, however, led to declines in the total number of jobs in the Pioneer Valley. Employment in service industries has soared, growing from fewer than 150,000 jobs in 1969 to nearly 200,000 by 2001. While the average service job carries a lower wage than the average goods-producing job, our region’s service jobs are not nearly all low-wage positions.

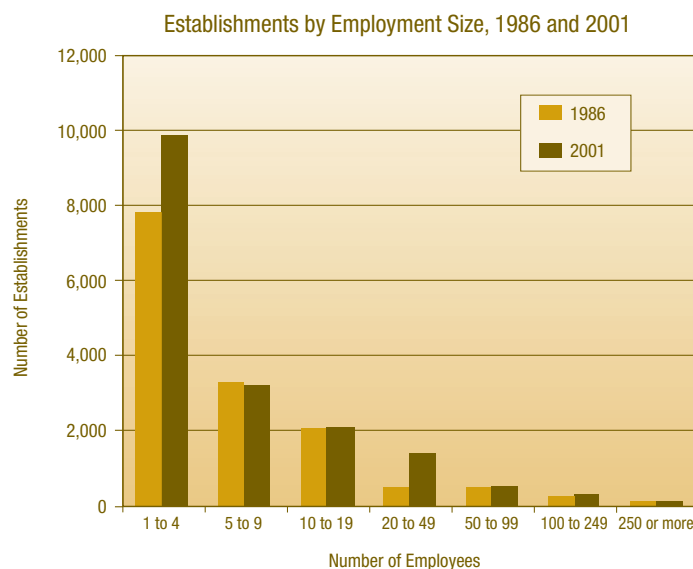
The region’s fast-growing health care and education sectors, for example, are both highly remunerative, as are financial services and real estate. Nonetheless, it continues to be important for the Pioneer Valley to retain its share of the nation’s goods-producing positions. Consequently, although manufacturing is now smaller in scale, it remains an extraordinarily important component of the region’s economic base and future.



### Small businesses growing in importance . . .

Comparing the number of businesses by employment level between 1986 and 2001 dramatically reveals the growing importance of small businesses to the Pioneer Valley's economy. The number of Pioneer Valley businesses employing one to four people grew from 7,783 in 1986 to 9,853 in 2001, an increase of 26.6 percent. The number of 20- to 49-employee businesses grew from 539 in 1986 to 1,409 in 2001, a 161.4 percent increase. During this same 15-year period, the number of mid-size and large businesses (50-plus employees) remained by comparison relatively stable, with a 7.6 percent increase.

The increase in the number of small businesses likely means that the share of the region's economic output produced by small businesses is increasing; furthermore, small businesses are now generating a significant portion of the region's new employment growth. By 2003, two of every five workers in the Pioneer Valley were employed in businesses with fewer than 50 employees. Although an economy that is increasingly dependent on small businesses presents new challenges, it also provides new opportunities. As innovation and entrepreneurship flourish, creating yet more small businesses, the potential for growth and expansion of the region's employment base increases.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns

### **A hidden economy of home-based and non-employer businesses . . .**

Non-employer companies – individually run businesses with no paid employees – are growing in number in the Pioneer Valley. The number of non-employer establishments grew by nearly 800 businesses between 1997 and 2001, an increase of about 2.0 percent. Total gross receipts from non-employer establishments also increased, between 1997 and 2001—by 8.4 percent, after controlling for inflation.

Since 1999, despite the concurrent economic downturn, the number of non-employer businesses and their total gross receipts increased. These non-employer businesses could, if properly supported, be especially important sources of regional economic growth, as some will eventually incorporate, hire employees, and increase revenues. Efforts to improve access to risk capital for unincorporated businesses—and to encourage more entrepreneurial activity—must continue, in order to nourish this “invisible” but vital sector of the region’s economy.

### **A growing “creative economy” centered in arts-based businesses . . .**

The number of businesses and jobs based in the arts, design, media, and entertainment sectors has grown considerably over the last decade. Some research suggests that such a flourishing “creative economy” can spark widespread regional economic benefits, and the state of Massachusetts has already experienced gains. Between 1996 and 2000, spending by Massachusetts cultural non-profits increased more than \$900 million, and incomes nearly doubled to \$2.6 billion.

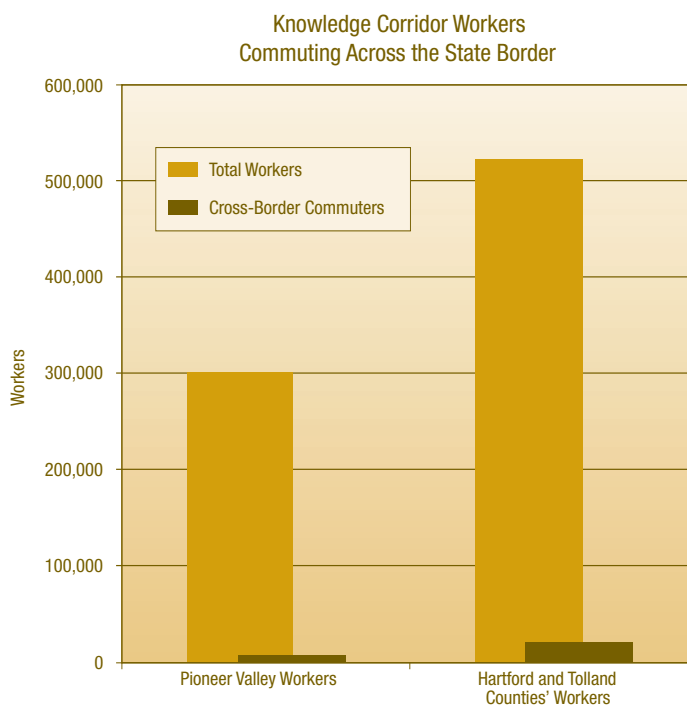
In the Pioneer Valley, self-employed artists, cultural non-profits, and arts-based businesses thrive in several key communities. In 2002, arts and culture nonprofit organizations in the Pioneer Valley generated \$41 million in revenues, and the number of arts-related businesses grew to 250 establishments. Several communities have undertaken successful adaptive-reuse projects in vacant or underutilized mill buildings in order to develop incubator space for artists and arts-based businesses.

### **An evolving and connected interstate economic region . . .**

Recent efforts to unite economic development efforts in the Pioneer Valley with those of the greater Hartford, Connecticut region spring from the well-established and deeply rooted economic ties connecting these two metropolitan regions. In the year 2000, for instance, approximately 1.8 percent of all employees working in the Pioneer Valley commuted from Hartford or Tolland counties in Connecticut, while 3.9 percent of all employees working in

Hartford and Tolland counties commuted from the Pioneer Valley. While these percentages may seem small, in aggregate they mean that more than 26,000 people commute across the state line every day.

Undeniably, numerous residents on both sides of the border view the regions as interconnected and proximate. This flow of commuters, and the fact that it has increased, reinforces the importance of recognizing our economic ties and the wisdom of capitalizing on our shared human and institutional resources. In addition to the exchange of human capital, our regions also rely on shared natural assets such as the Connecticut River and infrastructure assets such as Bradley International Airport. The 26 colleges and universities within our shared region give meaning and substance to the economic moniker identifying our collaboration: “The Knowledge Corridor.”



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census Journey-to-Work Data

### A higher education knowledge base to grow on . . .

With its fourteen institutions of higher education, the Pioneer Valley has a rich knowledge base upon which to build a robust and innovative economy. Of the 13,939 degrees and certificates awarded by these institutions in 2002, nearly 3,000 (or 20.0 percent) were in science- or math-intensive fields. The University of Massachusetts Amherst, the state's flagship university and a major research institution, graduated 366 engineering majors, 269 biological science majors, 58 mathematics majors, and 106 physical science majors in 2002. This is particularly significant for the region's growing healthcare industry.

The Valley's community colleges are also an important source of trained workers for the region's burgeoning healthcare industry, with 302 students receiving degrees or certificates in health-related fields in 2002. The dual challenge for the region is to ensure that there is ample state support for these programs, and that there is the wherewithal to retain these knowledge workers upon their graduation.

Degrees and Certificates Awarded in 2002

College or University	TOTAL	Computer Science and Related	Engineering and Related	Biological Science	Mathematics	Physical Science	Health and Related Professions
American International College	441	0	0	3	2	1	99
Amherst College	431	15	0	31	4	27	0
Bay Path College	194	33	0	0	0	0	14
College of Our Lady of the Elms	170	3	0	5	3	2	27
Greenfield Community College	383	15	2	0	0	0	61
Hampshire College	245	8	0	14	1	1	0
Holyoke Community College	746	3	14	0	0	0	98
Mount Holyoke College	513	15	0	67	8	18	0
Smith College	923	15	0	91	17	42	0
Springfield College	1,540	13	0	20	2	0	239
Springfield Technical Community College	803	98	125	5	0	1	143
University of Massachusetts Amherst	5,211	119	366	269	58	106	243
Western New England College	1,387	52	71	5	3	1	15
Westfield State College	9,52	36	0	24	12	5	0
<b>All Institutions</b>	<b>13,939</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>939</b>

Source: U. S. Department of Education, Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

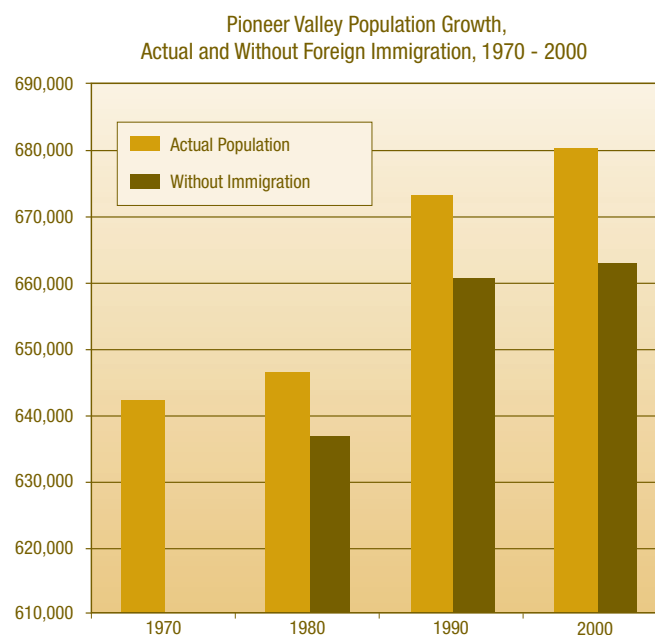


### A population expanding through new arrivals . . .

During the decade of the 1990s, when the Pioneer Valley's population grew only slightly, migration to and from the region within the 50 states was negative in every year. The population growth that the region did experience in the 1990s, a net gain of about 7,000, was exclusively the result of migration from Puerto Rico and foreign immigration. Without foreign immigration, the population of the Pioneer Valley would have increased by only 2,500 people in the 1990s. And, without the nearly 6,000 individuals migrating from Puerto Rico between 1995 and 2000, the population of the region would have contracted significantly.

