


1994

# Overall Economic Development Program Montachusett Region

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**OVERALL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
MONTACHUSETT REGION**

**Spring, 1994**

**Worcester & Middlesex Counties, Massachusetts**

**(Ashburnham, Ashby, Athol, Ayer, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Groton,  
Harvard, Hubbardston, Lancaster, Leominster, Lunenburg, Petersham,  
Phillipston, Royalston, Shirley, Sterling, Templeton, Townsend,  
Westminster, Winchendon)**

**for submission to**

**The Economic Development Administration**

**U.S. Department of Commerce**



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## **I. Administrative Organization**

### **A. History and Organizational Structure**

As the regional planning agency for the Montachusett area, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission selected individuals to participate on the Overall Economic Development Committee utilizing EDA guidelines. Prior to selection MRPC staff met and discussed what individuals, organizations, and/or private companies should be included on the committee. It was important to get a cross section of the population to represent diverse interests and viewpoints.

The OEDP Committee composition included representatives from local and state government, private business and industry, banking institutions, chambers of commerce, agricultural concerns, the professions, organized labor, education, community/social service agencies, racial and ethnic minorities, women, the unemployed, and underemployed.

A Chairman and Vice-Chairman were elected as officers of the committee. The Chairman is Dean Mazarella, Mayor of the City of Leominster, and the Vice-Chairman is Jamison Graf, Vice-President of Safety Fund National Bank. OEDP meetings were held from February through May of 1994. Summaries of meeting minutes and handouts are attached in the appendix. All meetings had at least 40 people in attendance.

The Committee was responsible for identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and constraints in the region; preparing general goals with specific attainable objectives; identifying viable economic development projects/issues for the region; reviewing the "draft" Overall Economic Development Plan; ranking economic development projects that could be accomplished in a short-term timeframe (1 to 2 years); and formulating strategy to implement those projects.

## B. Overall Economic Development Program Committee

Committee Member	Title	Affiliation
Philip Rocca 16 Haskell Ave Leominster MA 01523 345-4012	President	ATU Local 690/ALFCIO
Stephen Slarksy Town Hall 1 Main St Ayer MA 01432 772-8220	Chairperson	Ayer Board of Selectmen
Jeffrey Bean City Hall 718 Main St Fitchburg MA 01420 345-9550	Mayor	City of Fitchburg
Virginia Wood 293 Old Dunstable Rd Groton MA 01450 448-3691	Planner	City of Fitchburg
David Streb City Hall 178 Main St Fitchburg MA 01420 345-1018	Planning Director	City of Fitchburg

Michael Lanava City Hall 718 Main St Fitchburg MA 01420 345-9602	Ind. Development Dir.	City of Fitchburg
Charles Manca City Hall Gardner MA 01440 632-1900	Mayor	City of Gardener
Hugh Cambell City Hall Gardner MA 630-4014	Planning Director	City of Gardner
Dennis Rosa 109 Country Lane Leominster MA 01453 537-7042	Councilor	City of Leominster
Dean Mazarella City Hall 125 West St Leominster MA 01453 534-7500	Mayor	City of Leominster
Ned Murray City Hall 125 West St Leominster MA 01453 534-7525	Planning Director	City of Leominster
Carol Kelley 24, Church St Leominster MA 01453 534-7700	Superintendent	City of Leominster School Department

Carolyn Dallas 85 Fairmont St Fitchburg MA 01420 342-2069	Director	Cleghorn Center
Susan Templeton 1 Green St Clinton MA 01510 368-7687	President / CEO	Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce
Polli Moryl-Kriedler 881 Main St Fitchburg MA 01420 342-9561	Legislative Aide	Congressman Olver's Office
Mark Wigler 120 Main St Fitchburg MA 01420 343-6461	Director	Department of Employment and Training
Betsy Hannula 1 Oak Hill Rd Fitchburg MA 01420 342-9561	Consultant	Fitchburg CDC
Leasa Segura 1 Oak Hill Rd Fitchburg MA 01420 342-9561	Director	Fitchburg CDC
Norman Vigeant 780 Main St Fitchburg MA 01420	Vice President	Fitchburg Savings Bank
Glenn Garber PO Box 2160 Ft Devens MA 01433 772-6340	Planner	Fort Devens Reuse



Todd Shimkus 95 Pleasant St Gardner MA 01440 630-2975	Director	Gardner CDC
Larry Adams 31 Lake Street, Suite 140 Gardner MA 01440 630-1290	Director	Gardner Redevelopment Authority
Russell Shade 166 Boulder Dr Fitchburg MA 01420 343-1000	General Manager	General Electric
Karen Koller 55 Lake St Gardner MA 01440 632-1780	Director	Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce
Neddy Latimer 16 Cross St Leominster MA 01453 534-3145	Director	Leominster Spanish Center
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Daniel Mc Carty 42, Lancaster St Leominster MA 01453 534-8727	President	Mc Carty Associates
Marietta Poras 122 Hill Top Rd Lancaster MA 01523 365-5849	Secretary	Montachusett Joint Transportation CTE
Joyce Huff 956 Main St Fitchburg MA 10420 342-5601	Chairperson	Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
Mohammed Khan R 1427 Water St Fitchburg MA 01420 345-7376	Director	Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
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Mark Goldstein 110 Erdman Way Leominster MA 01453 840-4300	Assistant Director	North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce
David Mc Keehan 110 Erdman Way Leominster MA 01453 840-4300	Director	North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce

