


1991

# Economic Development Policies Overall Economic Development Program

UMass Amherst Center Economic Development

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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICIES  
OVERALL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

**FITCHBURG, MASSACHUSETTS**

**SPRING, 1991**

**Principal Investigator**  
**John R. Mullin, Ph.D., AICP**

The Center for Economic Development would like to thank  
the Technical Assistance Committee for their efforts

Zenia Kotval, Project Coordinator  
Julie Cornelio  
Frank Luchessi  
Maureen Moriarty

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## I. The OEDP Committee

The Fitchburg OEDP Committee consists of 10 members who are representatives of various occupations and interests within the community, including the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority and the Fitchburg Industrial development Commission. The OEDP'S role in developing the OEDP is to review and comment on draft sections of the plan and approve the final OEDP document.

The Fitchburg Industrial Development Commission is responsible for final approval of this document and is also responsible for the overall coordination and oversight of the plan. The Industrial Development Commission will also be responsible for providing periodic status reports on progress of the program and evaluating the actual outcome of projects undertaken as a result of the OEDP.

### Fitchburg Overall Economic Development Committee

John Shields, Chairman Fitchburg IDC  
98 Laurel St.  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Engineer  
New England Tel.  
Marlborough

Robert Lyle, Vice Chairman Fitchburg IDC  
1440 Rindge Road  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Business Representative  
Bay State Council  
Leominster

John T. Cunningham  
56 Richardson Road  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Manager-Utility Serv.(Ret)  
General Electric  
Fitchburg

Richard Maynard  
855 John Fitch Highway  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Advertising Rep. (Retired)  
Montachusett Review  
Fitchburg

Dan E. Wuoti  
1431 Pearl Hill Road  
Fitchburg , MA 01420

Senior Design Engineer  
Toshiba  
Burlington

Daniel Flynn, Chair FRA  
34 Ash Street  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

V.P. for Advancement  
Fitchburg State College  
Fitchburg

Carlton E. Blackwell  
Vice Chairman FRA  
808 Fisher Road  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Attorney  
Gelinas, Ward and Reynolds  
Fitchburg

Kenneth Caron, Treasurer FRA  
46 Lovisa Street  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Partner  
William S. Reagan & Co.  
Fitchburg

Richard O. Fitzpatrick  
547 Elm Street  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Designer  
General Electric Co.  
Fitchburg

Kenneth Stone  
188 Pine Street  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Senior Sales Representative  
Digital Equipment Corp.  
Westborough



## **II. Past Development Efforts**

The city of Fitchburg has long been known as the "paper city." From the founding of the first paper mill in 1805, the city flourished as an industrial center. Cotton and woolen mills along with iron works employed thousands of people during the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.

Many of Fitchburg's paper companies survived the mass factory moves to the south which devastated other Massachusetts cities, but during the 1960's and 1970's, even Fitchburg fell victim to the changing economic environment in New England.

The industrial base of Fitchburg has been eroding since the late 1960's, according to information from the Bureau of Census regarding manufacturing in the city between 1967 and 1972. The number of manufacturing establishments with twenty or more employees decreased by 15.4%. The number of employees in manufacturing decreased by 19.6% and the new capital expenditures decreased by 58.7%.

By the late 1970's, Fitchburg had lost a substantial number of medium and large sized industries which outgrew their facilities. These industries were forced to locate elsewhere due to the unavailability of suitable industrial sites within the city.

In order to arrest the out-migration of industry and the accompanying loss of jobs and tax base during the middle 1970's, the EDA funded the development of the 231 Industrial Park in Fitchburg. Today, the park is sold out with 14 companies making the park their home., with construction scheduled for one additional building and two expansions. Over 600 jobs in electronics, instrumentation, and chemicals are new to the city.

While great strides have been made to retain, expand, and attract new industries, Fitchburg's economy is still very fragile. The reason being is that Fitchburg's economy is dominated by "mature" manufacturing industries still undergoing transition.

## **III. The Area and its Economy**

The city of Fitchburg, located in North Central Massachusetts, is the twenty-eighth largest community in the Commonwealth with a 1990 census count of 39,580 persons and an estimated 190,139 within the adjacent designated statistical area (SMSA). The city is situated on the North Branch of the Nashua River approximately 46 miles Northwest of Boston and 25 miles North of Worcester. Fitchburg makes up one of the largest industrial communities of the Mountachusett region, which consists of 18 communities, while the towns surrounding Fitchburg and Leominster are largely residential and rural.

The city is well served by major means of transportation. It is traversed east to west by Route 2, a limited access state highway. Interstate I- 90 connects the region to Worcester and the Massachusetts Turnpike. Major commercial air transport is available at Logan International Airport located just outside of Boston. In addition, the region contains five smaller civilian airports.

Among some of the constraints to development that Fitchburg currently faces includes high energy costs for industry, long distances to many national consumer markets, increased competition from foreign markets and a limited supply of developable land for industry due to steep topography, poor soils and vacant land.

Other constraints include several empty industrial sites under Chapter 21-E and marketing difficulties of downtown office and retail space due to the undesirability of these buildings which were constructed before the turn of the century. Declining real estate values and current difficulties within the banking industry have also aggravated the economic situation in Fitchburg.

## Population

In 1985, Fitchburg ranked as the second largest city in Worcester County, accounted for 40% of the people living in the Fitchburg-Leominster SMSA and for nearly 21% of those found in the eighteen communities which make up the Montachusett Regional Planning Area . As of the August Preliminary 1990 Census the population of Fitchburg is 41,194.

Between 1970 and 1980, Fitchburg's population size decreased by almost 10% (Table1). From 1980 to 1985 there occurred a decline of only minus 0.6 %, suggesting that the city had entered a stage of population stability. The emergence of such a condition may be attributed to the positive effects associated with Fitchburg's expanding economic base, as well as the many recent civic improvements brought about by public and private investments.

At the metropolitan level, slight increments in population were recorded in both time periods. The number of people in the Fitchburg-Leominster SMSA increased from 97,164 in 1970 to 99,957 in 1980. In 1985, the total stood at 101,032. Whereas each of the two central cities and the town of Lunenburg underwent similar, slight proportionate declines between 1980 and 1985, the three remaining communities (Shirley, Townsend and Westminster) grew by 1.5%, 13.9% and 9.3% respectively.



**Table 1 - Population Trends in the Montachusett Region 1970-1985**  
**Percentage Change**

	<b>1970 Population</b>	<b>1980 Population</b>	<b>1985 Population</b>	<b>1970- 1980</b>	<b>1980- 1985</b>
<b>Massachusetts</b>	5,689,170	5,728,288	5,823,000	0.7%	N A
<b>Worcester City</b>	637,037	643,968	661,100	1.1%	N A
<b>Labor Mkt Area</b>	97,164	99,957	N A	2.9%	N A
<b>Fitchburg</b>	43,343	39,580	39,332	-9.5%	-.6%
<b>Ashburnham</b>	3,484	4,075	4,322	17.0%	6.1%
<b>Ashby</b>	2,274	2,311	2,484	1.6%	7.5%
<b>Leominster</b>	32,939	34,508	34,318	4.8%	-0.6%
<b>Townsend</b>	4,281	7,201	8,202	68.2%	13.9%
<b>Westminster</b>	4,273	5,139	5,619	20.3%	9.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, 1980 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics: Massachusetts, 1-C-23, Issued June 1983, and 1985 Massachusetts Population Census.

### **Demographic and Social Characteristics**

As compared with county and statewide figures, Fitchburg exhibits proportionately fewer persons under the age of 15 and a relatively greater number of persons 65 years and over (Table 2). Despite these differences, the median age of people in Fitchburg is comparatively lower. The apparent discrepancy is explained largely by the presence of resident students attending Fitchburg State College. As reported in the 1980 Census of Population, the combined proportionate number of persons in Fitchburg between the ages of 15-19 and 20-24 was greater than that in Worcester County and Massachusetts by 3.8% and 3.5% respectively. In addition, the greater differential between the numbers of males and females in the city as compared with the county or state, is strongly influenced by the student population of the college. Enrollment figures for the spring semester of 1986 reveals a ratio of 1.7 female students to 1 male student.

As shown in Table 2, the racial composition of Fitchburg's residents in 1980 resembled more closely that of Worcester County than that of the state. Nonwhites made up 3% of the city's population as compared with 2.8% in the county and 6.3% statewide. The city's foreign born population of 8.2%, on the other hand, was appreciably greater than that found in the county, but only slightly less than the number found in Massachusetts. According to census data, of those foreign-born Fitchburg residents who reported their countries of origin, 43.5% had emigrated from Europe, 38.8% from Canada, 5.5% from Central and South America, 5.5% from Asia, and 1.2% from other areas of the world. Finally, the relative number of persons of Spanish origin living in Fitchburg (2.4%) differed negligibly in comparison with either the county or state.