“ Migration and foreign immigration from Puerto Rico, then, are central to the region's economic vitality and growth. ”

Population increases stimulate a region's economy by creating new markets for local goods and services while also growing the size of the labor force. Migration from Puerto Rico and foreign immigration, then, are central to the region's economic vitality and growth. The rapidly emerging challenge for the region is to provide the necessary language and skills training to effectively integrate new arrivals into the region's economy. Although these obstacles are formidable, this in-migration is a disguised opportunity for the Pioneer Valley to accelerate its role and importance in today's global economy, while simultaneously enhancing its ethnic and cultural diversity.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### **New state support for sustainable economic development practices . . .**

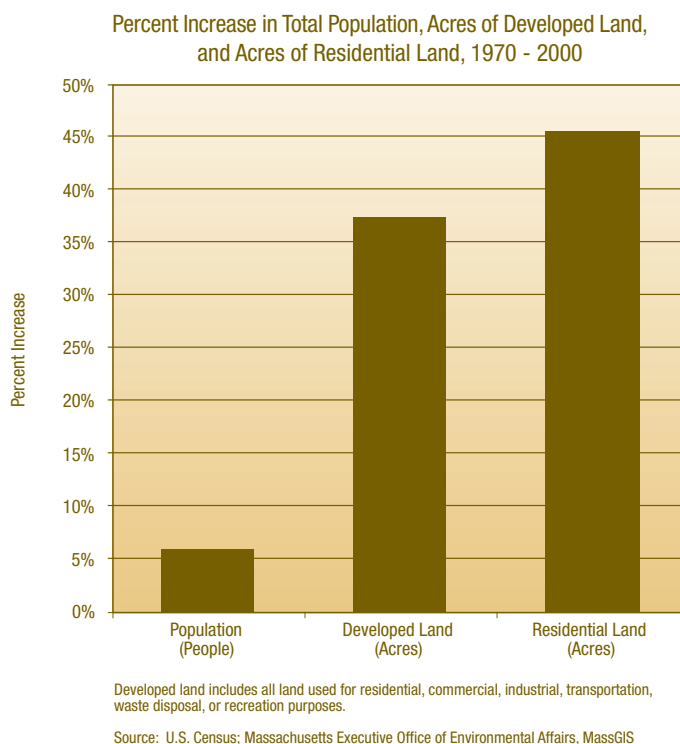
Economic development practices in place a decade ago and earlier focused in large part on strengthening local and regional tax bases and generating job growth. Today, state-level support for collaboration between economic development professionals and land use planners unites priorities with a set of common sustainable development principles. This shift has generated a new set of economic development incentives and techniques, from changes in funding conditions to regulatory reform.

In January 2004, Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney introduced the Commonwealth Capital plan, designed to assist regions in implementing sustainable, comprehensive development practices. The set of sustainable development principles fosters planning in a regional context, and highlights the essential connection between preservation of open space and agricultural lands, and urban redevelopment and investment. In our region, adopting sustainable economic development principles and tactics aids in safeguarding the unique and high quality of life Pioneer Valley residents and workers enjoy.

### **Rapid consumption of land coupled with relatively flat population growth . . .**

Although the Pioneer Valley did not experience robust population growth between 1970 and 2000, the number of acres of developed land (for residential, commercial, industrial, waste disposal, transportation, or recreational use) increased by more than 35 percent. With population growth at about five percent during this period, the percentage increase in developed land was larger by a factor of seven. The percentage increase in the number of acres of residential land between 1970 and 2000 was even higher, at 45 percent. Clearly population growth does not explain the rapid rate of land development the Pioneer Valley has experienced over the last 30 years. Most important, the lack of population growth does not diminish the adverse effects emanating from the Pioneer Valley's current low-density land development pattern.

The Pioneer Valley's changing land use patterns explain the rapid development of land in the region. Many municipalities are interested in attracting businesses and new residents to increase their tax base and provide new jobs for their residents. Although these are worthy goals, some communities fail to take into account the hidden costs of expansive commercial development and large-lot residential development. A thoughtful balance provides the high quality of life and attractiveness for which the Pioneer Valley is renowned. If undeveloped or agricultural land continues to be consumed at its current rate, with little population growth, the Pioneer Valley stands to lose an irreplaceable resource and economic asset. Antidotes to this threat are available if municipalities, for example, choose to redevelop existing sites rather than create new ones, adopt land use regulations that are flexible and encourage more compact development patterns, and foster alternative modes of transportation that reduce sprawl and traffic congestion.



### A widening gap between rich and poor . . .

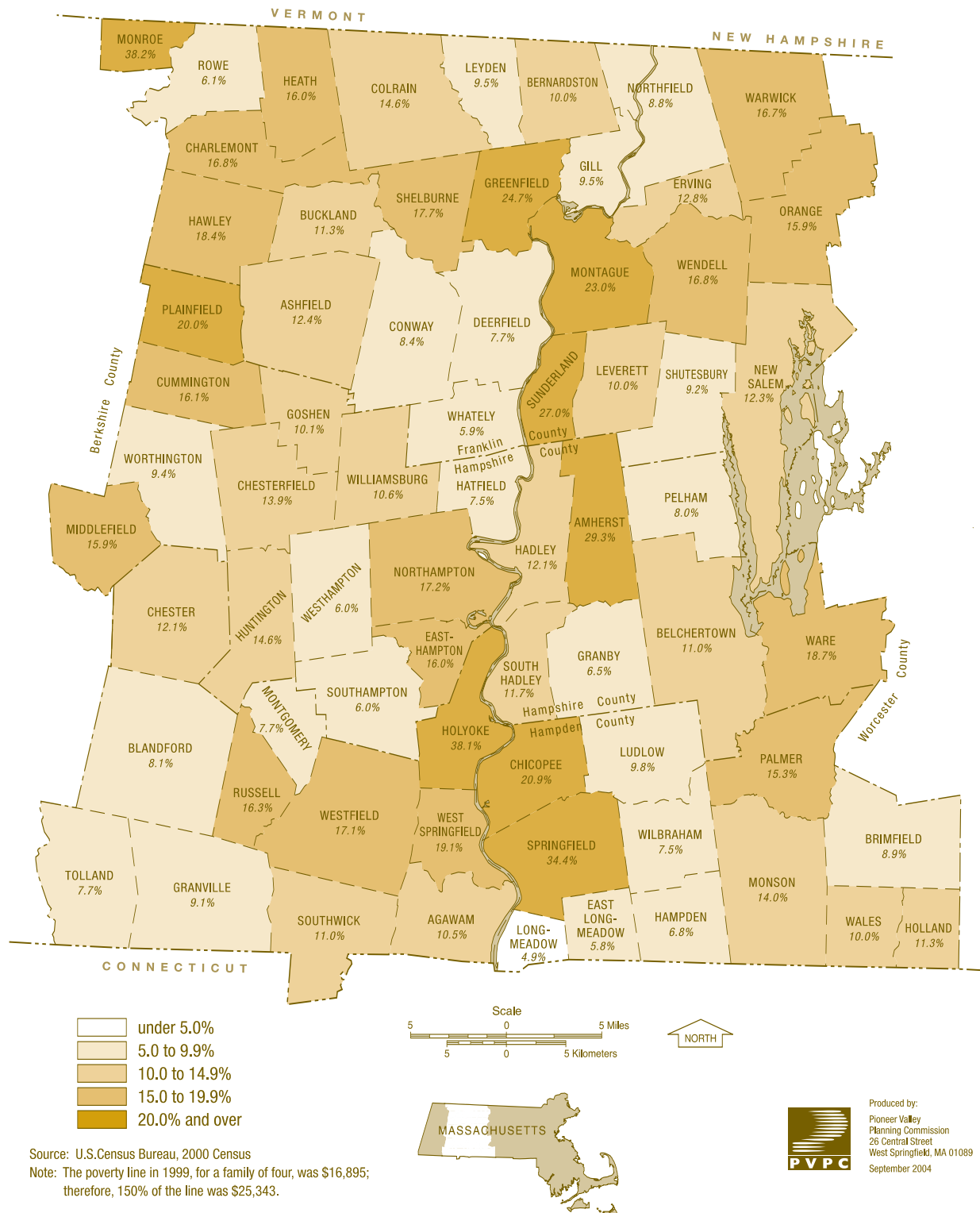
An emerging trend nationally and in the Pioneer Valley is the widening divide between wealth and poverty. Within the Valley, this divide tends to be demarcated by municipal boundaries. More than a third of residents in some of our region's cities have incomes below 150 percent of the poverty line compared to less than five percent of residents in adjacent suburbs.\* Such disparity is not confined only to the region's urban core and surrounding suburbs. In mostly rural Franklin County, one town may have a poverty rate twice that of a neighboring community. In fact, lower incomes are most evident in both urban and rural communities, while the region's highest incomes are concentrated in its suburbs, a pattern now typical nationally.

“...a region cannot be healthy if particular parts of it are dramatically unhealthy.”

These figures cannot be easily explained or addressed through any one factor such as geography, access to jobs, opportunities for education, or municipal resources; however, it is increasingly clear that a region cannot be healthy if particular parts of it are dramatically unhealthy.

\* In 1999, the year this data is based on, a family of four (two adults, two children) would have had an income below 150 percent of the federal poverty line if their income was below \$25,343.

## Percent of the Population Below 150 Percent of the Poverty Line, 1999



## An Inventory of the Pioneer Valley's Premier Economic Assets

Nestled between the Quabbin Reservoir to the east and the Berkshire Mountains to the west, the Pioneer Valley is home to more than 680,000 people and the fourth largest metropolitan area in New England. Across the region's 69 communities one can find everything from urban centers to rural farmland. Long known for its natural beauty and resources, the Valley is a region abounding in assets:

- An exceptional quality of life based on good jobs, affordable housing, short commutes, walkable communities, numerous recreational activities, festivals and events year-round, entertainment venues, tourist attractions, educational opportunities, diverse communities, and a plethora of outdoor activities in a scenic environment.
- Fourteen institutions of higher education located in the Pioneer Valley, including three highly respected community colleges, two accredited schools of business, and three colleges of engineering.
- Springfield Technical Community College, home to the Andrew M. Scibelli Enterprise Center, which provides entrepreneurial education to high school and college students as well as incubator space for emerging businesses.
- A wide variety of cultural amenities and major tourist attractions, including the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, the Quadrangle Museums, Six Flags New England amusement park, the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, the Eastern States Exposition (the "Big E"), the National Yiddish Book Center, the Dr. Seuss National Memorial Sculpture Garden, the Yankee Candle Company Factory Store, Historic Deerfield, and the Flynt Center of Early New England Life. Pioneer Valley attractions provide a rich cultural life for the region's residents and tourists, drawing several million visitors each year.
- An active community of artists, craftspeople, and others in the creative industries who generate world-class products that are sold locally and globally.
- Superior agricultural soils, extensive tracts of forest land, magnificent rivers, and other abundant natural resources that support farming and forestry operations and enhance the growing outdoor recreation and tourism industry.
- A long history of manufacturing and distribution, with internationally known companies such as Hasbro (Milton-Bradley), Solutia (formerly Monsanto), Top-Flite Golf Company, Kollmorgen, Olympic Manufacturing Group, U.S. Tsubaki, Danaher Tools, Spalding Sports Worldwide, Smith & Wesson, Yankee Candle Company, Hardigg Industries, Friendly's Ice Cream, Greenfield Tap & Die, Avery Dennison, International Paper, C & S Wholesale Grocers, and Lenox, all of which are either headquartered or producing and distributing their products here.