Douglas Dettweiler 110 Erdman Way Leominster MA 01453 840-4300	Economic Development Director	North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce
Gordon Lankton 101 Union St Clinton MA 01510 365-9721	President	NYPRO
Gail Snow Lovell Place Rd Phillipston MA 01331 249-7606	Economic Development Committee	Phillipston Local Partnership
Phyllis Lary 76 Summer St Suite 235 Fitchburg MA 01420 345-6108	Director	Regional Employment Board
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Jamison Graff 470 Main St Fitchburg MA 01420 343-6406	Vice President	Safety Fund National Bank
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Edward Watkins Simplex Plaza Gardner MA 01440 632-2500	President	Simplex
Richard Campbell 16 Cross St Leominster MA 01453 534-3145		Spanish American Center
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Rob Hubbard 1776 Depot Square MA 01432 772-7017	Economic Development Director	Town of Ayer
Chris Philbin Town Hall 242 Church St Clinton MA 01510 365-4113	Community Development Director	Town of Clinton
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## **II. The Area and its Economy**

### **A. Background Information**

#### **1. General Description of the Area**

Montachusett is a region of 675 square miles located in north central Massachusetts, see Map 1. It is bordered by New Hampshire to the north, metropolitan Worcester to the south, Franklin County to the west and Middlesex county to the east. The 22 towns and cities of Montachusett lie in northern Worcester and western Middlesex counties. The region is mostly rural, however there are industrial centers in the cities of Fitchburg, Leominster and Gardner and in the towns of Clinton and Athol. Fitchburg and Leominster comprise the largest communities in the region.

##### **1.1 History**

The earliest settlements in the Montachusett Region were founded as trading outposts for the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Lancaster and Groton were settled in the mid 1600's to ensure the flow of animal pelts from the interior to Boston. By the second half of the eighteenth century most of the towns of the Montachusett Region had been settled. The communities of Montachusett survived by means of agriculture for the first 50 years of their existence.

Topography has been the determinant factor in the development of the region. The Wachusett Mountains run north-south down the center of Worcester County. These mountains provide the sources of two major streams flowing in opposite directions: the Nashua and the Blackstone Rivers. The Nashua is the largest river in Worcester County. This river separates the northeastern tier of towns in the Montachusett region. The north branch of the Nashua, with main sources in the lakes of Westminster and Ashburnham, flows south through Fitchburg and Leominster to Lancaster to meet the south branch. The

combined stream of the Nashua then turns north to join the Merrimack at Nashua, New Hampshire.

It is the Nashua and its tributaries that served as the dynamo to economic development in the Montachusett region. Beginning in the 18th century, water privileges were gradually developed on nearly every stream that could be dammed. The first mills were allied to agricultural production. However in 1800 the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike was opened connecting Boston to Greenfield. Improved transportation linkages provided the impetus for growth of a manufacturing sector.

The first half of the nineteenth century saw the founding of the industries which would become the dominant employers in the Montachusett Region. Paper and textile industries were attracted to the region by the purity and power of the water resources. Furniture and woodworking industries were established and the City of Gardner came to be known internationally as a major center for chair manufacture. By the mid-nineteenth century lumber and wood products was the largest industry in the Montachusett Region with textile production not far behind.

The opening of the Fitchburg Railroad in 1845 was the next major impetus to economic development. This railroad connected Fitchburg, Leominster and Gardner with Boston. Two years later the Fitchburg and Worcester Line completed rail connections with southeastern Massachusetts and additional lines extended communications to Vermont and Canada. The Hoosac Tunnel, in northwestern Massachusetts, opened in 1874, became the gateway to the West. This connection widened the market for manufactured goods and increased accessibility to raw materials.

On the whole, the arrival of the railroad ushered a period of intensive industrialization. Communities with an industrial base prospered and expanded with the influx of foreign-born and US- born migrants. Smaller towns, such as Ashby and Hubbardston, did not see



expansion. However, their industrialized neighbors enjoyed their heyday in the late Victorian era.

In the early 1900's Leominster became a center for the plastics industry. The period from 1900 to 1920 was the Montachusett region's era of greatest expansion. In the following two decades, however, a migration of industry to the southern states brought on a period of economic decline that was aggravated by the Great Depression. The smaller industrialized communities suffered most severely and revived most slowly. In the post-war decades the southern states became a real challenge, especially to the textile and plastics industries. The paper industry remained healthy as a result of specialization. As a whole, the region is currently dominated by "mature" manufacturing industries which are undergoing a transition, meaning that the region's industrial base is not stable. (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, 1990).

## **1.2 Demographics**

According to Census data the population of the Montachusett region was 223,865 in 1990. This was an increase of 10.5% on 1980 figures. During this same time period the growth rate in the United States as a whole was 9.8%. However, the growth rate in the northeast was only 3.4% and in the state of Massachusetts, 4.9%. Every town except Ayer saw a growth in population, with the largest increases occurring in the more rural communities of the Montachusett Region. The two sectors of the population that saw the most significant growth were people over 65 years of age, (this age group grew three times faster than the general population) and persons of color. In 1980, 3.8% of the population of Montachusett were members of racial and ethnic groups. However, by 1990 this figure had risen to 11.4%. (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, 1990).

### 1.3 Infrastructure

The region is well served by major means of transportation; Route 2 is a major east-west state highway that runs from Boston through the Montachusett region to Interstate 91 in Greenfield and eventually to New York state (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, 1993). Interstate 190 runs north-south from Route 2 in Leominster to Interstate 290 in Worcester and to the Massachusetts Turnpike (Refer to map 2).