**Table 2 - Age, Sex and Ethnic Composition of City Residents, 1980**

	<b>FITCHBURG</b>	<b>Worcester County</b>	<b>Massachusetts</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	39,580	646,352	5,737,037
<b>Age/Sex Composition</b>			
Under 15 Years	19.7%	21.7%	20.4%
15-64 Years	65.9%	65.4%	67.0%
65 Years and Over 14.4%	12.9%	12.6%	
<b>Median Age</b>	30.2 yrs.	31 yrs.	31.2 yrs.
<b>Males</b>	45.7%	47.2%	47.6%
<b>Females</b>	54.3%	52.8%	52.4%
<b>Racial/Ethnic Composition</b>			
White Population	97.0%	97.2%	93.7%
Black Population	1.7%	1.3%	3.9%
Other Populations	1.3%	1.5%	2.4%
Foreign Born Population	8.2%	6.4%	8.7%
Spanish Origin	2.4%	2.1%	2.5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, 1-C-23.

### **Educational Attainment**

Levels of educational attainment among Fitchburg residents in 1980 lagged behind those recorded for Worcester County and Massachusetts. However, among the data contained in Table 3 there is evidence that the gap is closing. When the number of high school graduates among persons 18-24 years is compared with persons 25 years and over within each of the three areas, the greatest proportionate difference is found in Fitchburg. In 1980, 79.6% of the city's younger group were high school graduates, as compared with only 58.8% of their more elderly counterparts. In Worcester County the respective values were 81.1% and 66.7%, and for the state, 82.6% and 72.2%. Secondly, differences between the three enumeration units in both the percentage of high school graduates and in the number of persons completing four years or more of college are substantially smaller for the younger age group.

### **Economic Characteristics**

Measures of household and family income levels indicate that the earnings realized by Fitchburg's inhabitants in 1970 were far below county and state averages. The city's position in this respect can be related primarily to the particular mix of economic activities that traditionally has accounted for most of its employment opportunities. For many years, Fitchburg has exhibited a concentration of heavy manufacturing industries such as paper, textiles, chemicals and machinery.

Since the early 1980's Fitchburg has been quite successful in attracting new industry and business, and has experienced considerable growth. In addition, the city has been undergoing a strong resurgence in the housing construction market, and is rapidly becoming a place of residence for workers who commute to jobs in the Boston metropolitan area and in high-tech firms located along the Interstate 495 corridor. Educational and Economic Characteristics are shown in Table 3.

Each of these trends promises to raise income levels for wage earners living in Fitchburg, in both an absolute sense as well as in relation to other communities around the county and state. Evidence of such

an upward shift in household incomes is shown in Table 4. Information gathered by the National Planning Data Corporation in 1985 indicated also that the median household income in Fitchburg had risen to \$21,195.

**Table 3 - Educational and Economic Characteristics, 1980**

<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<b>FITCHBURG</b>	<b>Worcester County</b>	<b>Massachusetts</b>
Persons 18-24 Years	6,775	86,000	781,691
High School Graduates	79.6%	81.1%	82.6%
Four or More Years College	5.3%	6.5%	9.7%
Persons 25 Years and Over	22,823	384,152	3,463,256
High School Graduates	58.8%	66.7%	72.2%
Four or More Years College	9.7%	15.4%	20.0%
Median Years School Completed	12.2	12.5	12.6



**Table 4-Income Characteristics, 1979**

	<b>FITCHBURG</b>	<b>Worcester County</b>	<b>Massachusetts</b>
Total Number of Households	14,267	225,167	2,032,576
Under \$10,000	36.4%	28.1%	27.7%
\$10,000 - \$19,999	31.0%	30.1%	28.8%
\$20,000 - \$34,999	24.6%	30.5%	29.5%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	6.0%	8.2%	9.3%
\$50,000 & Over	2.0%	3.1%	4.7%
Median Household Income	\$14,139	\$17,182	\$17,575
Total Number of Families	9,891	167,239	1,444,985
Under \$10,000	22.6%	17.7%	17.4%
\$10,000 - \$19,999	34.0%	30.5%	28.7%
\$20,000 - \$34,999	32.6%	37.4%	36.0%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	8.2%	10.5%	11.9%
\$50,000 & Over	2.6%	3.9%	6.0%
Median Family Income	\$17,924	\$20,494	\$21,166
Families Below Poverty Level	19.2%	7.1%	7.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, 1-C-23.

**Table 5 - Distribution of Households by Income, 1980 & 1985**

	Number of Households		Percentage of Total	
<b>Income</b>	<b>1980*</b>	<b>1985**</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1985</b>
Under \$7,500	3,829	2,615	26.8%	17.6%
\$7,500 - \$14,999	3,688	2,771	25.8%	18.7%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	3,903	3,258	27.4%	22.0%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	1,713	2,635	12.0%	17.8%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	856	2,204	6.0%	14.9%
\$50,000 & Over	285	1,326	2.0%	9.0%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>14,274</b>	<b>14,809</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Sources:

\* U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, 1-C-23.

\*\* National Planning Data Corporation.

### **Labor and Employment**

Until 1984, the Fitchburg-Leominster Labor Market Area (LMA) included, in addition to the two cities, the towns of Lunenburg, Shirley, Townsend and Westminster. The same six places also constitute the Fitchburg-Leominster Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) according to criteria developed for use in the 1980 Census of Population and Housing. In 1985, the Massachusetts Division of Employment Training (DET) redefined the composition of the Fitchburg-Leominster LMA by removing Shirley and Townsend, and adding the towns of Ashburnham and Ashby. In order to provide valid comparisons of labor and employment trends at the regional level, recent statistics issued by the DET have been grouped according to the labor market area as originally defined, that is the Fitchburg-Leominster SMSA.



Between 1980 and the first quarter of 1986, the size of Fitchburg's civilian labor force increased by 5.1%, from a total of 18,709 to 19,672. A similar rate of increase, amounting to 5.4%, was experienced for the entire SMSA. In absolute terms the metropolitan labor force expanded from 47,889 to 50,466. For comparative purposes, it may be noted that for all of Massachusetts an increment of very nearly eight percent occurred during the same period of time.

The most comprehensive, recent analysis of labor force characteristics for the city, SMSA, and state is contained in the 1980 Census of Population. According to census information, the age structure of Fitchburg's resident work force differed in a rather consistent manner when compared with either metropolitan or statewide data. In essence, the city's labor force was characterized by the presence of a proportionately greater number of youthful (16-24 years) and elderly (55 years and over) workers. The proportionate contribution of the younger age group was approximately four percentage points greater than the total for the SMSA and almost five points more than at the state level. At the other end of the spectrum, the percentage of elderly workers in Fitchburg exceeded the number in the SMSA and in Massachusetts by about one point. These excess, relative amounts were offset by proportionately fewer workers in the 25-54 age group. In 1980, persons in this range of ages made up 54.8% of Fitchburg's resident workers. For the SMSA, the compatible figure was 59.8% with 60.4% found at the state level.

When classified according to sex, the labor force in all three areas exhibits a greater proportion of males than females. The differential in Fitchburg was not as great, however, as across the SMSA or state. The percentage of males comprising the labor force in each of the respective areas amounted to 54.2%, 55.5% and 55.3%. -

A different perspective on the age/sex composition of Fitchburg's labor forces provided by the measures known as participation ratios. Participation ratios specify the proportion of persons in a given demographic group who are considered to be members of an area's work force, whether employed or unemployed at the time of enumeration. In Fitchburg, the SMSA and Massachusetts, approximately three-fourths of all males 16 years and over were labor force participants in 1980, as compared with about one-half of all females of the same age (Table 6).

**Table 6 - Labor Force Participation Ratios, 1980**

By Sex	FITCHBURG		F-L SMSA		MASSACHUSETTS	
	Total Persons	Labor Force %	Total Persons	Labor Force %	Total Persons	Labor Force %
<b>MALES</b>						
16-19	1,613	59.8%	3,715	57.0%	221,074	53.3%
20-24	2,048	78.0%	4,604	79.4%	270,376	78.3%
25-54	6,266	93.1%	17,849	92.3%	1,038,518	92.5%
55-64	1,952	73.9%	4,792	76.0%	275,819	77.1%
65-Over	2,004	15.0%	4,376	15.6%	270,759	20.2%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>13,883</b>	<b>73.1%</b>	<b>35,336</b>	<b>75.2%</b>	<b>2,076,546</b>	<b>75.0%</b>
<b>FEMALES</b>						
16-19	2,141	49.0%	4,377	53.0%	222,854	53.1%
20-24	2,452	65.9%	5,110	67.8%	282,649	72.0%
25-54	6,518	67.7%	18,319	66.3%	1,104,050	66.9%
55-64	2,388	50.3%	5,607	49.5%	318,750	50.1%
65-Over	3,695	7.6%	7,430	8.3%	455,360	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>17,194</b>	<b>49.8%</b>	<b>40,843</b>	<b>52.2%</b>	<b>2,383,663</b>	<b>52.8%</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, 1-C-23.

Across all three areas, the greatest differentials occurred among persons 25-54 years. In each area, over 90% of the males in this age category were members of the labor force. Among females, participation



amounted to about two-thirds of the total number. The overriding implication of these statistics at any of the three levels of observation, but particularly in Fitchburg, is that the female population constitutes a significant reservoir of potentially employable persons.

### **Occupational Characteristics**

Three broad occupational groupings accounted for almost three-fourths of the number of employed persons living in Fitchburg, as reported in the 1980 Census of Population. In the order of their importance, these occupational characteristics were: technical, sales and administrative support (30.8%); operators, fabricators and laborers (26.7%); and managerial and professional (16.4%).