- Several rapidly growing service-sector industries requiring a highly-skilled workforce with numerous large employers, such as Baystate Health System, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mercy Hospital, Smith College, Holyoke Hospital, Springfield College, Mt. Holyoke College, Amherst College, and Western New England College.
- Peter Pan Bus Lines, the second-largest provider of regularly scheduled inter-city bus service in the country, with headquarters in Springfield.
- Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company, a Fortune 100 financial services firm with over \$250 billion in assets under management, with headquarters in Springfield.
- A partnership between the Pioneer Valley and the Greater Hartford region of Northern Connecticut to create the Knowledge Corridor, a combined economic region with more than 1.7 million people, 26 colleges and universities, and numerous high-tech companies.
- A range of housing options for people of various income levels, from contemporary downtown living and stately historic homes to modern suburban neighborhoods and rural homesteads.
- The Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts, made up of many of the region's largest employers, which promotes and coordinates regional economic development, provides site selectors with assistance locating in the region, and develops a range of commercial and industrial options throughout the Pioneer Valley.
- An ideal location situated at the intersection of Interstate 90 (the Massachusetts Turnpike) and Interstate 91 (traveling north-south to New Haven, CT), placing the Pioneer Valley within two hours' drive of Boston, three hours' drive of New York City, and six hours' drive of Philadelphia.
- Easy access to Bradley International Airport, in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, with both passenger and air cargo service.
- Two major freight and switching yards, in West Springfield and North Deerfield, providing freight service for the region.
- A Regional Technology Corporation (RTC) to bolster and grow the technology-based components of the regional economy.
- Superior medical facilities, personnel, services, training, and research.
- An expanding and diverse workforce fueled by new arrivals from foreign countries and Puerto Rico and trained through the region's continuum of training opportunities, managed by two Regional Employment Boards.







## Developing the New Plan

**D**eveloping the new Plan for Progress was a cumulative process shaped not only by the 1994 Plan and an assessment of its impact, but also by the annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) reports prepared by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Franklin Regional Council of Governments, by research into the current economic climate in the Pioneer Valley, and by focus group sessions on a variety of topics held during 2003 and 2004.

The 1994 Plan resulted in new partnerships and programs which will continue to evolve and develop and are incorporated into the 2004 Plan for Progress. The CEDS report provided an annual update on their progress. Research performed by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission – presented in various publications such as the 2003 State of the People report and “Discerning the Future”—provided insight into the current state of the region’s economy and people. The final component, a wide-ranging series of focus groups, was probably the most significant in directly shaping the content of the new Plan.

An initial special work session, titled “Beyond Words: Solving the Economic Development Puzzle for the Pioneer Valley,” drew more than 125 people, and determined the topics for the focus group series. The focus group sessions brought together business people, local government officials, community leaders, and representatives from academic and charitable institutions to discuss economic data, industry clusters, housing, urban investment, education, workforce development, infrastructure, and small businesses. Because these focus groups included individuals with knowledge and experience in a specific topic, the information gleaned from these sessions was extremely useful, and recommendations were specific and constructive.

## The Vision and Mission of the Plan for Progress

The vision of the 2004 Plan for Progress is of:

**a strong, vibrant regional economy that fosters sustainability, prosperity, and collaboration—and that attracts national recognition.**

The mission of the Plan for Progress Trustees is:

**to create—through planning, decision making, and implementation—collaborative economic development that will benefit all of the Pioneer Valley’s residents.**

## Cross-Cutting Themes of Special Regional Significance

Recommended strategies identified in the original Plan for Progress included an urban investment strategy, which was introduced with the following qualifying note:

Urban investment is far too comprehensive to address in the Plan. This section is a framework that acknowledges the regional need for competitive cities. Individual cities within the region are forming specific strategies.

Throughout the implementation of the 1994 Plan, an Urban Investment Strategy team met on a regular basis to discuss progress and identify opportunities to advance this particular strategy. Over time it became increasingly clear that the success of the Urban Investment Strategy relied on the work taking place under the auspices of other strategies, such as the Regional Education Alliance, School-to-Work Transition, and Increasing Support for Small Businesses.

Throughout the process that culminated in this new plan, particular topics were mentioned repeatedly, regardless of the context. “Urban investment” was one such topic, and there were others. The Plan for Progress Trustees consequently decided to adopt seven cross-cutting themes that essentially provide the underpinning for the new Plan for Progress:

- Cross-Border Collaboration (with the Greater Hartford region)
- Diversity
- Education
- Industry Clusters
- Sustainability
- Technology
- Urban Investment

These themes do not have specific action plans associated with them; rather they are the overarching principles that will guide the implementation of the Plan’s strategies and action steps.

The Plan for Progress Coordinating Council, which is charged with evaluation and accountability for the Plan’s implementation, will utilize these themes as the evaluative framework in both a formative and summative fashion. When project proposals and new action steps are considered by the Coordinating Council, the standard for acceptance will be rooted in whether or not a proposal is consistent with a majority of these principles.

Furthermore, at the end of each year, when the Coordinating Council prepares to report on our region's progress, quantitative benchmarks related to each theme will be used to measure success, making the planning process more rigorous and performance-driven.

Brief descriptions of the background for each theme, the principles for project planning, and the initial benchmarks for evaluation follow.

## Cross-Border Collaboration

### Background

In 2000, the Hartford-Springfield Economic Partnership was officially launched and efforts were begun to adopt an interstate economic identity and compact—dubbed the Knowledge Corridor—to boost the region’s economic development profile, strength, and economic success by capitalizing on combined interstate assets, including a wealth of higher education institutions. This interstate economic region featuring the Hartford and Springfield metropolitan areas boasts more than 1.7 million residents, a vibrant workforce, 26 higher education institutions, and numerous world-renowned companies.

Since that beginning, many noteworthy cross-border collaborations have emerged, including joint presentations at national commercial and industrial real estate trade shows, interstate efforts to achieve cleanup of the Connecticut River, cooperative tourism and attractions’ marketing, and an innovative public-private partnership designed to retain college graduates within the cross-border Knowledge Corridor region.

### Principle

**The Plan for Progress endorses strategies and actions that build strong and dynamic interstate connections and promote an external identity as a cross-border economic region—the Knowledge Corridor—that is competitive on a global scale.**

### Benchmarks

1. Are there increasing numbers of collaborative economic development projects between partners located on both sides of the Massachusetts and Connecticut border?
2. Are there increasing numbers of companies listing internships on [www.InternHere.com](http://www.InternHere.com); and are there increasing numbers of college students listing their resumes on [www.InternHere.com](http://www.InternHere.com)?
3. Is the number of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) on the Connecticut River being reduced so that measurable environmental benefits are achieved on an ongoing basis?
4. Are there a greater number of events co-hosted by organizations on both sides of the Massachusetts and Connecticut border?
5. Are more people commuting to work across the state line?

## Diversity

### Background

For decades the Pioneer Valley, a historically diverse region, has been a point of arrival for migrants from Puerto Rico and foreign immigrants. The region's cities have and continue to be at the center of this migration. During the last ten years, the Pioneer Valley's diversity has increased and the pace of foreign immigration to the region has quickened. As domestic migration patterns in the United States continue to reveal people moving predominantly south and west, foreign immigration, and the concurrent growth of the Puerto Rican population, will be vital to the future expansion of the region's economy and society. Accordingly, diversity is both one of the region's greatest strengths, as it will provide the workforce of the future, and one of the region's greatest challenges, as language and skills training are critical to preparing this emerging workforce for employment.

### Principle

**The Plan for Progress endorses strategies and actions that increase the diversity of the region and the appreciation of that diversity, thereby promoting regional economic growth through entrepreneurship among long-time residents of and recent arrivals to the Pioneer Valley.**

### Benchmarks

1. Are multiple racial and ethnic groups growing as components of the Pioneer Valley's overall population?
2. Are economic gaps (as measured by household income) between different racial, ethnic, and citizenship groups diminishing over time?
3. Are the labor force participation rates of ethnic minority and immigrant populations comparable to those of white and native-born populations?
4. Are the high school dropout rates of ethnic minority and immigrant students getting nearer those of white and native-born students?
5. Is population growth as a result of foreign immigration increasing?

## Education

### Background

Education is simultaneously one of the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the Pioneer Valley. Fourteen public and private colleges and universities, some of them among the most prestigious in the country, and one a flagship state university, dot the region. But the performance of the Pioneer Valley's primary and secondary education systems is uneven, and particularly poor in the region's urban communities. Because quality of education has profound implications for today's knowledge-based economy, including everything from a skilled workforce to addressing crime, it is a vital cross-cutting theme.

### Principle

**The Plan for Progress endorses strategies and action steps that take advantage of the region's significant educational assets while fostering the potential to improve the region's educational weaknesses.**

### Benchmarks

1. Are third and tenth grade MCAS scores improving relative to statewide scores?
2. Are high school graduation rates increasing?
3. Are more high school graduates intending to pursue further education upon graduation?
4. Is the number of licensed early education and care slots increasing?
5. Is Chapter 70 education aid to the Pioneer Valley increasing (after adjusting for inflation)?
6. Is the University of Massachusetts Amherst's budget increasing (after adjusting for inflation)?
7. Are the budgets of the region's three community colleges increasing (after adjusting for inflation)?

## Industry Clusters

### Background

In the spring of 2003, Governor Mitt Romney, in concert with the Massachusetts Department of Business and Technology, convened the Pioneer Valley Regional Competitiveness Council (RCC) to develop a broad-based regional economic development strategy with a focus on identifying and supporting the region's priority traded industry clusters. In a presentation to Governor Romney and his cabinet in December of 2003, the Pioneer Valley RCC presented a list of the region's priority industry clusters for growth, along with a list of priority industry clusters to sustain.

Clusters to Grow	Clusters to Sustain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and knowledge creation</li> <li>• Plastics</li> <li>• Hospitality and tourism</li> <li>• Life sciences, medical devices and biopharmaceuticals</li> <li>• Health care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Printing and publishing</li> <li>• Precision manufacturing and production technology</li> <li>• Building fixtures, equipment, and services</li> <li>• Financial services</li> <li>• Agriculture and organic farming</li> </ul>

### Principle

**The Plan for Progress endorses strategies and actions that support the growth and long-term sustainability of the region's priority industry clusters.**

### Benchmarks

1. Is total employment in the Pioneer Valley's growth clusters increasing?
2. Is total employment in the Pioneer Valley's industry clusters to sustain remaining stable?
3. Is the region's share of national employment increasing in priority clusters and remaining stable in clusters to maintain?
4. Is the number of establishments in priority clusters increasing?

## Sustainability

### Background

After the release of the 1994 Plan for Progress, a sustainability strategy was added to the Plan and a strategy team convened to promote integration of economic and environmental sustainability across the region. As with urban investment, sustainable economic development can be achieved only through the use of sustainable principles in implementing other strategies.