Major commercial air transportation is available at Logan International Airport located in Boston, Worcester Municipal Airport in Worcester, and Bradley International Airport, located in Hartford Connecticut. In addition the region contains four municipal airports, the Fitchburg Municipal Airport located in Fitchburg between Fitchburg and Leominster; the Gardner Airport in Templeton; the Shirley Airport in Shirley; and the Sterling Airport in Sterling. These airports are classified as general aviation airports. There is also a military airport at Fort Devens in Ayer. Of these municipal airports the largest by far is the Fitchburg Municipal Airport. Approximately 85,000 flights per year are handled on its two-runway system. The airport provides for the general aviation needs for the greater Fitchburg area and provides facilities for personal, corporate and air taxi services. The region is also served by an extensive rail network, and the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority provides public transportation. These services are described in section 7.7.

Electricity is provided in all the communities although public water, sewer and gas service are limited in all of the communities except the cities of Gardner, Ayer, Fitchburg and Leominster. All the communities have either full- or part-time fire and police departments. The school systems and public libraries provide adequate services for the region.

## **1.4 Land Use and Zoning**

Within the Montachusett region land use patterns reflect the urban or rural characteristics of the communities. Urban communities such as Leominster, Fitchburg, Gardner, Clinton and Athol have a greater percentage of high-density residential, commercial and industrial acres than do rural communities, such as Ashburnham, Ashby, Groton, Hubbardston, Lancaster, Lunenburg, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston and Townsend. The communities of Ayer, Sterling, Templeton, Westminster and Winchendon, although rural in nature, have many acres devoted to industrial, and/or commercial use.

All the region's communities except Templeton have a zoning ordinance or zoning by-laws in place. Several communities have conducted zoning changes to enhance and encourage industrial and commercial activity in an effort to increase their tax base and produce jobs and services. Gardner and Ashburnham are aggressively pursuing a strategy to attract industrial development, while Leominster's zoning ordinance permits biotechnology industries to locate in the community. However, the region has seen several large scale developments fail to reach construction due to economic conditions that occurred after the communities conducted zoning changes to support the development proposals. Examples include Pyramid Mall and Orchard Hill Park in Leominster, and Digital Equipment Corp. in Lancaster.

## **1.5 Federal and State Designation**

The Montachusett region has a wealth of state parks, agriculture preservation restriction (APR) lands, parks and reserves. These areas present a multitude of recreation opportunities ranging from canoeing, fishing and swimming to hiking, hunting, skiing, and snowmobiling. While the rural areas are rich in these reserved lands, the cities have also taken care to provide parks, ponds and skating rinks. State parks and forests comprise the most numerous as well as the largest of these protected lands. They are found in varying sizes in 15 of the towns of the region. The largest parks are located in