Among the more specific types of occupations included in the technical, sales and administrative support group are those of health technologists and technicians, draftsmen, computer programmers, insurance and real estate salesmen, retail sales workers, secretaries, stenographers, typists and receptionists. The second most prominent occupational grouping in Fitchburg encompasses machine operators and tenders, welders, motor vehicle operators, material moving operators and construction workers. Among the managerial and professional occupations are found public administrators, education and health administrators, buyers and purchasing agents, engineers, architects, teachers, lawyers and physicians. This mix of occupations, along with those included under the headings of service, and precision production, craft and repair, supports the conclusion that Fitchburg possesses a diverse labor force in which the majority of workers can be described as moderately to highly skilled.

The three leading occupational sectors in Fitchburg are also the most significant at the SMSA and state levels, but with one major difference. For Massachusetts, the proportion of employed persons having occupations of a managerial and professional nature greatly exceeds the relative numbers found in both the city and the SMSA. Conversely, in both places there was found a proportionately greater amount of workers in the category of operators, fabricators and laborers. In addition, the percentage of Fitchburg's residents reporting service occupations was over two percent more than the SMSA figure, and almost one percent more than for the state. See Appendix A for further statistics of employment by sector.

### **Unemployment**

Since 1980, changes in the rates of unemployment among workers living in Fitchburg have closely paralleled trends exhibited in the SMSA and throughout the state. It is true also, that over the past five years the percentage of unemployed persons in Fitchburg has remained consistently greater than in either of the other two areas. From a high of 12.4% in 1982, the city's unemployment rate fell to an average of 5.8% during the first three months of 1986. Comparable figures for the SMSA were 10.1% and 3.7%. At the state level, unemployment values ranged from a high of 7.7% to 3.5% for the same two periods. As of January 1991 the unemployment rate for Fitchburg was 12.2%.



**Table 7- Yearly Unemployment Rates**

Year	Fitchburg	Fitchburg/ Leominster SMSA	Worcester	Massachusetts
1984	7.4%	5.7%	5.0%	4.8%
1985	5.9%	4.7%	4.0%	3.9%
1986	6.1%	4.9%	4.0%	3.8%
1987	4.8%	4.2%	3.3%	3.2%
1988	4.6%	4.0%	3.4%	3.3%
1989	6.2%	5.4%	4.4%	4.0%
1990	8.1%	(Average Over Six Months)		
Jan.	5.8%			
Feb.	7.1%			
March	7.1%			
Apr.	7.8%			
May	7.4%			
Jun.	8.5%			
Jul.	8.5%			
Aug.	9.8%			
Sept.	9.4%			
Oct.	9.8%			

The future employment picture in Fitchburg is difficult to assess with any great degree of certainty. Indications are, however, that unemployment levels in the city will remain rather stable or will continue to decline, though slowly, in the immediate future. The recent success of local development agencies in attracting new employers and in supporting the expansion of existing firms, is a positive sign. Moreover, as an integral part of the SMSA, Fitchburg is likely to benefit from the increasing desirability of the metropolitan area among companies seeking relatively inexpensive, suitable sites west of Boston and Interstate 495.

This latter observation finds support in the results of a study titled Final Report of the Mature Industries Research Project on Partial Plant Closings, which was issued by the Massachusetts Division of Employment Training in January 1986. As part of its attempt to establish eligibility criteria for unemployed workers to receive certain, state-mandated assistance benefits, the DET identified a number of so-called "declining," "intermediate" and "growing" industries. For each of the labor markets in Massachusetts, data were presented showing the percentage of employed persons in each of the three industrial groupings in 1984. In the Fitchburg-Leominster SMSA declining industries accounted for 19% of all employment, as compared with a state average of 12%. On the other hand, 49% of the SMSA's labor force was employed in growing industries and 32% in intermediate industries. At the state level, the respective values were 60% and 28%.

### **Wages**

Persons employed in Fitchburg earn lower wages, on average, than workers located throughout the whole of the SMSA or of the state. In recent years, these wage differentials have become progressively greater. In 1981, the average annual wage in Fitchburg amounted to \$14,030, according to Division of Employment Training estimates. This figure was \$170 below the SMSA average and \$1,039 below the state mean. By 1984, workers in Fitchburg realized an average annual wage which had risen to \$16,173. During the intervening years, however, wages in both the SMSA and the state climbed at a much faster rate. As compared with the SMSA, average wages in Fitchburg were lower by some \$458.00 in 1984. In relation to the state, the differential was more than two times greater than in 1981, amounting to almost \$2,200.00.

### **Labor Organizations**



According to the Massachusetts Division of Employment Training, about 10% of Fitchburg's labor force was unionized in 1985. Among the city's labor organizations, the three largest are the International Union of Electrical Workers, the Steel Workers Union and the Printers' Union. Other organizations which maintain offices in Fitchburg are Carpenters' Local 48, Truck Drivers' and Chauffeurs' Local 170, Musicians Local 173 and the Fitchburg Building Trades Council. Also, about three-quarters of the workers employed by the city are represented by collective bargaining units.

## **Labor Training and Employment Programs**

Several training and job placement programs which are administered by either state or local agencies are found in Fitchburg and the Montachusett Region. A brief description of the services provided by various programs is given below.

Fitchburg Job Matching Service Center - This agency is one of a statewide network of centers administered by the Massachusetts Division of Employment Training. The territorial scope of the Fitchburg office includes the city of Leominster and the towns of Ashby, Ayer, Groton, Harvard, Lunenburg, Pepperell, Shirley and Townsend. The services provided by the center include a job bank containing listings of job openings and referrals, employment counseling and occupational testing, job search workshops and computer job-matching assistance to registered applicants. Programs are intended for use by unemployed professional, administrative, technical, clerical and general workers. Employer services are also provided which include prescreening of job applicants, assistance for mass recruitment efforts, office space for on-site recruitment of workers and various forms of technical assistance related to employment matters.

Montachusett Regional Private Industry Council - MRPIC is a private non-profit corporation located in Fitchburg and serving twenty-three cities and towns in north central Massachusetts. The MRPIC was activated in January of 1986 when it became the administrative entity for the Job Training Partnership Act Program in Northern Worcester County. The goals of this organization are the development and comprehensive implementation of programs to educate, train and support the disadvantaged and others to fill the present and future labor requirements of the area. The PIC's programs include general training that relates to local employers needs as well as customized training and on-the-job training for businesses.

The implementation of these services has been carried out in association with area employers, public and private colleges and universities, organized labor, business advisory groups, local industrial development professionals, state agencies and community organizations.

## **Recent Development and Trends in the Economy**

Manufacturing traditionally has accounted for the greatest number of employed persons in Fitchburg. Despite the major job losses which occurred in the late 1960's to 70's, it continues to have a heavy concentration of manufacturing employment. Within manufacturing, there is a heavy representation of "mature" industries such as chemicals, plastic products, non-electrical machinery and paper. These mature industries, once the foundation of the local economy, are increasingly threatened by competition from abroad.

Employment in these key industries has shown no growth since the mid-1970's and plant closings have been a continuing problem. Fitchburg Engineering closed in December 1985 after 45 years of business. Fitchburg Paper permanently laid off 100 workers in the summer of 1985. In April 1986, DeJonge-James River Corporation Paper Coating closed leaving 86 unemployed and Margolin-Ladies Handbags closed, leaving 60 unemployed.

For 1989 and the first quarter of 1990 in the Fitchburg-Leominster SMSA continued. The following table illustrates job layoffs from 1989-1990, while table 9 shows industrial decline by company 1977-1990.

**Table 8- Mass Layoffs 1989-1990**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Employees Affected</b>	<b>Number of Layoffs</b>
<b>1989</b>	Furniture & Figures	41	1
	Paper & Allied Products	50	1
	Rubber & Misc. Plastics	52	1
	Nonelectric Machinery	20	1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1990</b>	Paper & Allied Products	102	1
	Fabricated Metal Products	21	1
	Nonelectric Machinery	11	1
	Apparel & Accessory Stores	8	1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>4</b>



**Table 9- Industrial Decline 1977-1990**

<b>EMPLOYER</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>#POSITIONS LOST</b>
Great American Chemical	Poly-Vinyl Chloride	120
Seth Thomas, Inc.	Clock Manufacturing	140
Fitchburg Metal Finishing	Chrome Plating	35
Hunter Sportswear	Clothing Sales	25
Fitchburg Yarn	Yarn Production	300
Fitchburg Paper	Printing Paper	100
Crocker Technical Papers	Electrical Papers	60
Fair-Cross Industries	Plastics	6
Fitchburg Engineering	Special Tools	45
Fitchburg Woolen Mills	Yarns on Woolen Systems	80
Hope Company	Service Belting	60
Lemor Plastics	Plastic Cutlery	16
R&W Machine Company	Machinery	7
Sloane Plastics	Plastic Articles	35
Armor Plastics	Plastic Molded	*
DeJonge-James River	Paper Coating	86
Margolin, Inc.	Handbags	60
Flextronics	Electronics Manufacturing	180
James River Corporation	Speciality Paper	140
Simmons Cutting Tools	Steel Specialities	*
Heritage Cabinet	Furniture	30
Bee Plastics	Plastic Manufacturing	250
Berkley Photo	Photography	*
Premier Corrugated Box	Corrugated Boxes	*
Asher Company	Trousers	*
ColorCraft Corporation	Photofinishers	140
<b>KNOWN TOTAL</b>		<b>1,939</b>
*Unavailable		

The data contained in Table 10 provide a measure of the importance of manufacturing industries in the employment structure of Fitchburg. These figures indicate that the dominant role of manufacturing has diminished significantly in relation to other sectors of the economy. Both the Wholesale & Retail Trade and Service sectors have surpassed manufacturing in average annual employment. This change resembles a statewide trend in Massachusetts.