We use sustainability in the broadest possible sense: the combined and long-term economic prosperity, environmental viability, and health of the region's people, communities, resources, and economy. In effect, the overarching goal is to foster development throughout the Pioneer Valley that meets the needs of the present without undermining the ability of the region to meet the needs of the future. The Plan for Progress embraces a concept of sustainability that is more expansive than ecology—embracing and interconnecting the full environmental, economic, and social dimensions of development.

### Principle

**The Plan for Progress endorses strategies and actions that—through existing regulations and innovative economic incentives for urban redevelopment—promote land development practices that are responsible and considerate of the long-term preservation of the region's land, forests, farmland, water, air, health, people, communities, and overall quality of life.**

### Benchmarks

1. Is the number of Connecticut River combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in the region decreasing?
2. Are there more resources available for brownfields assessment and remediation?
3. Are asthma related hospitalizations per capita decreasing?
4. Is the number of acres of open space being preserved increasing?
5. Are per capita vehicle miles traveled per day decreasing?
6. Is the average number of points for all communities in the Pioneer Valley on the Commonwealth Capital Fund rating criteria increasing?
7. Is public transit ridership increasing?
8. Is the number of businesses in the Pioneer Valley with ISO 14000 certification increasing?



## Technology

### Background

The issue of technology cuts across many of the recommended Plan for Progress strategies. Technology is increasingly vital for education, small business success, entrepreneurship, development of the workforce, and business attraction and retention. The specific issue of building the region's digital capacity is being tackled under the "Enhance High-Tech and Conventional Infrastructure" strategy. The importance of capitalizing on technology to boost the full spectrum of the Pioneer Valley's economic development efforts cannot be overstated.

At the heart of the Plan for Progress is technology-based economic development policies, programs, and actions that enable the region to foster growth in technology industries, facilitate transfer of technologies that improve the competitiveness of Pioneer Valley firms, improve worker productivity, and raise the standard of living for all the region's residents.

### Principle

**The Plan for Progress endorses strategies and actions that leverage technology to improve socio-economic outcomes across the region, and that likewise build the technology competency and capacity of the region's private sector businesses as well as that of public and civic sector organizations.**

### Benchmarks

1. Is the high-speed broadband capacity of the region increasing?
2. Are the region's public and private sector higher education institutions fostering research and development and technology transfer on a sustained and substantive basis?
3. Are an increasing number of businesses members of RTC-sponsored industry groups?
4. Do an increasing percentage of K to 12 classrooms have Internet access?
5. Do an increasing number of public libraries have public-use computers with access to the Internet?
6. Is the productivity of the Pioneer Valley's businesses increasing?

## Urban Investment

### Background

Urban investment is in many ways the original cross-cutting theme. It is absolutely clear that a truly vibrant and healthy Pioneer Valley requires vibrant and healthy urban core communities. Because Springfield and Holyoke are the only two communities in Hampden and Hampshire county considered to be “distressed,” according to criteria promulgated nationally by the Economic Development Administration (EDA), the term “urban core” in the context of this cross-cutting theme refers primarily to these two communities, along with the adjacent city of Chicopee. Nevertheless, given the importance and wide reach of the urban investment agenda, the definition must often be broadened to take account of other Pioneer Valley urban centers that face unique and often especially difficult economic challenges and obstacles.

### Principle

**The Plan for Progress endorses strategies and actions that directly or indirectly invest in the development and improvement of the region’s urban core cities and generate benefits for their residents as well as the region as a whole.**

### Benchmarks

1. Is the difference between the unemployment rate of the urban core and the region as a whole decreasing?
2. Are the gaps between tenth grade MCAS performance in the urban core and the region as a whole decreasing?
3. Is the urban core’s share of the region’s total population increasing?
4. Is the urban core’s share of the region’s poor (those living below the poverty line) decreasing?
5. Are the urban core cities sustaining and/or growing the number of businesses in their communities?
6. Are owner occupancy rates in urban core communities increasing?
7. Is the urban core’s share of all affordable housing units in the region (as defined by Chapter 40B) decreasing?

## Strategic Goals and Action Steps

While cross-cutting themes constitute the overarching vision of what the Plan for Progress can achieve, it is the thirteen strategic goals and their corresponding action steps that will realize that vision.

Some strategic goals in this Plan for Progress closely mirror those contained in the original Plan for Progress. For example, the Connecticut River 2020 strategic goal has changed little in ten years, because restoring our region's most important scenic feature is a process that is enormously complicated, costly, and protracted. On the other hand, many of the strategic goals in this Plan are new. For example, as the generation that has led our region with distinction moves toward retirement, it becomes necessary to include a strategic goal for leadership development. Finally, some strategic goals, such as public safety, may not immediately appear to be within the province of economic development; however, focus group participants made it clear that public safety is as important for new businesses as are tax incentives.

As with the strategic goals, the action steps on which our region's economic future depends represent a continuation of what has worked, as well as what is new and untested, and these are organized into short- and long-term categories.

The implementers of the Plan for Progress can grow the people, companies, and communities that grow our region by pursuing the thirteen recommended strategic goals in this Plan:

- Attract, retain, and grow existing businesses and priority clusters
- Promote small business and generate flexible risk capital
- Advocate efficient regulatory processes at all levels of government
- Integrate workforce development and business priorities
- Improve and enrich preK to 12 education
- Support higher education and retain graduates
- Recruit and train a new generation of regional leaders
- Market our region
- Revitalize the Connecticut River
- Enhance high-tech and conventional infrastructure
- Develop an array of housing options
- Endorse a regional approach to public safety
- Champion statewide fiscal equity

## Attract, Retain, and Grow Existing Businesses and Priority Clusters

### Background

Attracting, retaining, and growing businesses were some of the key accomplishments of the 1994 Plan for Progress. The Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts (EDC) was created by the region's business sector to play a lead role in implementing the Pioneer Valley's economic development strategies, and in marketing the region with the input and influence of the region's largest employers. More recently, the Economic Development Council's newest affiliate, the Regional Technology Alliance, and its successor, the Regional Technology Corporation, have brought businesses together in cluster networks to collaborate, advocate for, and grow their industries. Three such networks are already thriving in the region: the Materials and Manufacturing Technology Network (MMTN), the Technology Enterprise Council (TEC), and the Bio-economic Technology Alliance (BETA).

Nevertheless, as competition and the demand to "work globally" seems to increase exponentially every year, and with the emergence of a knowledge economy driven by innovation and entrepreneurship, the Plan for Progress will now focus on building further collaboration between the region's higher education institutions and the region's businesses. The transfer of intellectual capital from the academic to the private sector will be a primary builder of the Pioneer Valley's economy in the future.

The Plan for Progress also focuses on attracting and retaining businesses in the region's urban core communities, so that all the region's residents benefit from a growing economy.

### Short-term Action Steps (1-3 years)

- Continue to support the work of the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts to develop sites for new or growing businesses and to recruit and retain businesses throughout the region.
- Promote the Regional Technology Corporation (RTC) as the regional leader in building business networks, and attracting and retaining high-technology businesses.
- Grow the region's three technology-based networks: Materials and Manufacturing Technology Network (MMTN), Technology Enterprise Council (TEC), and the Bio-economic Technology Alliance (BETA).
- Initiate, as a partnership between the RTC and the University of Massachusetts Amherst, a new regional innovation affiliates program.
- Continue to have an annual academic-industry showcase sponsored by the RTC that brings colleges and university representatives together with their counterparts in business and industry.

- Continue the use of the e-Synchronist software package to document business interviews and to conduct timely research into pressing business concerns or needs.
- Build stronger linkages and collaboration between vocational-technical schools, regional employment boards, community colleges, and industry to ensure that workforce development programming is consistent with workforce needs in priority industry clusters.

#### **Long-term Action Steps (4 or more years)**

- Support the state's proposed creation of an office, housed at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, to coordinate the transfer of technology from state institutions of higher education to the private sector.
- Regularly study the region's economy to refine the definition of the region's priority industry clusters.
- Advocate for long-term, statewide solutions that reduce the overall cost of providing health insurance to employees.
- Identify and promote opportunities for the location of businesses, both commercial and industrial, in the region's urban core communities.

#### **Key Implementers**

- Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts
- Mayors and chief elected officials
- Municipal economic development staff
- Massachusetts Career Development Institute
- Regional Technology Corporation
- University of Massachusetts Amherst
- Chambers of Commerce (region-wide)
- Hampden Regional Employment Board
- Franklin-Hampshire Regional Employment Board
- Economic Development Partners
- Commercial real estate professionals

## Promote Small Businesses and Generate Flexible Risk Capital

### Background

While preparing a study of the Pioneer Valley's major employers in 2003, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission uncovered the startling fact that 85 percent of all employers in the region have 20 or fewer employees. In fact, two of every five employees in the Pioneer Valley now work in businesses with fewer than 50 employees. In a region once renowned for its large mills and factories, the emergence of an economy characterized by small businesses is noteworthy. It means that efforts to retain or recruit large businesses to the region cannot be our only approach if the region is to remain economically strong. Small businesses also need to be recruited, supported, and nurtured so that they grow in total revenues and employment.

The Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network (MSBDC), part of the University of Massachusetts, has for 25 years serviced the small business community with counseling, management training, and information and referral. Its professional staff has counseled thousands of clients throughout the four counties of western Massachusetts, often working through and with chambers of commerce that are increasingly recognized as the backbone of our regional economy. Collaboration between MSBDC, the chambers, and municipal economic development offices will continue to nurture the entrepreneurial community, as will programs such as the business incubator of the Andrew M. Scibelli Enterprise Center, Springfield Technical Community College's youth entrepreneurship program, and the Youth Entrepreneurs Society in Orange.

In addition, the recently established HiddenTEC network brings together a growing group of individuals using technology to work out of their homes. As these businesses not captured in traditional economic data are networked and supported, some will emerge as significant employers.

In an increasingly global economy, small regional businesses need assistance connecting to global markets and marketing their products and services to large businesses, even those within the Pioneer Valley. Networks can provide needed support and advice to entrepreneurs as they attempt to develop and grow their businesses. Small businesses also need greater access to risk capital to finance and grow their companies. A critical focus of this new Plan for Progress is in improving the availability and accessibility of risk capital to small businesses while encouraging those businesses to develop products and services worthy of investment.

### Short-term Action Steps (1-3 years)

- Create an ad-hoc regional small business task force, with representation on the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts, to advocate for entrepreneurship efforts in the Pioneer Valley.
- Expand efforts of regional chambers of commerce, community development corporations, municipal economic development offices, and the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network to support and encourage the growth of small businesses.
- Conduct detailed research of the smallest businesses in the Pioneer Valley to identify their core needs, strengths, and weaknesses, while at the same time creating an inventory of programs and organizations assisting start-up firms and entrepreneurs.
- Support and expand the work of entrepreneurship programs and funders such as the Youth Entrepreneurs Society based in Orange, the Andrew M. Scibelli Enterprise Center, and the Western Massachusetts Enterprise Fund.
- Expand the HiddenTEC network, particularly into the urban core, and develop infrastructure and support services targeted at these entrepreneurs.
- Work collaboratively with regional lenders to improve the level of risk capital available to small businesses.
- Expand the entrepreneurial assistance activities operated by the Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield, such as the Greater Springfield Entrepreneurial Fund.
- Enlist the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts (EDC) to forge better communications and working partnerships between the region's small businesses and the large industries and institutions that compose EDC's membership.
- Engage more small business leaders in the implementation of the Plan for Progress.
- Support the creation of new venture capital firms and assist, as needed, recently created venture capital firms, such as River Valley Investors, Long River Ventures, Village Ventures, and Longmeadow Capital.