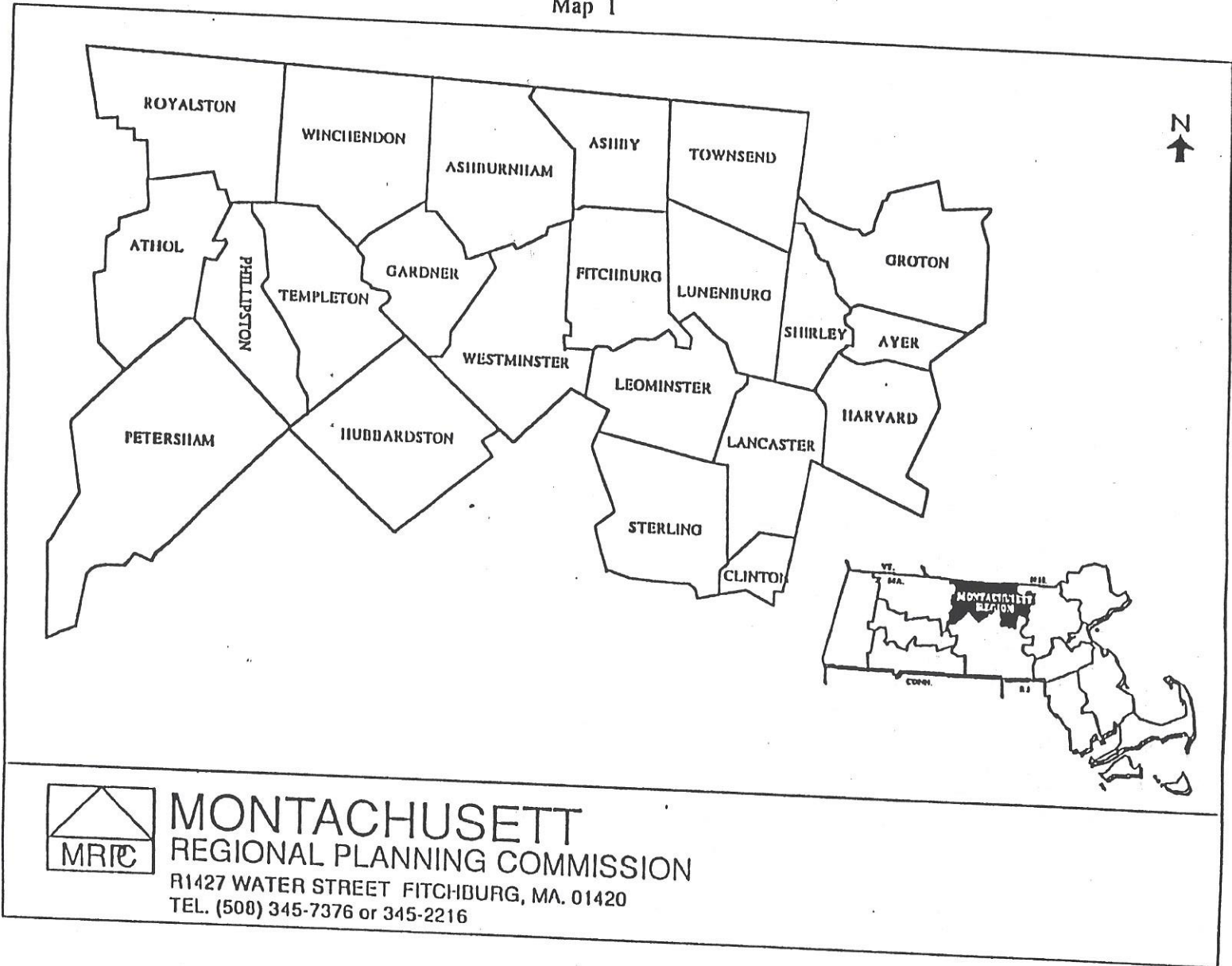


Ashburnham, Ashby, Athol, Hubbardston, Templeton, Westminster, and Winchendon. In Groton, there is the Squannacook River Wildlife Management Area and the Bolton Flats Wildlife Management Area. The Mt. Watatic Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Ashby; the Ayer State Game Farm in Ayer; the Hubbardston Wildlife Management Area in Hubbardston, and a wildlife management area is also located in Gardner.

Federally owned lands include the Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge in Lancaster, and the Fort Devens Military Reservation with considerable open space in the four towns of Shirley, Ayer, Lancaster, and Harvard. While the Army Corps of Engineers owns Birch Hill Flood Control Area, it allows the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife to manage it for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreational uses.



Map 1



## 2. Natural Resources

Natural resources can present economic growth opportunities for the Montachusett region. However, there are constraints as well as opportunities when dealing with natural factors and resource use issues. This section describes the quality, quantity and location of natural resources in the region.

Natural resources have historically had a significant impact on the Montachusett region's development. During the colonial era its initial land uses were predominantly agricultural. However, most of the old farms have reverted to succession forest and most of the orchards have been abandoned. The Nashua and its tributaries were instrumental in the industrial development of the region. Gardner's rise as a leading chair manufacturing city was made possible by the ready supply of native timber. (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, 1990).

### 2.1 Soils

The soils of the Montachusett region are characteristic of the soils of Massachusetts as a whole. They are for the most part deep, loamy, sandy soils formed from glacial till derived from rubble left by the glacial retreat. There is a smaller amount of soil which has formed on outwash plains and in stream valleys from glacial outwash, lacustrine and alluvial sediments. The glacial till is quite acidic and cannot buffer the effects of acid rain. Much of the region has experienced some acidification of its surface water. Although the mean alkalinity of surface water does not interfere with the natural beauty of the area, it does have a serious effect on aquatic life systems, leaving them vulnerable to damage.

The sand and gravel deposits may be a resource for the region in terms of extraction. These materials can be used as a mix in the manufacture of cement or as dry fill that has

good drainage characteristics. These drainage characteristics can also be a constraint, as liquid pollution can permeate easily through porous material and seep into ground water and aquifers. This may limit the suitability of some types of commercial and industrial development in areas near aquifers or public water and recreational facilities. (Bickford and Dyman, 1990)

## 2.2 Rivers and Streams

The Montachusett Region is located within three river basins: the Chicopee River Basin, the Millers River Basin, and the Nashua River Basin. These basins are part of the Connecticut River drainage system and form an integral part of the water supply system leading to the major metropolitan areas in and around Boston. They also provide a range of recreational opportunities.

The following is an inventory of rivers and streams in the Montachusett Region.

### The Millers River Basin

Beaver Brook	Templeton and Phillipston
Otter River	Templeton and Gardner
Lawrence River	Royalston
Millers River	Athol, Winchendon, Ashburnham
Priests Brook	Winchendon
Tully River (east branch)	Royalston
Mill Brook	Athol

(Bickford and Dyman, 1990).

Originally the waters of the Millers River were full of salmon, trout and other fish. European settlement of the region in the seventeenth century, with its accompanying development of dams and mills, began to change the quality and character of the water. In the 1930's and 1940's the river was still one of the best-stocked streams in the state. However by the 1950's pollution from industrial and domestic sources had ruined the Millers for fishing and recreation. In the 1970's the local watershed council began the task of orchestrating a cleanup. By 1983, the river was clean enough to stock again (Bickford and Dyman, 1990).

### **The Nashua River Basin**

North Nashua River	Fitchburg and Leominster
Nashua River	Harvard, Lancaster and Ayer
Squannacook River	Townsend and Shirley
Mulpus Brook	Lunenburg and Shirley
Whitman River	Westminster, Ashburnham
Wachusett Brook	Princeton and Sterling
Stillwater River	Princeton and Sterling

In 1970 the Nashua River was one of the ten most polluted rivers in the nation, with less than 5% of its banks protected. Today much of the Nashua has class B water (fishable and swimmable). In addition, over 65% of its length and most of its major tributaries are protected as open space. The Nashua's upper reaches have been impounded in Clinton to form the Wachusett Reservoir. Over 25 miles of surface and underground aqueduct connect the Quabbin Reservoir to the Wachusett Reservoir. An additional 30 miles of aqueduct transports water from the Wachusett Reservoir to Boston where it is used as an important part of the metropolitan water supply. Three major tributaries; the Stillwater, the



Nissitissit, and the Squannacook, are relatively pristine. They offer excellent trout fishing and canoeing as well as opportunities to observe nature (Bickford and Dyman, 1990).