**Table 10 - Employed Persons, by Industry**

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>
Government	1,946	2,011	1,835	1,799	1,814	1,925	2,003	1,992
Agriculture/ Forestry	44	42	32	39	54	65	65	146
Mining	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contract Construction	521	564	615	605	721	889	988	1,201
Manufacturing	6,067	6,093	5,460	4,891	4,970	4,837	4,500	3,986
Transportation/ Communication/ Utilities	755	715	696	630	658	645	557	652
Wholesale & Retail Trade	3,787	3,944	3,830	4,150	4,482	4,499	4,734	4,743
Finance/Insurance Real Estate	817	802	800	818	878	988	1,074	1,212
Services	3,532	3,610	3,614	3,743	3,995	4,231	4,285	4,281

Sources: Massachusetts Division of Employment Training, Employment and Wages in Massachusetts Cities and Towns: 1980-1987

**Table 11- Major Employers in Fitchburg**

<b>Company:</b>	<b>Product:</b>
Simonds Industry	Cutting Tools, Castings
General Electric	Steam Turbine Drivers, Industrial , Navy, Marine Applications
Burbank Hospital	Health Care
Fitchburg State	Higher Education
DeMoulas Supermarket	Grocery Items
Montachusett Opportunity Council	Social Services
U.C.F Feeds	Animal feed
The Asher Company	Trousers and Sportswear
James River	Paper Products
Sanitoy Inc.	Infant Products
Dennison Mfg.	Retail and Commercial Tagging and Cable Ties
ChemDesign	Chemical Manufacturers
Rolland Fitchburg Paper	Decor Paper
Boutwell Owens & Company	Commercial Printing, Packaging and Design

**Economic Ties to Surrounding Regions**

In April 1991, the Department of Defence announced it was considering the closure of Fort Devens. While the final decision is yet to be made, the future of the base is grim. On the other hand, if the plan to move the Information Command to the base is revived, there will be a major boost to the region's economy. If the Command does relocate, anticipated impacts would include the following:

- Increase in salaries - \$61.5 million
- Increase in post purchases- \$79.1 million
- Increase in regional sales volume - \$442.4 million
- Increase in regional income - \$110.2 million

Another important economic tie Fitchburg has with the surrounding region is its retail market areas. These trade areas were delineated on the basis of information provided by merchants, pertaining to the origins of shoppers frequenting comparison goods stores in the city's Intown business district. The 1982 survey was carried out by Economics Research Associates.

The Primary Trade Area accounted for about 85% of Intown's shoppers. This market encompasses communities within a radius of twelve miles from Fitchburg. Included in the region are the cities of Gardner and Leominster, as well as the towns of Ashburnham, Ashby, Ayer, Groton, Lunenburg, Princeton, Shirley, Townsend and Westminster in Massachusetts, along with the towns of Greenville, Mason, and New Ipswich in New Hampshire. The boundary of the Primary Trade Area as defined by Economic Research Associates, coincides very closely with the Retail Trade Zone determined by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) for the twelve months ended December 31, 1985.

The ABC zone reflects the primary circulation area of the Fitchburg-Leominster Sentinel and Enterprise evening newspaper. With the exception of Princeton, the retail zone arrived at by the ABC includes all of the places listed above, as well as Clinton, Lancaster, Sterling, and Winchendon in Massachusetts and Ringe, New Hampshire. Most of the remainder of Intown's shoppers originated within the Secondary Trade Area which extends as far as 25 miles from Fitchburg.

In 1980, there were 102,596 households and 276,260 people in the combined Primary and Secondary Trade Areas. Data gathered by Economic Research Associates in 1981 revealed the following income characteristics of the resident population: per capita income, \$7,390; median household income, \$19,000; average family income, \$24,286; and aggregate income, \$2,041.5 million. For the Primary Trade Area alone, the respective monetary indicators amounted to: \$7,080, \$17,500, \$23,125 and \$983.2 million. Between 1980 and 1985, the population size of Massachusetts communities in Fitchburg's Primary Trade Area increased by 5.6% from 133,661 to 141,152.



## IV. Potentials for Economic Development

### Quality of Life

Fitchburg today continues its long standing role of prominence as a center of social, educational and cultural activities. In addition, the medical facilities and services which are available in the city rank among the finest anywhere in central New England. Whether one considers Fitchburg in terms of the architectural variety of its buildings, the ethnic diversity of its inhabitants or the broad scope of human services which it provides, there emerges a uniqueness defined by a successful blending of the traditional with the modern.

### Housing

As indicated in Table 12, the age of housing in Fitchburg is relatively old as compared with that found throughout the SMSA or the state. According to census tabulations, there were 15,338 housing units in Fitchburg in 1980. Of this number, nearly two-thirds had been constructed prior to 1940. For both the SMSA and state, structures built during this era accounted for less than 50% of all housing. On the other hand, housing built between 1960 and 1980 made up almost 30% of all the structures found in the SMSA and Massachusetts, respectively. In Fitchburg, such newer housing contributed slightly more than 15% of the total.

**Table 12 - Age of Housing Stock, 1980**

Housing Built	Fitchburg	F-L SMSA	Massachusetts
In 1939 or Earlier	65.5%	48.2%	46.7%
1940 to 1959	19.0%	22.5%	24.6%
1960 to March 1980	15.5%	29.3%	28.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980 Census of Population and Housing, Census Tracts, Fitchburg-Leominster SMSA, PHC80-2-155, Issued June 1983.

**Housing Trends: 1970-1980** - The 1970s was a period of virtual inactivity in the construction of new housing in Fitchburg. Only 526 new units were added during the ten-year period. This number constituted an increase of just 3.5% over the 14,821 units which were in existence in 1970. Moreover, the majority of these 526 units represented government-subsidized housing for the elderly.

The proportionate growth of housing in Fitchburg from 1970 to 1980 was considerably less than the 29.6% increment exhibited in the five communities comprising the remainder of the SMSA, wherein the number of units rose from 17,255 to 22,359. A decline in the City's population of some 3,760 residents contributed to the small gains in housing. This decline was also significantly related to the city's housing vacancy rate of 6.6% in 1980, as compared with an average of 3.6% in the rest of the SMSA. Table 13 provides a summary of housing characteristics in Fitchburg in comparison with the SMSA.



**Table 13- Housing Characteristics, 1980**

	<b>FITCHBURG</b>	<b>F-L SMSA</b>
Number of Households		
Single Family Units	47% (7,209)	51% (11,403)
Multiple Family Units	53% (8,129)	49% (10,956)
Occupancy Status		
Owner Occupied Units	51% (7,822)	59% (13,192)
Renter Occupied Units	49% (7,516)	41% (9,167)
Median Value Single Dwelling Units	\$34,600	\$40,600
Median Gross Monthly Rent	\$148	\$223

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980 Census of Population and Housing, Census Tracts, Fitchburg-Leominster SMSA, PHC80-2-155, Issued June 1983.

**Housing Trends in the Eighties** - The lull in construction of housing which had characterized Fitchburg during the seventies continued into the early 1980's. Signs of a reawakening in the demand for new housing, however, began to appear in 1983. Between January of that year and March 1986, residential building permits for 631 units were granted to private developers by the Fitchburg Building Department. The number for single-family dwellings alone totalled 159. The remainder of the permits issued involved a variety of residential structures ranging from two-family dwellings to multiple-unit apartment buildings and condominiums.

According to local officials, the rapid escalation in multi-family housing construction began during the fall of 1984. By January 1986, a former industrial building on Bemis Road had been converted into a 51-unit apartment complex known as Duck Mill. As of March 1986, apartment buildings or condominiums containing 378 housing units were either under construction or in the proposal stage.

By mid-1986, the housing market in Fitchburg had strengthened considerably as the resurgence in construction which had begun three years earlier continued to be sustained. Indicative of renewed demand for housing in the city is the near-doubling of average selling prices for both single and multiple family dwellings which occurred between the second quarter of 1984 and the first quarter of 1986. As of August 1986, the vacancy rate among rental units stood at a level of 1-2%. According to some observers familiar with the local housing market, it is possible that Fitchburg may eventually evolve into a "bedroom community" for persons employed in the Montachusett Region as well as the Boston metropolitan area. Such speculation is tempered, by a concern that, as demand for housing closes in on supply, a potentially serious shortage of low and middle income residential units may occur. For now, vacancy rates stand at 10% with an ample supply of low and moderate income housing, as well as sufficient affordable housing.