### Long-term Action Steps (4 or more years)

- Create an entrepreneurial environment within the Pioneer Valley and promote that culture internally and externally.
- Secure greater financial support, particularly risk capital, for small businesses.
- Consolidate and coordinate numerous small business start-up funds to make risk capital more available and less expensive.

- Develop a web-based regional buying guide identifying local small businesses available to provide services to consumers and other businesses throughout the region.
- Advocate for the creation of a statewide inventory of business establishments to enable ongoing tracking of the size and scope of the small business component of the region's economy.
- Support regional initiatives that overcome the lack of high-speed broadband access in underserved areas of the Pioneer Valley (see "Enhance High-Tech and Conventional Infrastructure" strategy).
- Create and expand small business networks and industry clusters, and promulgate models of partnerships between small businesses that help both parties to grow.
- Review cross-border and cross-community challenges facing small businesses in the region, such as getting permits in both Massachusetts and Connecticut and integrating Chamber membership benefits.
- Develop networks of and provide support services to arts- and culture-related small businesses to encourage the growth of the region's creative economy.
- Engage small business lenders and local banks in economic development strategies for small businesses.

#### **Key Implementers**

- Regional Technology Corporation
- Western Massachusetts Small Business Development Center
- Chambers of Commerce (region-wide)
- Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts
- HiddenTEC
- Western Massachusetts Enterprise Fund
- Massachusetts Office of Business Development
- Andrew M. Scibelli Enterprise Center at Springfield Technical Community College
- Springfield Technical Community College
- Municipal economic development staff
- Community development corporations
- Local and regional banks
- Holyoke Community College
- Greenfield Community College
- Pioneer Valley Connect



## Advocate Efficient Regulatory Processes at All Levels of Government

### Background

Community and regional planning is a thoughtful, rational process, characterized by public participation, open dialogue, fact-finding, and adherence to rules and regulations. At times, however, permitting processes and the regulatory environment can stall worthwhile projects.

Development is guided through various boards and regulatory agencies, helping us to prevent unplanned or unsustainable development, to channel dollars and energy into our core cities, and to lead the charge for a progressive and diverse economic base. However, good projects can sometimes struggle to successfully navigate municipal, state, and federal regulations and processes.

Creatively streamlining the regulatory permitting process can simultaneously meet our planning goals and the needs of the development community. We will craft a fresh vision that stresses public participation and discourse, with effective information sharing and technology-based municipal management initiatives. Development that results in an innovative and competitive region begins with an efficient regulatory process.

### Short-term Action Steps (1-3 years)

- Support the adoption by municipalities of single development presentations to all relevant municipal boards and committees to speed the process of gaining necessary permissions to develop a site, commonly called “one-stop permitting.”
- Advocate for legislation to reform foreclosure laws in Massachusetts and allow municipalities to return abandoned and delinquent properties to productive use more quickly.
- Remain engaged and current with the state Office of Commonwealth Development’s “smart-growth” initiatives, which feature regulatory reform as a critical component.
- Participate in and support efforts to educate small business owners, particularly those new to the region, in environmental and business regulations to improve compliance and public health.

### Long-term Action Steps (4 or more years)

- Advocate for workers compensation and unemployment insurance reform to reduce the overall cost of operating a business in Massachusetts.
- Advocate for the passage of land use reform legislation that would improve zoning processes and speed permitting at the municipal level.
- Advocate for collaboration across municipalities to create consistent fire safety regulations for the entire region so that developers are not subject to different rules in each community.

- Study and advocate for long-term solutions to rising health insurance costs.
- Review and revise tax incentive programs to more effectively encourage new businesses and particularly urban redevelopment.
- Develop and institutionalize mechanisms for collaboration and the exchange of ideas between land use planners and economic development partners through conferences and joint meetings.

#### **Key Implementers**

- Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts
- Mayors and chief elected officials
- Municipal planners and planning boards
- Chambers of Commerce (region-wide)
- State and Federal legislative delegations

## Integrate Workforce Development and Business Priorities

### Background

As part of the “Knowledge Corridor,” the Pioneer Valley is home to a network of higher education institutions, public school systems, and vocational schools. The Valley attracts many students from around the country and abroad; unfortunately, too many of our graduates leave the region after completing degrees. The challenges begin even earlier, at the high school and vocational levels, where funding and personnel constraints leave the region’s students without the professional skills necessary to join the workforce.

To be most effective in meeting these challenges, action steps centered on increasing funding, worker training, and links with educators must be complemented by research into the populations that make up our workforce. Why do many of our Latino and African-American children growing up in economically distressed areas not receive the education necessary for gainful employment? How has the MCAS affected vocational and technical schools in our region?

By making a pledge to educate ourselves about our students, workers, and the needs of our business community, we can grow a competent and versatile workforce that remains in the Pioneer Valley.

### Short-term Action Steps (1-3 years)

- Increase collaboration between workforce training providers and businesses to promote real-time shifts in training to accommodate shifting private sector workforce demands.
- Support the growth and flexibility of the region’s three community colleges as key suppliers of the region’s skilled workforce.
- Study and implement the best methods for engaging small businesses in high school and college-level internship and externship programs.
- Conduct a study to get a better sense of the overall work skills needed by the region’s employers, reviewing “work keys” for priority industries.
- Support the development, already underway, of a statewide workforce readiness certificate that could be earned by youth preparing to enter the workforce.
- Promote a wide range of employment options for students throughout the Pioneer Valley, highlighting career opportunities in skilled trades.
- Continue successful cross-border workforce initiatives under the aegis of the collaborative Knowledge Corridor forum.
- Support a systemic review of the workforce training and education delivery system in Massachusetts and advocate for the passage of legislation to streamline and improve access to workforce development programs.

### Long-term Action Steps (4 or more years)

- Advocate for much greater funding of adult basic education and literacy programs to improve the quality of the adult workforce and the meet the skills needs of recent arrivals to the region.
- Advocate for increased state funding of school-to-work internship programs at the high school and collegiate level to promote the development of work skills in young people and to build workplace connections that retain students in the region upon completion of their education.
- Expand school-to-work internship and externship opportunities.
- Take advantage of technology to develop a web-based system that allows businesses to update their workforce needs, allowing workforce-training providers to identify trends as they happen.
- Advocate for increased state support of the workforce development programs at the Pioneer Valley's three community colleges and two regional employment boards.
- Identify and address the core reasons new college graduates leave the region.
- Collaborate closely with workforce training partners in northern Connecticut to ensure that the trained workforce will meet the needs of businesses throughout the Knowledge Corridor.
- Encourage Pioneer Valley school districts to adopt a curriculum that, within the required Massachusetts frameworks, introduces basic work skills in the context of regular classes and integrates workforce readiness into all curricula.
- Support the development of a statewide literacy certification that could be used by area employers.

### Key Implementers

- Hampden Regional Employment Board
- Franklin-Hampshire Regional Employment Board
- Capital Region Workforce Development Board
- Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts
- Community colleges
- School districts
- Mayors and chief elected officials
- Workforce associations and labor unions
- State and Federal legislative delegations
- Regional Education and Business Alliance

## Improve and Enrich PreK to 12 Education

### Background

A world-class public school system is the foundation of a competitive, knowledge-based economy. To encourage and aid the Pioneer Valley in its move toward this New Economy—one in which knowledge and technology are the primary wealth-creating assets of our community—improving pre-school to 12th-grade education is perhaps our most important and farsighted economic development strategy.

The Commonwealth's 1993 Education Reform Act was a catalyst for profound changes in preK to 12 education. The region's educators responded to the challenge in a way that has resulted in dramatic improvement in MCAS performance and overall student achievement. The Regional Education and Business Alliance – the original Plan for Progress implementer of the K to 12 strategy – provided important direction and support assisting schools in addressing key challenges and accelerating the implementation of the new law.

The Pioneer Valley is home to a diverse number of school districts ranging in size, demographics, and characteristics. Because the region's two largest urban school districts (Springfield and Holyoke) educate a very large portion of the region's total student population, high dropout rates and poor MCAS scores in these communities challenge the entire region's economic well being.

Research indicates that students who get an early start in a classroom environment are likely to do better academically throughout school. A 2003 essay by Arthur Rolnick of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis makes a compelling argument for the staggering economic returns that can come from a public investment in early childhood education. The challenge before us, then, is to enhance early education programs that provide a strong foundation from which children thrive throughout their education and ultimately are able to build successful careers within the New Economy workforce of the Pioneer Valley.

### Short-term Action Steps (1-3 years)

- Restructure the Regional Education and Business Alliance's operating model and programs to address the next phase of identified needs within the region's school districts, and further expand the membership base.
- To boost student achievement, deepen the level of collaboration between businesses and local school districts through programs like mentoring, with particular emphasis on the region's urban core communities.

- Support programs that engage the community in the work of implementing the preK to 12 strategy such as Cherish Every Child, Step Up Springfield and other replicable models that can be transferred to other districts across the region.
- Advocate for and support the improvement plans of all vocational-technical institutions in providing state-of-the-art technology and programs geared to the region's emerging industries.
- Support the alignment of existing and developing programs to maximize resources, improve communication across initiatives, and eliminate redundancy in order to ensure the achievement of desired outcomes.
- Support the efforts of the newly created Pioneer Valley Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics network (STEMnet) to develop engineering focused projects that improve math and science learning among students and professional development among teachers.
- Support and advocate for the passage of legislation guaranteeing early education opportunities for all children wanting or needing such services.

#### **Long-term Action Steps (4 or more years)**

- Establish and nurture a mutual understanding of economic development and civic goals among business and education sectors that results in a strategic partnership.
- Advocate for the passage of state regulations and legislation that promote the implementation of the Plan for Progress preK to 12 strategy.
- Develop a campaign to attract young people, in particular from the region's urban core communities, into the early education and K to 12 teaching professions to replace the many teachers who will be retiring in the next ten to fifteen years.
- Promote the use of technology in the classroom to better prepare students for success in the knowledge-based economy.
- Find ways to make better use of the region's unique higher education resources in order to support the goals of the Plan for Progress.
- Advocate for reforms to Massachusetts' school funding formulas to more equitably disperse funds across the state, including to regional school districts.

**Key Implementers**

- Regional Education and Business Alliance (REBA)
- Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation
- Cherish Every Child
- Step Up Springfield
- Public school districts
- Teacher training programs at area colleges
- Pioneer Valley STEMnet
- Mayors and chief elected officials
- United Way organizations
- Pioneer Valley colleges
- Early childhood education advocates and providers
- Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts

## Support Higher Education and Retain Graduates

### Background

According to some estimates, 85 percent of all jobs in the United States will require some form of education beyond high school by the year 2005. This is the reality of the “knowledge economy.” If innovation and creativity are the engines of this economy, higher education is the vehicle. Happily, our region already has significant assets with which to prepare our workforce.