### **The Chicopee River Basin**

Swift River (east branch)	Petersham
Burnshirt River	Templeton and Hubbardston
Ware River (west branch)	Hubbardston
Canesto Brook	Hubbardston

The Chicopee River is formed where its three tributaries; the Swift, the Ware and the Quaboag meet. This is the largest river basin in the state. The towns of Petersham, Templeton, and Hubbardston lie in this river basin. The Swift River's three branches were impounded in 1938 to form the Quabbin Reservoir, the largest high quality water impoundment in the world. The upper section of the Ware River has class A water which is seasonally diverted to the Quabbin Reservoir (Bickford and Dyman, 1990).

### **Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan**

This 1988 plan establishes the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs' (EOEA) policy for managing its openspace and outdoor recreation areas. The purpose of the SCORP is to develop a framework for ensuring the protection of highly valued cultural and natural resources, and enhancing existing recreational opportunities in Massachusetts. The Montachusett Region has a total of 103,860.3 acres designated as SCORP holdings. These lands provide a wide variety of recreational possibilities, from hiking and picnicking to hunting and fishing. These areas are a valuable natural resource to the region and the state.

**Table 2.1: SCORP land in the Montachusett Region**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Area Acres</b>	<b>SCORP Area Acres</b>
Ashburnham	24,832.0	5,133.9
Ashby	15,142.0	1,291.3
Athol	20,832.0	3,338
Ayer	5,779.2	332.9
Clinton	3,609.6	5,870.5
Fitchburg	17,593.6	5,975.0
Gardner	13,638.4	5,227.6
Groton	21,049.6	3,614.5
Harvard	16,800.0	2,999.0
Hubbardston	25,817.6	3,697.4
Lancaster	17,689.6	8,204.4
Leominster	17,913.6	6,498.4
Lunenburg	16,825.6	1,065.4
Petersham	35,732.8	7,015.6
Phillipston	15,168.0	3,634.6
Royalston	26,873.6	5,327.7
Shirley	9,664.0	2,849.4
Sterling	19,321.6	1,749.7
Templeton	20,012.8	7,649.7
Townsend	20,953.6	8,259.2
Westminster	22,534.4	352.0
Winchendon	23,942.4	13,774.1
		Total = 103,860.3

Source: Massachusetts Outdoors, Volume Two, 1988-1992.

### **3. Environmental Issues**

Environmental issues in any region have both positive and negative implications for economic development. This section will identify environmental concerns that could have an effect on economic development in the Montachusett Region. Among the environmental issues that will be discussed are: (1) endangered species located within the area, (2) hazardous waste sites, (3) solid waste, (4) historic areas, (5) waste water disposal, (6) and environmentally sensitive areas.

#### **3.1 Endangered Species**

Species that are considered to be in peril are listed in one of two categories: "endangered" and "threatened". In Massachusetts 18% of all vertebrates have been placed within one of these categories. Eighty-nine invertebrates and 1,700 plants that are indigenous to Massachusetts have also been designated as either endangered or threatened. Massachusetts is the home to nine different rare fish species ( Bickford and Dyman, 1990)

The largest percentage of species that are listed within the three above mentioned categories are wetland species. Wetland species are put in jeopardy mostly due to loss of habitat. They are dependent upon floodplain forests, river sandbars, clay banks, freshwater tidal marshes, and marshes ( Bickford, Dyman 1990).

The Montachusett Planning region is saturated with wetland environments. The region is situated within three different river basins; the Millers River, the Chicopee River, and the Nashua River (see Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: River Basins and Correlating Towns and Cities**

Chicopee River	Nashua River		Millers River
Hubbardston	Ashburnham	Lancaster	Ashby
Petersham	Ashby	Leominster	Athol
Phillipston	Ayers	Lunenburg	Gardner
Templeton	Clinton	Shirley	Hubbardston
	Fitchburg	Sterling	Petersham
	Gardner	Townsend	Phillipston
	Groton	Westminster	Royalston
	Harvard		Templeton
			Westminster
			Winchendon

Source: Bickford and Dyman, 1990

Each watershed has several endangered species contained within (see Figure 3.2).

**Table 3.2 : Endangered Species Associated with Each Watershed**

	Chicopee River	Nashua River	Millers River
plants:	Terete Arrowhead	Bartrams Shadbush	Bartrams Shadbush
	Longbeaked-Baldrush	Climbing Fern	Dwarf Mistletoe
	Golden Club	Sand Violet	Sand Violet
animals:	Common Loon	Pie Billed Grebe	
	Bald Eagle*	American Bittern	
	Four Toed-Salamander	Blandings Turtle	

\*Federally Protected

Source: Bickford and Dyman, 1990

### 3.2 Hazardous Waste

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is responsible for investigating and enforcing cleanup of sites they believe are contaminated by toxic or hazardous waste. They have listed 170 sites within the twenty-two cities and towns that comprise the Montachusett Planning District (see Table 3.3)(Source: Secretary of the State et al, 1993).



The DEP uses the following categories to index sites:

- Remedial: sites at which remedial response actions have been completed and at which further remedial response actions are unnecessary
- Confirmed: locations confirmed by the DEP as being contaminated and requiring cleanup
- Waiver: locations sighted by the DEP as being non-priority cleanup sites, and which cleanup will be orchestrated and carried out without DEP oversight
- L.T.B.I. locations to be investigated. These are sites that the DEP considers to be likely disposal sites. (Secretary of the State et al. 1993)

The largest portion of the areas cited for cleanup are lands and facilities owned by small businesses with minor cleanup requirements. These toxic waste sites create environmental hazards if they are not cleaned up quickly and effectively.