### **Education**

Fitchburg has attained regional, statewide and national recognition as a center for learning. The educational institutions found in or near the city offer a broad range of academic opportunities, up to and including graduate degree studies.

**Local Public Schools** - Fitchburg's public school system encompasses one high school, two middle schools and five elementary schools. During the 1985-86 school year, there were 310 teachers employed in the system, and a total enrollment of 4,349 pupils. Average expenditures per pupil during



the year amounted to \$2,200. This figure represents a 51% increase as compared with the level of funding in 1982-83.

**Regional Vocational Schools** - The city's public high school is complemented by the Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School. Monty Tech is part of a statewide network of vocational-technical institutions and provides training in twenty occupationally-oriented fields. Included are programs in data processing, diesel mechanics, machine drafting, electronics, graphic arts, and plant maintenance. The school's 1,200 students are drawn from the cities of Fitchburg and Gardner, and eight surrounding towns. Representatives from each community constitute the regional school committee responsible for the school's governance. Annually, up to 60% of Monty Tech's senior class is enrolled in the Cooperative Education Program. Through the co-op program, students gain valuable practical experience in their chosen fields of specialization. Among the list of cooperating firms and organizations are found some of the region's largest employers, including: Simplex Time Recorder Company, Digital Equipment Corporation, Burbank Hospital, General Electric Company, James River, New England Telephone, Sears Roebuck Company and Technographics. Monty Tech's success in preparing students for entry into the job market is reflected in its statistics for past graduates. Approximately 75% have gained immediate employment, while 15% have opted for higher education and 10% have entered the military.

**Private Schools & Day Care** - The private/parochial school system in Fitchburg is made up of two high schools and six elementary schools which in 1985-86 had a total enrollment of 1,161 pupils. Also found in Fitchburg is the Applewild School, which is a private boarding school/academy that encompasses grades 1 through 9.

To meet the rising demand for child-care services, Fitchburg has ten nursery schools and day-care centers. In addition, Head Start programs for younger and minority children exist at several sites throughout the city.

**Junior College Programs** - Two-year college programs leading to an Associates Degree are offered by Fisher Junior College at their Fitchburg facility and at Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner.

**Fitchburg State College** - Much of the educational recognition which Fitchburg enjoys in an educational context is due to the presence of Fitchburg State College, the largest four-year undergraduate institution in central Massachusetts. FSC was founded in 1894 as a teacher-training school, and in 1911 was the site of the nation's first program for the preparation of teachers in the Practical Arts. Fitchburg State College today is a modern, multi-faceted institution of higher learning. The college's twenty academic departments offer more than 60 undergraduate majors which lead to the degrees of Bachelor degrees in the Arts, Science and Education. Fitchburg State has long been recognized for the scope and excellence of its programs in Industrial Arts and Technology, Nursing, and Education. In response to the changing social and technological needs of society, the college recently has established new and rapidly expanding majors in Business Administration, Computer Science, Communication/Media and Medical Technology. Efforts currently are underway for the establishment of a Center for Excellence in Computer Graphics. Enrollment at the present time totals 3,700 full-time students and 3,700 part-time students.

The Division of Graduate and Continuing Education at FSC offers both graduate and undergraduate degree programs which are designed primarily for the professional advancement and scholarly enrichment of adult learners from throughout central New England. At the graduate level, the Division confers Master of Education degrees in five areas of specialization, the Master of Arts in Teaching Degree in English and Master of Science degrees in Computer Science, Communication/Media, Counseling, and Management. Undergraduate programs provided through the Division lead to Bachelor of Science degrees in Business Administration, with majors in Accounting, Marketing, Management and Labor Relations, Computer Science, Industrial Science, Nursing for Registered Nurses, and Vocational Education. In addition, the Division sponsors timely, in-service courses which are addressed to the particular needs and concerns of local business. Beyond its educational mission,



Fitchburg State College is dedicated also to the goal of utilizing its human and technical resources for the betterment of communities in the Montachusett area. Toward this end, the College provides various forms of assistance to both public and private organizations, and has assumed a leading role in dealing with a wide range of economic, social and environmental problems confronting the region. Illustrative of this commitment was the decision made in 1983 by the college's administration to provide unemployed persons with the opportunity to attend classes on a tuition-free basis.

**Other Educational Facilities** - Notable adjuncts to the city's educational institutions are the 140,000-volume Hammond Library on the campus of Fitchburg State College, the 160,500-volume Fitchburg Public Library, and the Fitchburg Law Library with over 20,000 volumes. Of singular distinction also are the Fitchburg Art Museum, the Fitchburg Historical Society, and the Alice G. Wallace Planetarium.

### **Health Care**

Burbank Hospital serves as a hub of medical services in north central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. Burbank is a 226-bed facility, and with a staff of 780 medical and support personnel it represents one of the city's largest employers. The hospital's annual operating budget amounts to nearly \$40 million.

The high quality of services which Burbank Hospital traditionally has provided and its responsiveness to changing health care needs constitute the basis for its regional leadership in medical practices and programs. Burbank is the only certified Level II Trauma Center in the area. It is further distinguished by its Oncology Program which was founded in 1976 in conjunction with the Dana Farber Cancer Institute of Boston, and is the only health care facility in the Montachusett region to be equipped with a CT scanner. The Speech, Language and Hearing Center is widely regarded as one of the best staffed and equipped programs in Massachusetts. In fact, Burbank is one of fewer than 300 such centers throughout the nation to be accredited by the Services Board of the American Speech, Language and Hearing Association.

Numerous other specialized services also are found at Burbank. These include a Maternal and Newborn Care Center, a Renal Dialysis Program, a Critical Care Center and a Mental Health Unit. In addition, there exists a Child Development Center, a Social Service/Continuing Care Department, a Gerontology Center and a Restorative Care Unit. The hospital also provides Home Health Care and Hospice Programs.

The outstanding health care provided by Burbank Hospital is augmented by the presence of over 100 physicians, surgeons and dentists with private practices in Fitchburg alone. The Montachusett Health Plan (MHP) is a non-profit Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) developed as an independent, self-governing venture between Burbank and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Massachusetts. Prime Med is an immediate-care, walk-in facility located in the Twin Cities Shopping Center. In addition, a variety of social, counseling and referral services are available. Residents of the Montachusett region are fortunate also in their proximity to the many renowned medical facilities and services which are to be found in Boston and Worcester.



## **Cultural and Recreational Activities**

Residents of Fitchburg enjoy easy access to a variety of cultural facilities and events including several art museums, photo galleries, live theater, cinema and musical performances. The Fitchburg Art Museum features arts and crafts classes as well as on-loan exhibits by local and regional artists. At the Notre Dame Community Art Gallery, there are exhibits of the works of local artists, photographers and the traveling programs of other galleries. Live theater performances can be seen on a year-round basis at the Stratton Playhouse and the New Players Theater Guild. Musical performances ranging from symphony to rock are sponsored by Fitchburg State College, the Montachusett Association for the Performing Arts and the Montachusett Community Concert Association, respectively.

The Fitchburg Public Library is especially active in promoting cultural activities for the public's enjoyment. In its performing arts series, the library provides musical offerings as well as poetry, drama and ethnically-oriented events. Topics of current interest are addressed in programs involving films, lectures and panel discussions. The library also maintains permanent exhibit space, a portion of which is available for use by individuals or groups. As a part of its lending function, the library makes available to the public items such as works of art, films and recordings. Fitchburg's historical and cultural heritage is preserved in materials contained in the Rosenbaum Ethnic Heritage Room.

Numerous sites and landmarks steeped in the events and traditions of colonial America and the Revolutionary War Period can be found in and around Fitchburg. Concord, Lexington and numerous other historically prominent sites in the Boston area are but a short driving distance from the city. Locally, the Fitchburg Historical Society serves as a repository for the accomplishments of area residents whose inventive genius contributed to the nation's industrial growth. For those seeking recreational opportunity, the city operates two pools and 30 public parks and playgrounds. The largest, Coggs Hall Park, encompasses an area of 263 acres. Among the city's private recreational facilities is the Oak Hill Country Club which boasts a 260-acre, USGA-approved 18 hole golf course, an outdoor pool, and nine tennis courts. The Fitchburg YMCA has programs for the entire family and offers a pool, saunas, exercise room and hand-ball courts. The Wallace Civic Center, located on John Fitch Highway, houses two ice rinks and sponsors the Wallace Wallopers, a Junior-A hockey team.

The foremost outdoor winter recreational facility in central Massachusetts is the Wachusett Mountain Ski Area which occupies 90 acres in the nearby town of Princeton. As a result of a multi-million dollar expansion program, the area offers a new 24,000 sq.ft. base lodge, 14 downhill trails, three double chair lifts and eleven miles of cross-country trails. The mountain, which is state-owned and privately operated, has 100% snow-making capability and top-to-bottom lighting on all alpine trails.

Fitchburg is also the home of the annual Longsjo Classic Bicycle Race, a 50-mile endurance race for expert riders from all over the world. This race is the second oldest in the United States and has attracted international riders due to the excellent course and crowd participation. In 1987, the Longsjo also sponsored a very well received amateur race for local riders to test their skills.