The Plan for Progress calls for the continued strengthening of our region’s higher education institutions, the fostering of greater connections between these public and private institutions and the private sector, and the retention of the graduates of those institutions within the region’s workforce.

### Short-term Action Steps (1-3 years)

- Promote and expand the use of the new cross-border internship website [www.InternHere.com](http://www.InternHere.com), to connect local college students with employers.
- Support and promote the new state-sponsored office for technology transfer to be housed at the University of Massachusetts Amherst to build stronger linkages between higher education-based innovation and private sector applications.
- Support the Hartford-Springfield Economic Partnership in their ongoing efforts to measure the effectiveness of college graduate retention programs and overall college graduate retention.
- Advocate for increased financial support for public higher education, from community colleges to the University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- Encourage local private colleges to reserve some portion of scholarship money for local students.
- Continue an annual college career fair on a cross-border basis as a crucial Knowledge Corridor initiative.
- Advertise the exceptional quality of life, diversity, and cultural amenities throughout the region to prospective, arriving, and current undergraduate and graduate students.
- Hold focus groups with young professionals to identify the key factors that have kept them in the region and to engage them in the region’s economic development efforts.
- Engage more of the region’s private colleges in supporting and participating in economic development.



### **Long-term Action Steps (4 or more years)**

- Advocate and support the proposed expansion in enrollment at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- Expand communication and collaboration among urban colleges and their surrounding communities.
- Continually work to adapt programs and curricula, particularly at the community college level, to the changing needs of the region's employers through ongoing communication and partnership between the colleges and the private sector.
- Develop programs and interventions that build ties between students and the region as early as prospective students' first visit to a campus.
- Expand existing programs that provide student discounts to arts and entertainment events and venues to foster a greater connection between students and the region.

### **Key Implementers**

- Hartford-Springfield Economic Partnership
- University of Massachusetts Amherst
- Pioneer Valley colleges
- Knowledge Corridor colleges and universities
- Regional Technology Corporation
- Municipal economic development professionals
- Hampden Regional Employment Board
- Franklin-Hampshire Regional Employment Board
- Capital Region Workforce Development Board

## Recruit and Train a New Generation of Regional Leaders

### Background

Baby boomers, the generation that has led the Pioneer Valley for nearly two decades, are preparing for retirement, and there are fewer people in the generation succeeding them. The Plan for Progress aims to create and support initiatives that recruit and develop a new generation of leaders for the region.

### Short-term Action Steps (1-3 years)

- Collaborate in the creation and expansion of the Knowledge Corridor's new internship website, [www.InternHere.com](http://www.InternHere.com).
- Build and expand networks for current and emerging business, nonprofit, public sector, and education leaders.
- Encourage the region's nonprofit sector to engage individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 in order to develop their leadership potential.
- Expand the leadership development programs currently run by chambers of commerce throughout the region.

### Long-term Action Steps (4 or more years)

- Study and implement, if viable, a high-profile, competitive, post-undergraduate internship program that places graduates in area companies for two years while requiring participation with an area non-profit organization.
- Develop, through existing small business support structures, programs to assist area small businesses with succession planning.
- Recruit from regional businesses and non-profit organizations emerging leaders to serve with the Plan for Progress.
- Develop a collaborative action plan built with tools and techniques taken from exemplary models operating elsewhere in the country capable of meeting the leadership needs of the Pioneer Valley on a self-sustaining basis.

### Key Implementers

- Hartford-Springfield Economic Partnership
- Chambers of Commerce (region-wide)
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- Springfield Area Council for Excellence
- Mayors and chief elected officials
- Capitol Region Council of Governments

## Market Our Region

### Background

Drawing 13 percent of the state's tourism to our region (when including Berkshire County), the Pioneer Valley ranks just behind Boston and Cape Cod as a tourist destination, with more than three million trips in 2002 alone. The economic impact of tourism and regional promotion is felt throughout the state and in the Pioneer Valley through sales tax and property taxes on vacation homes.

Our marketing efforts are not only targeted at tourists, but also at businesses outside and within our region that are considering moving to or remaining in the Pioneer Valley.

Overall, we must better market our region, highlighting its many attractive qualities such as the arts, crafts, open spaces, small business climate, ethnic and cultural diversity, hiking, boating, biking, and other outdoor activities.

### Short-term Action Steps (1- 3 years):

- Continue to strengthen the region's role as a tourist destination, utilizing promotional materials, advertising, tours, research reports, industry trade shows, and new media.
- Enhance and expand the internal and external image of the region's urban core communities of Chicopee, Holyoke, and Springfield by releasing timely statistics and research reports that paint an accurate picture of our cities' quality of life, public services, and economic health.
- Stay abreast of and refine regional research and data issued by the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism that can be featured in promotional materials and media outreach campaigns.
- Undertake pre-development activities on at least one new significant regional attraction or addition to an existing regional attraction in order to spark capital investment in the Pioneer Valley.
- Continue to coordinate efforts with northern Connecticut to promote the Pioneer Valley as a tourist destination with abundant historical, cultural, and recreational assets.
- Support local artists, artisans, and craftspeople, and encourage the growth of their sector as a major contributor to the region's quality of life and as exporters of their products.

**Long-term Action Steps (4 or more years):**

- Preserve the Valley's historic architecture, special agricultural character, and open spaces through thoughtful development practices.
- Develop public outreach campaigns to rally local residents and business owners around the Pioneer Valley identity and the variety of local attractions.
- Work with the EDC to stimulate investment and expansion of the following industry clusters:
  - paper, printing, and publishing; educational services; fabricated metal products; plastics and rubber products; insurance carriers and related financial service activities; healthcare and life sciences; and, software and information technology.
- Learn from other similar interstate regions throughout the country through outreach to regional planning agencies or economic development councils, and concerted and thoughtful research on regional identity-building efforts.
- Consider the publication of a long-range, five-year calendar of events for the Pioneer Valley.
- Research the impact of the "creative economy" on the Pioneer Valley, invest in the growth of that sector, and promote the development of creative economies within the region's urban core communities.

**Implementers:**

- Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts
- Hartford-Springfield Economic Partnership
- Regional tourism councils
- Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Chambers of Commerce (region-wide)
- Cultural councils
- Municipal economic development staff
- Western Massachusetts Arts Alliance

## Revitalize the Connecticut River

### Background

In 1998, President Clinton designated the Connecticut River one of the nation's fourteen "American Heritage" rivers, highlighting the unique value of this body of water as a recreational resource, an historic transportation thoroughfare, and the foundation of the Pioneer Valley's manufacturing legacy. As New England's longest and largest river, the Connecticut represents opportunities and challenges that flow across state borders, affecting tourism, economic development, and environmental quality in towns and cities throughout Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. In Franklin and Hampshire counties, the river is vital to outdoor recreation, drawing tourists and improving the quality of life for the Valley's residents.

The Connecticut River 2020 Strategy and the organizations driving it are crucial to restoring the river and highlighting its potential economic benefits. Currently, the Connecticut does not meet Class B (swimmable/fishable) federal water-quality standards from Holyoke to the Long Island Sound. A host of other threats exist, from combined sewer overflows (CSOs) discharging untreated waste into the river, to imprudent land-use practices that cordon off sections of the river with commercial and residential developments.

### Short-term Action Steps (1 to 3 years):

- Continue to work with a cross-border congressional delegation to secure federal assistance for ongoing Connecticut River CSO clean-up efforts and storm water Phase II compliance.
- Expand the Connecticut River 2020 Strategy by working with New England region Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials.
- Complete remaining sections of the Connecticut River Walk and Bikeway—a 13-mile pedestrian and bike trail running from Agawam to Chicopee—by working closely with the Massachusetts Highway Department and the cities of Agawam, Chicopee, Holyoke, Springfield, and West Springfield.

### Long-term Action Steps (4 or more years):

- Improve water quality by working with members of the Connecticut River Watershed Team to implement the Connecticut River Strategic Plan.
- Continue to work with the EPA at the regional and federal levels to secure financial support for long-range water quality improvement planning.
- Support new federal legislative initiatives that would provide increased federal funding for water quality and infrastructure improvement programs.

- Continue to work closely with the Economic Development Council (EDC) and other partners to actively promote the river as a tourism and recreational resource.
- Work with communities throughout the region to implement storm water Phase II permit compliance.
- Link the Connecticut Riverwalk under construction in the Greater Springfield area to the north with the Norwottuck Rail Trail in Northampton, Hadley, and Amherst.
- Evaluate the feasibility and benefits of pursuing, on a bi-state or multistate basis, Congressional designation of the Connecticut River Valley area as an official National Heritage Corridor (NHC) linked to the National Park Service. Assuming broad public involvement in and support for this initiative, secure this nationally significant designation as a means to enhance our region's identity, economy, ecology, liveability, and cohesiveness.

**Implementers:**

- Connecticut River Clean-Up Committee
- Connecticut River 2020 Strategy
- Massachusetts Highway Department
- Connecticut River Task Force
- Connecticut River Watershed Council
- State and Federal legislative delegations
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- Capitol Region Council of Governments
- Hartford-Springfield Economic Partnership
- Municipal planners and planning boards

## Enhance High-Tech and Conventional Infrastructure

### Background

New types of infrastructure have begun to emerge as critical components of a competitive economy and livable region. Like roads and bridges, telecommunications and technology services provide links between the Pioneer Valley and nearby regions, and between our remotest rural communities and our urban centers. Enhancing all forms of infrastructure—from our roads, buses, sewer lines, and energy services to commercial space, broadband Internet, and cellular technology—will have far-reaching impacts on the quality of life for our residents, and on the economic health of our businesses.

### Short-term Action Steps:

- Continue efforts to refine and improve the objective transportation criteria introduced in late 2003 by the Massachusetts Highway Department.
- Continue the collaboration between the Plan for Progress Coordinating Council and the Pioneer Valley Connect initiative to bring to market affordable highspeed broadband capacity.
- Continue the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Franklin Regional Council of Government's efforts to expand the region's work on brownfields, chiefly by enlarging revolving loan funds and assessment pools, and by working with the state to maintain an accurate inventory of brownfields sites in the Pioneer Valley.
- Advocate for equitable state funding of regional transit authorities through the creation of a dedicated revenue stream.
- Advocate for increased state and federal transportation assistance to address the region's expanding list of necessary highway and bridge improvements.
- Complete the construction and renovation of new multi-modal transportation facilities in Holyoke, Springfield, and Westfield to serve the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority, Amtrak, and inter-city bus service.
- Explore innovative means of increasing the Pioneer Valley's pool of funds for priority infrastructure improvements tied to the region's economy.
- Pursue comprehensive plan designed to revitalize and enhance the CSX rail freight yard in West Springfield and its' surrounding Merrick and Memorial neighborhoods as an intermodal transportation asset that can boost the region's economy, mobility, and conductivity.

**Long-term Action Steps:**

- Improve both passenger and freight rail service within the region, particularly the development of a commuter rail line between Springfield and New Haven, Connecticut.
- Develop a plan to identify potential industrial sites for continued business expansion in the Valley, including creative solutions for infill development and adaptive reuse of existing structures in our urban and rural areas.
- Support regional watershed initiatives to help protect the region's water supply.
- Work closely with the Economic Development Council (EDC), Regional Technology Corporation (RTC), Massachusetts Highway Department, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, and other partners to develop fiber optic links along the I-91 north-south corridor and along east-west conduits.