The most contaminated site in the region is the Fort Devens Military Base. This has been scheduled as an area of Superfund Cleanup action. Contaminated material found on the base must be cleaned up before initial industrial use can occur. According to Montachusett Regional Planning Commission staff, cleanup on the northern portion of Fort Devens is approximately 10% complete. The southern portion, a more heavily contaminated former weapons proving area, will remain under military control.

**Table 3.3: Type and Number of Hazardous Sites in Montachusett**

	Remedial	Confirmed	Waiver	L.T.B.I.	Total
Ashburnham	0	0	0	2	2
Ashby	0	1	0	1	2
Athol	1	6	1	7	15
Ayer	0	3	0	2	5
Clinton	1	6	4	6	17
Fitchburg	4	8	7	11	30
Gardner	0	13	3	8	24
Groton	0	5	1	4	10
Harvard	0	2	0	0	2
Hubbardston	0	1	1	0	2
Lancaster	0	1	1	1	3
Leominster	1	11	7	10	29
Lunenburg	0	1	0	1	2
Phillipston	0	1	0	0	1
Shirley	0	1	2	0	3
Sterling	0	0	0	1	1
Templeton	0	1	0	1	2
Townsend	0	3	1	1	4
Westminster	0	2	1	1	4
Winchendon	1	3	0	7	11
Totals	8	69	29	64	170

Source: Secretary of the State, 1992.

### 3.3 Solid Waste

Solid waste has become an issue of great concern to communities within Massachusetts. As development increases, a correlating amount of solid waste is produced, putting increased stress upon an already strained system of solid waste disposal. If economic development is to move forward, solid waste disposal issues must be addressed by the communities within the Montachusett Planning Region. Seventeen of the twenty-two cities and towns utilize landfills. The remaining five incinerate their solid waste. Many landfills within the region are reaching capacity and large amounts of capital will have to be invested in order to increase the existing facilities' capacity or to create new lined landfills.

The communities within the region that use landfills as their means of solid waste disposal participate in one of three landfill types. These types are: a) Regional Municipal Landfills

(RML), b) Regional Commercial Landfills (RCL), or c) Single Municipal Landfills (SML). Regional Municipal Landfills (RML) are landfills that service multiple communities and are publicly owned. Regional Commercial Landfills (RCL) are landfills that service multiple towns and are owned privately. Single Municipal Landfills (SML) are landfills that service only one community and are publicly owned (See Figure 3.4).

**Table 3.4: Solid Waste Disposal Methods by Town**

	Incineration	RML	RCL	SML
Ashburnham				X
Ashby				X
Athol		X		
Ayer	X			
Clinton			X	X
Fitchburg		X		
Gardner				X
Groton				X
Harvard	X			
Hubbardston				X
Lancaster			X	
Leominster	X			
Lunenburg				X
Petersham	X			
Phillipston		X		
Royalston				X
Shirley				X
Sterling	X			
Templeton				X
Townsend				X
Westminster		X		
Winchendon				X

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs et al, 1987.

### 3.4 Recycling

With many landfills within the Montachusett Region approaching capacity, recycling alternatives to solid waste disposal are being implemented in more than half of the Montachusett communities. The area has begun to adopt a progressive attitude toward solid waste disposal. Glass, paper, plastic, aluminum and other metals are actively being recycled by many communities. Recycling programs should be aggressively sought after in communities not already participating in one.

Fifty-five percent of the communities within the region are involved in some sort of recycling of solid waste. The following eleven towns are presently participating in the recycling of metals, paper, and glass: Ashburnham, Ayer, Athol, Gardner, Groton, Harvard, Lunenburg, Petersham, Phillipston, Townsend, and Winchendon. Westminster, Fitchburg, Lancaster, and Shirley are recycling and composting, and Westminster and Lancaster are composting organic materials (Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, 1987). Additionally, the towns of Ashburnham, Ayer, Clinton, Harvard, Shirley, Sterling and Townsend are members of the Coalition for North Central Waste Management, Inc., which is a nonprofit corporation comprising a coalition of approximately fifteen municipalities in north central Massachusetts for the marketing of recyclable waste. The Coalition for North Central Waste Management, Inc. has achieved a high degree of success in generating the highest revenue possible for recyclables in the waste stream, and should be explored by other communities participating in this economic development plan.

Recycling can bring revenues into the community, as well as retard the closure of important landfills. If recycling continues to be actively pursued, it could become a significant area industry.



### 3.5 Waste Water Disposal

Thirty-six percent of the twenty-two cities and towns that comprise the Montachusett Planning Region use individual, on-site sewage disposal systems (septic tanks). The lack of sewage treatment facilities is a major constraint upon industrial growth. Sewage treatment facilities in the region are owned in one of the following four ways: Municipally Owned (MU), Privately Owned (PI), Publicly Owned (PU), and Individual On-site Ownership (ISO). The first three ownership types are large facilities owned by stock holders, private firms, or town governments respectively. Individual on Site Ownership equates to subsurface sewage disposal (septic systems).

**Table 3.5 : Ownership of Waste Water Disposal Facilities by Town**

	MU	PI	PO	ISO
Ashburnham	X			
Ashby				X
Athol			X	
Ayer	X			
Clinton	X			
Fitchburg			X	
Gardner			X	
Groton				X
Harvard				X
Hubbardston				X
Lancaster	X			
Leominster			X	
Lunenburg		X		
Petersham				X
Phillipston				X
Royalston			X	
Shirley		X		
Sterling				X
Templeton			X	
Townsend		X		
Westminster				X
Winchendon			X	

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, 1990

### **3.6 Environmentally Sensitive Areas**

It is important to strike a balance between development and preserving the environment. With increased environmental degradation, quality of life as well as public health becomes jeopardized.