Also in the immediate vicinity of Fitchburg are seven state parks and conservation areas offering a wide variety of ski-touring trails. Within a ten-mile radius of the city there are many diverse outdoor recreational opportunities including camping, mountain climbing, boating, sailing, fishing and hunting.

## **Utilities, Energy and Fuel**

**Water** - The Fitchburg Water Department services approximately 95% of the city's households. The municipal water supply is drawn from ten reservoirs which intercept both ground and surface flow, and have a total storage capacity of 4.9 billion gallons. Two more reservoirs are presently being studied for possible use in the future. The chemical composition of the water supply is enhanced by the addition of several elements including chlorine, sodium hypochloride, sodium fluoride and sodium silico fluoride. A chlorine residual of 0.5-2.0 parts per million is maintained at each distributing plant.

The infrastructure through which water is carried throughout the city consists of 182 miles of mains, some with diameters as great as 24"; nearly 1,700 hydrants; and 15 emergency booster hydrant pumping locations. Since 1985, more than \$700,000 has been spent in modernizing the city's water distribution system.

Statistics published in December 1984 by the Water Department indicated a maximum daily usage of 6.94 million gallons, as compared with a safe yield of 11.91 million gallons per day. In 1984, the approximately 9,000 active accounts in Fitchburg used some 2.54 billion gallons of water, with sales totalling \$850,000.

**Wastewater Treatment** - The City operates two wastewater treatment plants, both of which were completed in 1975. The East Fitchburg facility utilizes a biological system to treat domestic waste. This plant is designed to handle a maximum, daily volume of waste for a population of 54,000, or about 15,000 more people than presently live in the city. The West Fitchburg Wastewater Treatment facility processes industrial waste generated by area manufacturers. A physical-chemical method of treatment is employed, with an average of nine million gallons of wastewater being handled on a daily basis.

**Telephone** - Telephone service in Fitchburg is provided by New England Telephone, a NYNEX company. Boston Cellular Telephone Company, a NYNEX authorized company, provides the additional communication services.

**Electricity** - The supplier of electricity, as well as natural gas, is the investor-owned Fitchburg Gas and Electric Light Company (FG&E). The company's combined electric and gas operations cover an area of 170 square miles, encompassing approximately 80,000 people. Existing supplies of electricity are produced at several generating plants located in New England. Nearly 86% of the company's present capacity originates at oil-fired units, 11% at a nuclear-powered unit and 3% is hydro-generated.

In order to ensure for its customers a reliable supply of energy into the foreseeable future, FG&E recently assumed two additional, long-term commitments for the purchase of electricity. FG&E's share of an agreement reached between the New England Power Pool (NEPOOL) and the Quebec Hydro-Electric Corporation (Hydro-Quebec), is expected to increase the company's capacity by approximately 8.5 megawatts over the next ten years. In addition, the company has acquired a 0.217% ownership interest (2.5 megawatts) in a nuclear-powered plant located in Waterford, Connecticut.

**Natural Gas** - FG&E supplies natural gas to 15,200 customers in the communities of Fitchburg, Ashby, Lunenburg, Townsend, Gardner and Westminster. FG&E purchases natural gas from the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company. The company's present commitment provides for a maximum daily amount of 7,506 MCF. Beginning in the winter of 1987, this volume will be increased to 10,246 MCF per day. As a supplement to these supplies of pipeline natural gas, FG&E operates a propane gas plant with a daily production capacity of approximately 7,200 MCF of natural gas equivalent.



## **Safety Services**

**Police** - The Fitchburg Police Department has 70 full time members. The Department is quartered in a newly-constructed station located at the intersection of Prichard and Academy Streets, just north of the Intown central business district. Among its many modern features are state-of-the-art communications equipment and computers, to assist police in responding to emergencies and in identification procedures.

**Fire** - Fire protection in Fitchburg is provided by a force of 104 full-time members. The Fire Department is housed in three stations throughout the city and has available ten pieces of equipment, including six engines and three ladder trucks. Proposals are presently being considered for the construction of a new headquarters building for the Fire Department. The city's fire insurance rating is Class III.

**Ambulance/Civil Defense** - Private ambulance service is made available by three companies with a combined fleet of more than eight vehicles. Fitchburg is served also by several privately operated medivans which provide transportation for the handicapped, elderly and those persons requiring supervisory care. In addition, the Fitchburg Civil Defense Unit has available three rescue vehicles for emergency use.

## **Current Economic Development Activities**

In the spring of 1986, site work began on the construction of a \$50 million hotel and office complex located near the junction of Routes 2 and 31 called the Mount Wachusett Corporate Center. The project is being undertaken by LaCava Associates of Waltham, Mass. Phase 1 involved the construction of a 300-room hotel with conference facilities. The Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel opened July 1, 1989 and the 60,000 s/f Trade Center opened September 1, 1990. Future construction on the 50-acre site will include office space as well as laboratory facilities for research and development.

Plans for a new, city-developed industrial park called the Fitchburg Technology Park have been completed and are presently being evaluated by municipal and state officials, as well as local citizens groups. The proposed Fitchburg Technology Park encompasses a 160-acre site abutting Route 2 between Mt. Elam Road and Oak Hill Road. It will house approximately 20 buildings, accommodating up to one million square feet of light industrial and research and development businesses. At full capacity, the park could provide as many as 2,000 new jobs. Should implementation of the planned development be approved, the city intends to seek state and federal assistance in undertaking the \$5.5 million project.

The Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority has just completed the city's new Blueberry Lane Industrial Park. The park consists of 11 acres which are subdivided into four acre lots, a roadway, sewer system, and all utilities. Three of the lots have been sold and a sale is pending on the fourth.

The Redevelopment Authority has also assisting in the development of the privately-owned and fully developed Montachusett Industrial Park, which is located in West Fitchburg on Route 2A, about 1.5 miles from Route 2. The park totals 107 acres and presently houses 10 companies.

## **Potentials for Economic Development**

**Location or Transportation Advantages**-Fitchburg is well served by all modes of surface and air transportation. As a result, the city enjoys a relatively high degree of accessibility for local, regional and long distance passenger travel and freight shipment.

Local, public transportation in Fitchburg is provided by the Montachusett Area Regional Transit Authority (MART). In addition to offering an efficient means of travel within the city, MART also



provides Fitchburg with frequent, regularly scheduled bus service to and from Leominster, Gardner, Ashburnham, Ayer, Shirley, Sterling and Fort Devens. Recently, MART added two industrial bus routes for shift workers from the Gardner, Templeton and Athol areas. Another specialized service, the Mount Wachusett Community College Express, has stops in Gardner, Fitchburg and Leominster.

At the present time, MART is one of only two transit authorities in Massachusetts to offer special access services for the elderly and disabled. The "Dial-a-Ride" program is intended to meet medical, educational, work or social travel needs within Fitchburg and Leominster only. To obtain such transportation, passengers can telephone MART directly. "Dial-a-MART" services are provided by contractual agreement with regional social and health agencies. Dial-a-MART is used to transport passengers to destinations outside Fitchburg and Leominster, but within the Montachusett region. To carry out these functions, MART has available a fleet of 20 vans. City school buses are operated by the Fitchburg and Leominster Street Railway Company. The company is sometimes called upon also to provide service along MART's regular passenger routes. Additional travel services in and around Fitchburg are provided by three taxi cab companies. Cabs are available between 7:00 a.m. and 2:00 a.m., seven days a week. Besides passenger fares, all three companies offer small package delivery.

### **Transportation Facilities and Services**

**Bus** - Regional bus transportation is available from three major carriers: Trailways, Vermont Transit Lines, and Englander Coach Lines, Inc. All three lines offer passenger and package delivery services to points throughout New England, with connections to other parts of the United States, as well as Canada.

**Rail** - Fitchburg is situated along the primary east-west route of the Boston & Maine Railroad, and on a major spur of the Conrail system. Facilities for the loading and unloading of "piggy-back" freight are maintained by the B&M. In addition, the New York, New Haven and Hartford line provides an interchange connection for freight moving north, south or west. Most of the industrial districts and industrially-zoned land in the city have sidings which are adjacent to one or the other of these systems.

Beyond its freight-hauling functions, the B&M has an agreement with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) to operate daily commuter trains between the Montachusett region and Boston, along the so-called "Fitchburg Line". The trip from Depot Square in Fitchburg to Boston's North Station requires approximately 80 minutes. This is about the same amount of time that would be spent in driving between these points during peak commuter traffic.

In 1982, the B&M completed a \$26 million improvement program along its rights-of-way through the Montachusett Region. As a result of this investment, Fitchburg and neighboring communities will realize even greater benefits in terms of both freight and passenger rail service.

**Truck** - There are approximately 30 trucking companies located in the Greater Fitchburg area. A number of these firms offer overnight, package and freight delivery to all points in New England and the mid-Atlantic states. Many also are equipped to provide cross-country shipping. United Parcel Service maintains a terminal in Leominster. UPS operates an air/ground delivery service on a nation-wide basis. The area is also served by the other major parcel carriers including Federal Express, Purolator, Emery Express and others, several of which offer world-wide service.