**Key implementers:**

- Pioneer Valley Connect
- Regional Technology Corporation
- Massachusetts Highway Department
- Hartford-Springfield Economic Development Partnership
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- Franklin Regional Council of Governments
- Pioneer Valley Regional Competitiveness Council
- Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts
- Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
- Greenfield-Montague Transportation Area
- Franklin Regional Transit Authority
- Mayors and chief elected officials
- Municipal public works departments
- Municipal planners and planning boards



## Develop an Array of Housing Options

### Background

Housing is a basic human need, and one of the most significant expenditures individuals face. During the past several years, the Pioneer Valley has experienced a fairly stable housing market, marked by a gradual increase in housing affordability. Despite the general availability and affordability of housing, a disparity still exists between the number of “affordable” housing units (according to existing guidelines) and the number and location of individuals in need of such housing. In order to stave off continued isolation of low-income families and individuals, we must continue to pursue even distribution of affordable and workforce housing throughout the Valley’s urban, suburban, and rural communities.

### Short-term Action Steps (1-3 years)

- Encourage the development or redevelopment of new owner and rental housing that will attract young professionals, particularly in the region’s urban core communities, and market the existing mid- and high-end housing stock.
- Promote a partnership between local mortgage lenders and community-based organizations to expand opportunities for low-income individuals and families to purchase homes without sub-prime or predatory lending terms.
- Prioritize redevelopment of vacant or under-utilized sites across the region as more valuable than new development.
- Survey employers to develop a better understanding of their employees’ housing needs.
- Conduct a study of the impediments to affordable and workforce housing development in the region and assemble a regional housing plan to guide actions and decision-making.
- Link regional housing options to support “smart growth” development plans, programs, and regulations.

### Long-term Action Steps (4 or more years)

- Through regulations such as Chapter 40B, develop a better distribution of affordable and workforce housing across the region.
- Regularly study and document instances of predatory and sub-prime lending and, when necessary, advocate for legal action to end such practices.
- Advocate for the state to implement regional housing and affordable and workforce housing policies that make sense within each regional context.

- Develop a means of coordinating housing issues on a regional basis, particularly the growing concentrations of group homes in particular areas.

#### **Key Implementers**

- HAP, Inc. – The Region's Housing Partnership
- Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority
- Massachusetts Fair Housing Coalition
- Local and regional banks
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- Franklin Regional Council of Governments
- Community development corporations
- Mayors and chief elected officials
- Municipal housing authorities
- Municipal planners and planning boards
- Private housing developers and builders

## Endorse a Regional Approach to Public Safety

### Background

Our entire region suffers when some of our communities are unsafe and at a high risk of crime. Making sure the Pioneer Valley provides safe places to live and work—and equally important, places that feel safe—is achieved through sound laws and policies coupled with adequate funding, training, and collaboration across jurisdictions. Also, it is necessary to ensure that the region addresses the threat to public safety emanating from terrorism and a variety of natural hazards such as floods, forest fires, and hurricanes.

For more than a decade, Pioneer Valley per capita spending on public safety has fallen far short of state levels. Working with the state to increase overall funding and helping communities find ways to better fund public safety services is critical to addressing crime on a regional level.

Overall, the Plan seeks to ensure that the Pioneer Valley has a well-coordinated and effective system in place to address and respond to crime, terrorism, and natural disasters. With the formation of the Western Region Homeland Security Council, regional emergency response and collaboration will be enhanced.

### Short-term Action Steps (1-3 years)

- Support the efforts of the Western Region Homeland Security Council to improve interoperable communication systems and to implement training and exercise opportunities for emergency responders in the region.
- Support an increase in collaboration among law enforcement departments to eliminate criminal activity that drifts across municipal lines when one community cracks down.
- Support public outreach campaigns that paint a truthful and accurate picture of crime throughout the region.
- Continue to refine and improve the Western Region Homeland Security Plan.
- Develop a natural hazards mitigation plan for the Pioneer Valley in concert with state, regional, and local officials.

### Long-term Action Steps (4 or more years)

- Promote the use of business improvement districts (BIDs) across the Pioneer Valley.
- Advocate for reform in the criminal justice system to reduce the backlog of court cases, so suspects are not free for up to two years between their arrest and trial.

- Advocate for greater limitations on access to Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) to prevent eligible employees from being perpetually screened out of jobs.
- Advocate sensible union contracts for public safety officers that protect those officers while maximizing public safety.
- Support and prioritize development and redevelopment projects (facade improvements, brownfields clean-up, etc.) that build safe, attractive spaces in the urban core.
- Maintain the Western Region Homeland Security Plan so that it is kept active and current, and ensures a coordinated regional emergency response system.

### **Key Implementers**

- Chiefs of police
- Mayors and chief elected officials
- State and Federal legislative delegations
- Mayors and chief elected officials
- Western Massachusetts Regional Homeland Security Council
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- Franklin Regional Council of Governments
- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
- Municipal emergency planning committees
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety
- Western Region Homeland Security Council
- Emergency responders

## Champion Statewide Fiscal Equity

### Background

There are many examples of fiscal imbalance across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, many of which handicap the Pioneer Valley's economic development efforts. The Plan for Progress advocates a consistent and persistent campaign designed to achieve statewide fiscal equity to ensure that Pioneer Valley taxpayers are treated equitably relative to residents living elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

### Short-term Action Steps (1-3 years)

- Advocate for a fair apportionment of local aid to municipal governments, apart from education aid, that is roughly proportionate to the size of a community's population or some other rational indicator of need.
- To ensure adequate levels of public transit service to support the region's economic base, advocate for the creation of one or more dedicated funding sources for the Pioneer Valley and Franklin Regional Transit Authorities, and the Greenfield-Montague Transportation Area, similar to actions already taken in the Boston area for the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority.
- Participate in and contribute to objective statewide assessments of transportation infrastructure needs and costs, and support significant increases in existing rates of capital investment.
- Advocate for the adoption of policies that ensure, for cities and towns, equitable and stable funding in lieu of taxes on state-owned properties.

### Long-term Action Steps (4 or more years)

- Advocate for equity in transportation funding so that the Pioneer Valley receives monies for road and bridge projects equivalent to our size within the state.
- Advocate for the state to more frequently select western Massachusetts sites for capital investments, with a particular emphasis on the region's distressed urban core communities.
- Advocate for greater infrastructure investments that generate significant benefits for the regional economy.
- Advocate for the equitable allocation of state and federal funding for adult education, literacy, and school-to-work programs to enhance the region's capacity to meet more of the demand for these services.

- Launch an effort to establish and capitalize a within–region infrastructure investment fund designed to supplement public funding commitments available from federal and state governments.

### **Key Implementers**

- State and Federal legislative delegations
- Mayors and chief elected officials
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- Franklin Regional Council of Governments
- Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
- Greenfield–Montague Transportation Area
- Franklin Regional Transit Authority
- Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts







## Plan for Progress Trustees

**T**he people who participated in and contributed to the development of the 2004 Plan for Progress represented the diversity of interests in our region, and are too numerous to name. Listed below are present and recent Trustees of the Plan for Progress who dedicated their time, shared their knowledge, and invested both personal and professional energy in the development of this Plan.

H. Edgar Alejandro, Western Massachusetts Electric Company  
 Teri Anderson, City of Northampton  
 Suzanne Beck, Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce  
 Kay Berenson, The Recorder  
 Allan W. Blair, Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts  
 Paul H. Boudo, Paul H. Boudo and Associates  
 Timothy W. Brennan, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission  
 Catherine Brown, City of Chicopee  
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 Valerie Conti, Massachusetts Small Business Development Center  
 John Coull, Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce  
 Patricia Crosby, Franklin-Hampshire Regional Employment Board  
 Glenn Davis, Urban League of Springfield  
 Russell Denver, Esq., Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield  
 John Doyle, Consultant  
 Dianne Fuller Doherty, Western Massachusetts Small Business Development Center  
 Linda Dunlavy, Franklin Regional Council of Governments  
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 Richard Feldman, Center for Public Technology  
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 Paul Gagliarducci, Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District  
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 John Hoops, National Tooling and Machine Association  
 James Horne, Jr., United Way of Pioneer Valley

David Howland, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection  
Mary Jenewin-Caplin, Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts  
Stanley Kowalski, Jr., Western New England College  
Geoff Little, Telecommunications Consultant  
Thomas McColgan, City of Springfield  
Ann McFarland-Burke, Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts  
Christopher B. Myhrum, Esq., Bulkey, Richardson, & Gelinas, LLP  
Juliette Hanh Nguyen, Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants  
Linda Petrella, City of Springfield  
Doris Ransford, Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce  
Barbara Roche, Regional Education and Business Alliance  
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Ron Schetzel, Hotel Northampton  
Andrew Scibelli, Springfield Technical Community College  
Christopher B. Sikes, Western Massachusetts Enterprise Fund  
Michael J. Sullivan, City of Holyoke  
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Michael Vann, The Vann Group  
Carlos Vega, Nueva Esperanza  
John Waite, Franklin County Community Development Corporation  
William Ward, Hampden County Regional Employment Board  
Michael Wright, University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Mary Kay Wydra, Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau

## Key Implementers

While the Plan for Progress Trustees guide the development and oversee the implementation of the Plan for Progress, it is a variety of other individuals and their respective organizations that carry the work forward. The following organizations have been critical to the development of the new Plan and will be critical to its successful implementation.

Andrew M. Scebelli Enterprise Center  
 Berkshire Regional Planning Commission  
 Capital Region Workforce Development Board  
 Capitol Region Council of Governments  
 Chambers of Commerce  
 Chiefs of police  
 Commercial real estate professionals  
 Community development corporations  
 Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts  
 Connecticut River Clean-Up Committee  
 Connecticut River Task Force  
 Connecticut River Watershed Council  
 Cultural councils  
 Early childhood education advocates and providers  
 Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts  
 Economic Development Partners  
 Emergency responders  
 Franklin Regional Council of Governments  
 Franklin Regional Transit Authority  
 Franklin-Hampshire Regional Employment Board  
 Franklin-Hampshire Regional Tourism Council  
 Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau  
 Greenfield Community College  
 Greenfield-Montague Transportation Area  
 Hampden Regional Employment Board  
 HAP, Inc. – The Region’s Housing Partnership  
 Hartford-Springfield Economic Partnership  
 HiddenTEC  
 Holyoke Community College  
 Knowledge Corridor colleges and universities  
 Local and regional banks

Massachusetts Career Development Institute  
Massachusetts Department of Business and Technology  
Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety  
Massachusetts Fair Housing Coalition  
Massachusetts Highway Department  
Massachusetts Office of Business Development  
MassVentures, Inc.  
Mayors and chief elected officials  
Municipal and regional housing authorities  
Municipal economic development staff  
Municipal emergency planning committees  
Municipal planners and planning boards  
Municipal public works departments  
Pioneer Valley colleges  
Pioneer Valley Connec  
Pioneer Valley International Trade Council  
Pioneer Valley Life Sciences Initiative  
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission  
Pioneer Valley Regional Competitiveness Council  
Pioneer Valley STEMnet  
Pioneer Valley Transit Authority  
Private housing developers and builders  
Regional Education and Business Alliance  
Regional Technology Corporation  
Regional tourism councils  
School Districts  
Springfield Area Council for Excellence  
Springfield Technical Community College  
State and Federal legislative delegations  
United Way organizations  
University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Western Massachusetts Arts Alliance  
Western Massachusetts Electric Company  
Western Massachusetts Enterprise Fund  
Western Massachusetts Regional Homeland Security Council  
Western Massachusetts Small Business Development Center  
Western Region Homeland Security Council  
Workforce associations and labor unions

## Evaluating Our Performance and Process

The success of the Plan for Progress lies in the effective implementation of its strategic goals and action steps. Therefore, we propose to link a rigorous evaluation strategy to this Plan to ensure accountability for the achievement of the goals laid out for the Pioneer Valley over the next five to ten years.