Water is a large resource, as well as a constraint in the Montachusett region. The area contains a variety of water habitats including swamps, ponds lakes, rivers, and reservoirs. The region is located within the Chicopee, Millers, and Nashua River basins. The rivers offer cheap energy in the form of hydro-electricity, but their watershed areas are also sensitive to pollution. They should be treated responsibly to avoid the destruction of rare species habitats that border the rivers. Areas that are easily affected should be designated as sensitive through local governmental regulations.

There are 41,944 acres of reservoirs, lakes, and ponds within the three river basins. Watersheds are easily degraded through human activity. Waste disposal into watersheds along with certain industrial practices can easily degrade the quality of watersheds. Preserved land within the region is also a major resource and constraint. The landscape is dotted with state forests, management areas, and parks.

### **3.7 Historic Areas**

Many of the towns within the Montachusett region were first settled and incorporated by European colonists as early as the 17th century. As a consequence, many buildings have historic significance. There are 2,261 buildings in the Montachusett Region that are listed on the State Registry of Historic Places. Seventeen of the twenty-two towns and cities have historic districts, each comprised of a number of properties. The historic districts within the region provide a great opportunity for increased tourism. The Shaker Village Historic District located in the towns of Lancaster and Shirley is a good example of an

under exploited economic avenue. If marketed in the large markets of Worcester and Boston tourism to historic districts could become a viable and economically advantageous sector within the region.

The historic designation of buildings, however, can constitute a potential obstacle to development when it is applied to structures occupying essential industrially zoned land. Mills that are designated as historically significant cannot be altered in a way that would affect the overall appearance of the structure. Thus historic designation can create costly rehabilitation requirements for the reuse of industrial buildings.

**Table 3.6 : Number of Historic Properties per Town**

Ashby*	2	Harvard	211	Shirley	558
Athol*	2	Lancaster	151	Sterling	157
Ayer	80	Leominster	80	Templeton	144
Clinton	79	Lunenburg	120	Townsend	126
Fitchburg	22	Petersham	98	Westminster	56
Gardner	70	Royalston	85	Winchendon	96
Groton	126				

\*Towns without historic districts

Source: Massachusetts Historical Commission 1993.

The towns of Phillipston, Ashburnham, and Hubbardston have no lands within the State Register of Historic Places as of the 1993 publication.

#### 4. Political Geography

The Montachusett Region is situated within the First, Third and Fifth U.S. Congressional districts. The First Congressional District is represented by U.S. Representative John W. Olver (D). The Third District is represented by U.S. Representative Peter I. Blute (R) and the Fifth Congressional District is represented by U.S. Representative Martin Meehan (D). Edward Kennedy (D) and John Kerry (D) serve Massachusetts as U.S. Senators. State representatives are listed in table 4.1.



**Table 4.1: List of State Representatives**

	Congressional District	State Senator	State Representative
Ashburnham	1	Wetmore (D)	Hawke (R)
Ashby	1	Antonioni (D)	Hawke (R)
Athol	1	Wetmore (D)	Lane (D)
Ayer	5	Durand (D)	Hall (D)
Clinton	3	Chase	Hornblower(R)
Fitchburg	1	Antonioni (D)	Constatino (R)
Gardner	1	Antonioni (D)	Goguen (D)
Groton	5	Leahy (D)	Simmons (D)
Harvard	5	Durand (D)	Hawke (R)
Hubbardston	1	Wetmore (D)	Hornblower (R)
Lancaster	3&5	Antonioni (D)	Hall (D)
Leominster	1	Antonioni (D)	Lane (D)
Lunenburg	1&5	Antonioni (D)	Constantino (R)
Petersham	1	Wetmore (D)	Simmons (D)
Phillipston	1	Wetmore (D)	Lane (D)
Royalston	1	Wetmore (D)	Lane (D)
Shirley	5	Leahy (D)	Lane (D)
Sterling	3	Antonioni (D)	Walrath (D)
Templeton	1	Wetmore (D)	Constantino (R)
Townsend	1	Antonioni (D)	Lane (D)
Westminster	1	Antonioni (D)	Hawke (R)
Winchendon	1	Wetmore (D)	Hornblower (R)
			Hawke (R)
			Constantino (R)
			Hawke (R)

Source: Almanac Research Services, 1993

\*(D) Democrat (R) Republican

The twenty-two towns and cities use a variety of local governmental forms; there are open town meetings, a representative town meeting, and a mayor-council method (see Figure 4.2).