**Air** - Air transportation for the Montachusett area is provided locally by the Fitchburg Colonial Aviation Company. Colonial is a fixed-base airline which operates from the Fitchburg Municipal Airport located off Crawford Street in the southeastern part of the city. The company offers executive jet service and charter flights on a 24-hour basis. The Fitchburg Municipal Airport is a modern, beacon-equipped facility with two lighted, paved runways. The length of the runways are 4,500 feet and 3,000 feet, respectively and both runways are 150 feet wide. The airport is capable of handling four-engine aircraft up to 33,000 pounds per wheel. In 1985, there were recorded about 92,000 flight operations.



Among the aeronautical services available at the airport are the leasing of private hangars, flight instruction and aircraft repair. There also are found several helicopter landing sites. The Worcester Municipal Airport offers daily flights to Washington, D.C. and New York City via Piedmont Airlines. From Fitchburg, Logan International Airport in Boston can be reached in less than thirty minutes by air and less than 90 minutes by car.

## **Regional Highways**

Because of the particular orientation of highways in the Montachusett area, Fitchburg is most advantageously situated with respect to cities located throughout all of southern New England. Fitchburg is intercepted along its southern edge by Route 2, a controlled-access, multi-lane, divided highway. With terminal points in Boston and Albany, Route 2 serves as the principal east-west means of travel across the entire extent of northern Massachusetts.

The relative ease with which major highway transportation nodes around the state can be reached from Fitchburg is reflected in Figure 9. The average driving times shown were determined with respect to a point of origin at the intersection of State Routes 2 and 31, in the southwestern corner of the city. This particular origin is immediately adjacent to the 231 Industrial Park.

Travel time east along Route 2 as far as I-95, and south along I-190 as far as I-90 are based on actual road tests. According to these tests, an average speed of 55 m.p.h. was maintained on Route 2, and 60 m.p.h. on I-190. Driving times along other routes were calculated according to these average speeds and the measured distances between roadway intersections as shown in the "Official Transportation Map of Massachusetts," issued by the Department of Public Works. Comparisons among several common reference points indicate that the values presented in Figure 9 are virtually identical with the findings reported in two, earlier travel studies: Montachusett Planning Commission, Isochronal Mapping Study, October 1983, and Montachusett Economic Development Commission, Massachusetts Technology Park Proposal, Northern Worcester County, October 1983.

Fitchburg has all of the key ingredients to expand its industrial and commercial base-- affordable industrial and commercial property, financing sources, accessible transportation systems, connections to major markets, proximity to sources of high technology and a skilled labor pool. The Development Strategy and Action Plan are designed to insure Fitchburg can adapt to meet the demands of the changing economy, while making the most of the assets it already has.

## **Problems and Constraint to Economic Development**

Over the past decade, Fitchburg's industry has undergone a dramatic transformation. This shift has created several problems that must be faced. These are as follows:

**Lack of quality industrial space.** From 1979 through the present, the lack of first quality industrial space has caused many small and medium sized firms to leave the City. Most of these had been located in older facilities where expansion was not possible

**Fitchburg's manufacturing base continues to shed.** The home of extensive mature industries, the city must face the simultaneous down sizing of these firms, new competition from the European communities and the need to modernize these firms in an era of tough credit.

**Fitchburg's energy costs are among the highest in the nation.** This, alone, is a major influence upon the competitive position of the city's manufacturing firms.

**Fitchburg has no national locational advantage.** Almost all products manufactured require high transportation costs.

**Fitchburg is still a city made up of immigrants and first generation Americans who have not had extensive educational advantages.** The City's workers have an education attainment level that is below that of both Worcester County and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**The low wages paid by Fitchburg's industries** has contributed to the fact that the city's household and family incomes are below County and State averages. Further, the difference between the wages in Fitchburg and the State average are increasing.

**Fitchburg's unemployment rate is rising.** This will be higher in the near future. As of January 1991, the rate was 12.2%

**The closing of Fort Devens,** a proposal of the Defence Department, is now under consideration. Its impact on retail trade will be extensive.



## **V. Development Strategy, Priorities, and Plan for Implementation**

This section combines the long-range goals of the Industrial Development Commission (IDC), its rationale, local interest or goals, criteria and specifics, and short-term action plans for the next one to two years. For the most part, the order of the presentations is indicative of the IDC's priorities.

### **A. Develop Fitchburg Technology Park**

#### **1. Rationale**

No existing, large parcels of industrially zoned land are available for industries seeking to locate in Fitchburg.

As industrial growth spreads from Boston west and Worcester north, the site along Route 2 is ideally located to enable the city to capture new industries.

#### **2. Local Interest**

Fitchburg is, historically, a manufacturing community. As its mature industries decline, the community, oriented by character and tradition toward industrial employment for its citizens. The site of the park is also environmentally sensitive because of its proximity to a reservoir. Government development of this land will assure proper utilization in an ecologically sensitive area.

#### **3. Criteria**

Fitchburg's mature industries are light manufactures. Because of environmental concerns and current high unemployment of industrial workers, light industry will be given priority for the park. In addition, priority will be assigned to industries which help diversify the region's economy and, thereby, protect it from recession.

#### **4. Implementation Plan**

A considerable amount of work has already been done for the park, including an Environmental Impact Statement, approval from state agencies, and marketing and financial analysis studies. In the next year, the short-range goals are to:

- a. resolve the legal dispute with the city of Leominster over reservoir protection;
- b. complete federal and state loan application processes for funds to finance infrastructure and land clearance on the site;
- c. purchase land within the park area not currently owned by the city;
- d. authorize final engineering and design contract; and
- e. implement a marketing plan

## 5. Responsibility for Implementation

The Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority's Executive Director is primarily responsible for coordinating the implementation of this plan with the oversight of the Fitchburg City Council, the Industrial Development Commission, and the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority.

### **B. Expand Montachusett Industrial Park**

#### 1. Rationale

This successful private park is an ideal location for home-grown industrial firms to relocate in. While many mature industries are in decline; the city continues to be a place where new companies are incubated in low-rent; industrial space within the city's traditional, nineteenth century manufacturing base. The Montachusett Park has a large tract of residentially zoned land adjacent to it, that, if zoned industrial, can be developed for limited industrial uses.

#### 2. Local Interest

Incubating businesses employ many people. Retaining these jobs, as well as profiting from locally-grown opportunities, is a high priority. Moving manufacturing facilities out of the center of the city to peripheral sites will spur commercial and residential expansion and will lessen industrial traffic within the commercial zones where the older manufacturing sites are located.

#### 3. Criteria

Because incubating firms are a high priority interest, these local firms will be given priority. Also, because the park has several existing clients, compatibility with the existing park residents will be another criteria used in evaluating applicants.

#### 4. Implementation Plan

- a. Architectural, design, and environmental reviews will begin with the city issuing contract specifications and requests for proposals.
- b. Road planning; will begin and necessary City Council approval will be sought.
- c. Land taking and contractual agreements with current property owners will be negotiated.

## 5. Responsibility for Implementation

The Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority's Executive Director is primarily responsible for coordinating the implementation of this plan with the oversight of the Fitchburg City Council, the Industrial Development Commission, and the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority.



## **C. Create Airport Road Industrial Park**

### **1.Rationale**

This resident-free, industrially developed area is ideal for mature industries and is adjacent to rail and air transportation. Noise and heavy trucking will not be an issue for this area and heavy industrial sites are seldom found which are so free of such restraints. Despite the decline of mature industries, this location, within a city tolerant of industry, will be ideal for relatively small, heavy manufacturers within and outside the Northeast.

### **2.Local Interest**

Industrial development will spur the growth of the city's airport and help support rail services needed by other industries. Also, it will help check the spread of commercial businesses in this zone where access is limited and traffic volume along access routes is unwanted.

### **3.Implementation Plan**

- a) Existing and future sites that can be part of an industrial zone will be identified.
- b) Twenty-one "E" (21E) studies will be conducted to insure that sites are free of oil and hazardous waste.
- c) Large property owners will be encouraged to subdivide unwanted and underutilized land.
- d) The IDC will work with the city DPW to make city owned property available for industrial growth.
- e) Infrastructure will be extended through the airport area.

### **4. Responsibility for Implementation**

The Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority's Executive Director is primarily responsible for coordinating the implementation of this plan with the oversight of the Fitchburg City Council, the Industrial Development Commission, and the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority.

## **D. Seek New Industrial Sites Within the City**

### **1.Rationale**

Fitchburg's supply of unbuilt industrial land is small and scattered throughout the city. New technologies permit environmentally-safe and economically feasible development of these sites that were passed over by previous generations of industrialists. As the three afore mentioned parks build demand for feeder and supplying companies, relocating companies will seek Fitchburg sites. Having a "pantry" of industrial sites for these smaller companies is a prudent initiative.

### **2.Criteria**

The proposed sites must be industrially-zoned and accessible.

### 3. Local Interest

Outside the general, high-level of local interest in potential industrial employment and preparation for the future, the citing of specific local interest is not possible until the sites are known.