The Plan for Progress Coordinating Council will provide oversight to an annual measurement and evaluation of Plan implementation. Evaluation methods will be used for program planning (formative evaluation) and outcomes measurement (summative evaluation).

## Formative Evaluation

The Plan for Progress Coordinating Council will consider, when planning, approving, and prioritizing new projects or action steps each year, seven principles that arise from the Plan's cross-cutting themes.

The Plan for Progress endorses strategies and actions that:

- Build strong and dynamic interstate connections and promote an external identity as a cross-border economic region—the Knowledge Corridor—that is competitive on a global scale
- Increase the diversity of the region and the appreciation of that diversity, thereby promoting regional economic growth through entrepreneurship among both long-time residents of and recent arrivals to the Pioneer Valley
- Take advantage of the region's significant educational assets while fostering the potential to improve on the region's educational weaknesses
- Support the growth and long-term sustainability of the region's priority industry clusters
- Through existing regulations and innovative economic incentives for urban redevelopment, promote land development practices that are responsible and considerate of the long-term preservation of the region's land, forests, farmland, water, air, health, people, communities, and overall quality of life.
- Leverage technology to improve socio-economic outcomes across the region, and likewise build the technology competency and capacity of the region's private sector businesses as well as public and civic sector organizations

- Directly or indirectly invest in the development and improvement of the region's urban core cities and generates benefits for their residents and the region as a whole.

In addition to standards defined by the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA), these principles will be applied to the consideration and prioritization of public works projects for potential inclusion in the Pioneer Valley's annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

## Summative Evaluation

Each year, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, under the supervision of the Plan for Progress Coordinating Council and in conjunction with the submission of the annual CEDS report, will complete a comprehensive evaluation of the prior year. This evaluation will include two components: 1) an evaluation of implementation performance and 2) an evaluation of the ongoing planning and implementation process. Both evaluation components will provide quantitative indicators with qualitative supporting evidence.

## Performance Evaluation

Overall, implementation of the Plan for Progress will be measured against the Plan's seven cross-cutting themes. There will be three components of the performance evaluation:

- 1) Overall Theme Grades: Near the end of each fiscal year (June 30), staff of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission will identify and organize, by cross-cutting theme, the major accomplishments of the Plan for Progress for the previous year. These will then be sent with a questionnaire to each member of the Plan for Progress Coordinating Council, who will assign a letter grade (A to E) to each theme. Every effort will be made to ensure that a majority of Council members respond. Responses will be aggregated so that an overall grade can be assigned to each cross-cutting theme (theme grades will have a point value between 0 and 4).
- 2) Benchmarks: Because there is an element of subjectivity in Coordinating Council members evaluating progress, quantitative benchmarks will also be used. These are outlined in the "Cross-Cutting Themes" section of this Plan. Near the end of the fiscal year, the most recent available data will be collected for each benchmark and rated from 3 (significant progress) to 1 (no progress) by Pioneer Valley Planning Commission staff. As with overall theme grades, benchmark grades will be aggregated for each theme area into an average score between 1 and 3. Because data from various sources is released at different times, some benchmarks may not be used every year.

- 3) **Action Steps:** Information about accomplishments received from implementer organizations will also be applied to performance measurement. PVPC staff will rate each action step as completed (3), in progress (2), or not started (1). These ratings will be submitted to the Plan for Progress Coordinating Council for discussion, modification, and final approval. Action step ratings will be aggregated for each strategy to produce an overall strategy rating between 1 and 3.

Once all three components of the annual performance evaluation are complete, results will be aggregated into an annual evaluation profile. This profile will reveal aggregate overall cross-cutting theme and strategy ratings. In each case, the aggregate overall rating will be from one (worst performance) to ten (best performance). Each aggregated rating will incorporate all three components of the performance evaluation. Forty percent of ratings will be determined by Coordinating Council theme grades, and 30 percent each will be determined by benchmarks and action step ratings.

Following is the Plan for Progress performance evaluation profile that will be completed each year. Shaded areas will not be completed because they represent cross-cutting themes that are not relevant to the particular strategic goal in that row.

## Illustrative Example of Annual Performance Evaluation Profile

	Average Action Step Ratings (1-3)	Cross-Border	Diversity	Education	Industry Clusters	Sustainability	Technology	Urban Investment	Overall Strategy Ratings (1-10)
<b>Average Theme Ratings (0-4)</b>									
<b>Average Benchmark Rating (1-3)</b>									
Business and clusters									
Small businesses and risk capital									
Efficient regulatory process									
Workforce development									
PreK to 12 education									
Higher Education									
New leaders									
Market the region									
Connecticut River									
Infrastructure									
Housing									
Public Safety									
Statewide fiscal equity									
<b>Overall Theme Ratings (1-10)</b>									

This profile will guide members of the Coordinating Council in holding implementers accountable for progress. Because the overall theme and strategy ratings rely on three different evaluative mechanisms, this profile ameliorates potential bias in any one method and provides a fairly accurate assessment.

### Process Evaluation

A key component of the annual summative evaluation will be a quantitative analysis of the planning process. Using a series of quantitative indicators in several categories, the Coordinating Council, supported by PVPC staff, will annually determine targets for each indicator. At the close of the year, staff will assemble the necessary data to determine if targets were exceeded, met, or missed. Within sub-categories, the ratings will be aggregated to indicate overall performance in various aspects of the process.



Process indicators are likely to change as the Plan is implemented and evolves; however, the following are the initial process measures and their sub-categories:

1) Outreach measures

- The number of publications related to economic development produced and distributed by PVPC in the last year.
- The number of presentations related to economic development made by members of the PVPC economic development team at meetings not sponsored by the Plan for Progress or PVPC.
- The number of teams or committees working on economic development around the region that include members of the PVPC economic development team.

2) External engagement measures

- The number of organizations and companies, other than PVPC, actively engaged in implementing one or more strategies of the Plan for Progress.
- The number of presentations made to the Plan for Progress Trustees by non-board members.

3) Participation measures

- The average number of Plan for Progress Coordinating Council members in attendance at regularly scheduled meetings over the past year.
- The average number of Plan for Progress Trustees in attendance at regularly scheduled meetings over the past year.
- The diversity, by sector, of those Plan for Progress Trustees attending regularly scheduled meetings over the past year.

These indicators will be crucial to determining those parts of the planning process that need additional focus and attention.

## Reporting Results

The Pioneer Valley region was designated an Economic Development District in 1999 by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. Because the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), required annually by the Economic Development Administration, intersects with the Plan for Progress, the CEDS became the vehicle for annual updates to the Plan for Progress.

The regional strategies described in the CEDS each year are drawn from the strategies of the Plan for Progress. Each year since 1999, the CEDS report has listed the annual action plan, the lead implementing organization, the major accomplishments of the previous year, and the milestones for each Plan strategy. The annual CEDS report provides a regular and consistent assessment of progress for each of the strategies, and gives the Plan's lead implementers the feedback necessary for adjusting plans, goals, and resource allocation.

The Plan for Progress reporting process will be supplemented by a website, [www.PlanForProgress.org](http://www.PlanForProgress.org), whose primary purpose is to make the Plan more dynamic, interactive, and accessible. Interested community members will be able to contribute their ideas through e-mail and comment boards while following the progress of the Plan and the region's economy.

Beginning with the 2004 Plan for Progress, the reciprocal relationship between the Plan and the CEDS will be expanded to include the Plan for Progress website. The assessments included in the annual CEDS report will more accurately reflect the implementation of each of the strategies, because the website will provide the input of community members, links to project websites maintained by the lead implementers, and new data and analysis. For example, annual increases in the number of employees at businesses begun in the Regional Business Incubator could be listed on the Springfield Enterprise Center site. Those figures could be used as a quantitative indicator of the impact of that program on small business development and local employment. An assessment of that impact could then be included in the CEDS report as one indicator of the region's economic development.





## Celebrating A Decade of Regional Progress

Looking back over the past decade, it is clear that the results of implementing the 1994 Plan are extensive and impressive. The Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts was established and has been involved in numerous new programs. The Regional Technology Corporation was formed. The Andrew M. Scibelli Enterprise Center was launched, capitalizing on an available high-tech industrial space adjacent to Springfield Technical Community College. And the Hartford-Springfield Economic Partnership, developed to forge an interstate economic region, introduced us to the Knowledge Corridor.

The Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau developed a sales and marketing campaign in anticipation of the newly expanded Springfield Civic and Convention Center, and chronicled the expansion of tourism as three Pioneer Valley attractions grew to be among the top ten attractions in Massachusetts: the Eastern States Exposition (the Big E), Six Flags New England, and the Yankee Candle Company Factory Store.

As a grand finale to a decade of progress, the new Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, the Dr. Seuss National Memorial Sculpture Garden, the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, the widened Route 9 Calvin Coolidge Bridge, the new student center complexes at Smith College and Mt. Holyoke College, and a new terminal and parking garage at Bradley International Airport were some of the signature projects completed and opened to the public in 2003 and 2004.

“...we will continue to make our region a special and vibrant place in which to live, work, learn, play, and visit.”

The 2004 Plan has strategic goals aimed at building on the successes of the original Plan by creating a stable, diversified, and competitive economy. Through the implementation of these strategic goals, we will continue to make our region a special and vibrant place in which to live, work, learn, play, and visit. Expectations are high, in part because the foundation for success already exists.

### Implementing This New Plan Still Requires Collaboration—With You!

Perhaps the most important accomplishment of the original Plan for Progress was bringing together the region's government, business, and civic sectors to confront the Pioneer Valley's key economic challenges and opportunities. It was seen as a compendium of striking ideas about what could be done collaboratively to shape a positive economic future for the Valley. Within the relatively short span of a single decade, it made a positive and profound difference in how our region thinks and functions day to day.

This new Plan repeatedly confirms that the Pioneer Valley has undergone and will continue to undergo major changes as it makes the transformation to a 21st century, knowledge-based economy. With the Valley's government, business, and civic sectors working in a collaborative manner, regional dialogue and cooperation can be translated into regional behavior that makes implementation of this new Plan possible.

With the Plan for Progress as our road map, we can go forward together, creating a bright future for the place we call home.



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