### 4. Implementation Plan

- a) Through routine visitation programs, the IDC director will develop information to determine any level of dissatisfaction with city services or other problems and suggest/implement corrective action. The director will develop a survey instrument with the assistance of local college experts to identify areas of dissatisfaction. The IDC director will assist the company in correcting same.
- b) Traditional industries (machine shops, instrument manufacturers, etc.) are usually small and are unable or unaware of governmental assistance for expansion or lack sophistication in acquiring assistance from volunteer groups, like the Fitchburg State College Small Business Institute, the Montachusett Economic Center, etc. The IDC director, through the visitation program and surveying instruments will seek to discover any such needs and locate assistance.
- c) Small, traditional industries are also unaware of existing training programs for workers to adopt to new technologies. Again, the IDC director can act as a facilitator or stimulator in developing programs with the Private Industry Council, the local vocational schools, Fitchburg State College, or Montachusett Community College to assist local industries.
- d) A "stand-by action plan" will be developed as a crisis intervention tool for ailing companies to activate emergency assistance from state, gap financing, and marketing assistance.

### 5. Responsibility for Implementation

The Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority's Executive Director is primarily responsible for coordinating the implementation of this plan with the oversight of the Fitchburg City Council, the Industrial Development Commission, and the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority.

## **E. Retain Existing Industries**

### 1. Rationale

Attracting new industries to the region is hard work and costly. While the city devotes efforts to this goal, other cities are busy attracting local industries away from Fitchburg at equal cost.

### 2. Local Interest

Prevent worker dislocation and save the city from losing tax base.

### 3. Criteria

Companies with desirable characteristics, i.e., those who are good neighbors, maintain environmental safeguards and foster the long range goals of the city for educational and cultural growth will be those companies the city will need to retain.

### 4. Implementation Plan



- a) Through routine visitation programs, the IDC director will develop information to determine any level of dissatisfaction with city services or other problems and suggest/implement corrective action. The director will develop a survey instrument with the assistance of local college experts to identify areas of dissatisfaction. The IDC director will assist the company in correcting the same.
- b) Traditional industries (machine shops, instrument manufacturers, etc.) are usually small and are unable or unaware of governmental assistance for expansion or lack sophistication in acquiring assistance from volunteer groups, like the Fitchburg State College Small Business Institute, the Montachusett Economic Center, etc. The IDC director, through the visitation program and surveying instruments will seek to discover any such needs and locate assistance.
- c) Small, traditional industries are also unaware of existing training programs for workers to adapt to new technologies. Again, the IDC director can act as a facilitator or stimulator in developing programs with the Private Industry Council, the local vocational school, Fitchburg State College, or Montachusett Community College to assist local industries.
- d) A "stand-by action plan" will be developed as a crisis intervention tool for ailing companies to activate emergency assistance from the state, gap financing, and marketing assistance.

## 5. Responsibility for Implementation

The Executive Director will work with local college officials, the Private Industry Council, and the Montachusett Vocational Technical School to address concerns as they develop.

## **F. Analyze the City's Older Industrial Stock for Future Use**

### 1. Rationale

Much of the city's older industrial stock is considered unfit for modern industry. Some are in a shabby state of external repair and others are poorly utilized because of limited marketing and vision for modern production systems. During the 1980's, Fitchburg's housing prices soared as residential pressure moved eastward. Route 2 connector traffic and MBTA connector train usage grew phenomenally. When the current state recession ends, the pressure for housing will grow. Residential and commercial uses for these old factories may be feasible.

### 2. Local Interest

Many of the older industrial businesses are surrounded by residential or commercial neighborhoods. These uses may be more suitable now to these sites. The potential for increasing the city's stock of affordable housing is greatly desired.

### 3. Criteria

None at this stage.

#### 4. Action Plan

College Small Business Institutes or other interested ancillary academic areas will be used to:

- a) develop criteria for selecting, mapping, and evaluating older industrial buildings for new uses;
- b) map and visit selected sites, detailing current structure, condition, adjacent neighborhood, and access;
- c) suggest potential future uses;
- d) develop marketing brochure.

#### 5. Responsibility for Implementation

The Executive Director of the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority will work with college officials to seek funding for both the public and the private sectors.

### **G. Promote Fitchburg as a Cultural, Financial and Educational Center of North Central Massachusetts and Southwest New Hampshire**

#### 1. Rationale

Fitchburg has a reputation as a "dying mill town", but the mill town is long buried. It is time, then, to bury the image as well. The image hurts industrial development, inhibits residential growth, and limits commercial expansion, particularly in the downtown. A network of primary and secondary roads leading into the city from rapidly growing suburbs in the region make Fitchburg a magnet city. The college, hospitals, art museum, historical society, and other cultural activities attract thousands of visitors every year. Several areas of intense commercial activity have developed, and several hotels have recently located in the city or on its perimeter. Tourism is a growing area of economic activity.

#### 2. Local Interest

The regional Chamber of Commerce is currently exploring a similar image campaign. The college and the other cultural institutions have a great stake in the reputation on Fitchburg. Many people are employed in this non-industrial sector of the local economy and improving the city's image will expand job opportunities.

#### 3. Criteria

The first step will be to focus on access routes to the city. Because of neglect, oversight or distraction, many of the access routes are unattractive and each has its own separate and distinct problems. The plan of action will detail these.

#### 4. Plan of Action

##### a) Route 31 Action Plan

The area from the center of the city, along the Nashua River to Route 2 is the city's oldest industrial area where its first mills were developed. This scenic entry into the city, with little commercial development and historic mills along the river, requires modest clean up and landscaping. Working with the Nashua River Watershed Association, a non-profit environmental agency the city could develop a plan and hire an architect to recommend a



proposed beautification project.. Such a project would spur efforts to find new uses for many of the city's oldest industrial buildings.

b) Route 12 Action Plan

The Route 12 access route runs from its juncture with Route 2 in Leominster into the heart of Fitchburg. Hundreds of commercial enterprises, as well as scattered low-income apartments, are located on this route. Working with the Chamber of Commerce and the city of Leominster, Fitchburg could initiate a route 12 Small Business Association to develop plans for beautification, signage, etc. This would boost the area's retail activity, improve the quality of life for low-income residents, and create a positive image of the city for visitors.

c) The Fitchburg Connection

This action step is designed to create a new access route by relieving congestion on many secondary roads and easing north-south traffic into the city. Building a Fitchburg connector from the current juncture of Route I-190 and Routes 1 and 13 into the southeast sector of the city and exiting through the northeast sector, would improve transportation throughout central New England, as well as improve access to the city. Our action plan calls for the city to work closely with; the regional Chamber of Commerce to interest state and federal officials in this connector.

d) Other Image Building Plans

- (1) Feature Fitchburg cultural and education opportunities in all IDC publications.
- (2) Sponsor interaction between institutions and local companies by assisting them to develop linkages.
- (3) Provide high quality graphic and printed materials that include reference to recreational and residential opportunities and the area's hotel and convention sites in IDC publications.

e) Continue to upgrade the city's basic infrastructure and services by developing a capital building program for a new central fire station with the latest state of the art equipment

5. Responsibility for Implementation

The Executive Director will work with local area leaders as the regional economic development strategy for the '90s unfolds. With the Industrial Development Commission and the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority, the Executive Director will act as a catalyst for the city to focus on its role in a regional, as well as a municipal, economic development strategy.

**Supply of Industrial Land  
Leominster Market Area  
1987**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Average Available</b>
Ayer	311.5
Fitchburg	421.2
Gardner	27.0
Groton	0.0
Harvard	0.0
Lancaster	557.8
Leominster	642.6
Lunenburg	0.0
Shirley	119.0
Sterling	214.0
Townsend	40.0
Westminster	330.5

Source: Montachusett Regional Planning Commission



**Nonagricultural and Manufacturing Employment**  
**Massachusetts and Major Labor Area**  
(in Thousands)

	1980	1	Change	Percent Change
	1988			
Massachusetts—Total	2,65.2	3,119.6	467.4	17.6%
Manufacturing	673.3	585.6	(87.7)	(13.0)
Boston PMSA —Total	1,491.3	1,751.6	260.3	17.5
Manufacturing	313.2	271.1	(42.1)	(13.4)
Springfield MSA —Total	219.5	241.8	22.3	10.2
Manufacturing	64.9	51.0	(13.9)	(21.4)
Worcester MSA —Total	170.8	207.9	37.1	21.7
Manufacturing	50.2	45.0	(5.2)	(10.4)
Lawrence-Haverill PMSA—Total	132.0	165.6	33.6	25.5
Manufacturing	51.5	50.3	(1.2)	(2.3)
Lowell PMSA—Total	82.2	109.3	27.1	33.0
Manufacturing	30.0	36.6	6.6	22.0
Brockton PMSA—Total	60.9	74.0	13.1	21.5
Manufacturing	13.1	11.0	(2.1)	(16.0)
Fall River PMSA —Total	51.4	56.0	4.6	8.9
Manufacturing	19.3	15.8	(3.5)	(18.1)
New Bedford PMSA — Total	64.0	68.3	4.3	6.7
Manufacturing	25.6	19.1	(6.5)	(25.4)
Fitchburg-Leominster MSA—Total	38.1	41.4	3.3	8.7
Manufacturing	15.2	12.0	(3.2)	(21.1)
Pittsfield MSA —Total	39.2	42.6	3.4	8.7
Manufacturing	14.2	11.0	(3.2)	(22.5)

Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training, Current Employment Statistics Survey (OCES-790).