**Table 4.2 : Town Government Configuration**

	# voters	Political Forum	# of Reps	Leadership Type
Ashburnham	2921	open meeting	3 selectman	Town Adm.
Ashby	1332	open meeting	3 selectman	-----
Athol	5715	Rep. meeting	5 selectman	Adm. Assistant
Ayer	2841	open meeting	3 selectman	Town Adm.
Clinton	7659	open meeting	3 selectman	Adm. Assistant
Fitchburg	18012	Mayor-Council	11 councilman	Mayor
Gardner	9763	Mayor-Council	11 councilman	Mayor
Groton	4777	open meeting	3 selectman	Adm. Assistant
Harvard	3426	open meeting	3 selectman	Exec. Secretary
Hubbardston	1831	open meeting	3 selectman	Adm. Assistant
Lancaster	2315	open meeting	3 selectman	Adm. Assistant
Leominster	20086	Mayor-Council	9 Councilman	Mayor
Lunenburg	5647	open meeting	3 selectman	Exec. Secretary
Petersham	851	open meeting	3 selectman	-----
Phillipston	821	open meeting	3 selectman	Adm. Assistant
Royalston	656	open meeting	3 selectman	-----
Shirley	2815	open meeting	3 selectman	Adm. Assistant
Sterling	4047	open meeting	3 selectman	-----
Templeton	3545	open meeting	3 selectman	Adm. Assistant
Townsend	4622	open meeting	3 selectman	Exec. Secretary
Westminster	3839	open meeting	3 selectman	Town Coordinator
Winchendon	4319	open meeting	3 selectman	Town Manager

Source: Information Publications, 1993.

## 5. Population and Labor Force:

At the time of the 1980 Census, the population of the 22-town Montachusett region stood at 202,557 persons. By the 1990 Census the population had grown to 223,865 persons, a 10.5% increase over the decade. This compares with a 4.9% population growth rate for Massachusetts during the 1980s and a 9.8% rate for the nation as a whole.

Montachusett's population growth in the 1980s can be mainly attributed to immigration from the Boston metro area during the state's economic boom years. Housing development and migration were pushed westward by Boston's high real estate prices into the more affordable Montachusett region. Rapid growth also occurred in the region's

minority population. In the 1970 - 1980 period by contrast, the Montachusett population increased by only 1.5%. Likewise, in the decade to the year 2000, the region's population is projected to grow by only 1.6% due to slower economic growth, an aging population, the housing slump and the closure of Fort Devens.

During the 1980s, both population and job growth varied widely from town to town within the region. In the cities and older industrial towns the population growth rate remained below or near the regional average growth rate of 10.5%. However, every urban area in the region except Ayer did experience some growth during the 1980s, in contrast to the previous decade, when Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Athol and Ayer all declined in population (see Table 5.1).

In contrast to the urbanized towns and cities, many of the smaller rural towns experienced very rapid population growth between 1980 and 1990. Hubbardston (55.6%) and Phillipston (55.8%) had the highest growth rates, followed by Ashburnham (33.3%), Winchendon (25.4%), Groton (22.1%), Westminster (20.5%) and Royalston (20.1%).

These growth patterns reflect a general migration westward from the Boston Metro area, and a shift of jobs and population away from the region's cities and into its rural and suburban communities, continuing a trend established in the 1970-1980 period. Within the small towns, growth took place in the wealthier eastern towns of Groton, Ashburnham, Ashby, Westminster and Sterling as a result of upscale housing development pushing westward from the Boston Metro area. This in turn caused housing displacement which spurred population growth in the more affordable western towns of Winchendon, Hubbardston, Phillipston and Royalston.

If the population growth rates from 1970 to 1990 are considered, Townsend is the fastest growing community in the Montachusett Region. Its population doubled over the 20 year

period. Hubbardston follows with an increase of approximately 95% during the same time period.

**Table 5.1: Population in Montachusett Communities by Decade:  
1960 - 2000**

Community	1960	1970	1980	1990	Proj. 2000	'70 - '80 % +/-	'80 - '90 % +/-
Ashburnham	2,758	3,484	4,075	5,433	6,606	17.0	33.3
Ashby	1,883	2,274	2,311	2,717	3,988	1.6	17.6
Athol	11,637	11,185	10,634	11,451	11,934	-4.9	7.7
Ayer	14,927	7,393	6,993	6,871	6,935	-5.4	-1.7
Clinton	12,848	13,383	12,771	13,222	12,536	-4.6	3.5
Fitchburg	43,021	43,343	39,580	41,194	39,161	-8.7	4.1
Gardner	19,038	19,748	17,900	20,125	20,115	-9.4	12.4
Groton	3,904	5,109	6,154	7,511	9,428	20.5	22.1
Harvard	2,563	*12,536	12,170	12,329	**4,772	-2.9	1.3
Hubbardston	1,217	1,437	1,797	2,797	2,980	25.1	55.6
Lancaster	3,958	6,095	6,334	6,661	6,615	3.9	5.2
Leominster	27,929	32,939	34,508	38,145	38,975	4.8	10.5
Lunenburg	6,334	7,419	8,405	9,117	9,548	13.3	8.5
Petersham	890	1,015	1,024	1,131	1,175	0.9	10.4
Phillipston	695	872	953	1,485	1,417	9.3	55.8
Royalston	800	809	955	1,147	1,447	18.0	20.1
Shirley	5,202	*4,909	5,124	6,118	**5,495	4.4	19.4
Sterling	3,193	4,247	5,440	6,481	8,389	28.1	19.1
Templeton	5,371	5,863	6,070	6,438	6,996	3.5	6.1
Townsend	3,650	4,281	7,201	8,496	12,068	68.2	18.0
Westminster	4,022	4,273	5,139	6,191	6,862	20.3	20.5
Winchendon	6,237	6,682	7,019	8,805	9,871	5.0	25.4
Region Total	182,077	181,851	202,557	223,865	217,046	11.4	10.5
U.S.							9.8
State (MA)							4.9

\* Includes Ft. Devens population for the first time

\*\* Figures do not include Fort Devens population due to questionable status of base.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1960 - 1990.



## 5.1 Median age, sex and racial composition:

### A. Age

The average median age of Montachusett's twenty-two towns in 1980 was 29.8 years, slightly under the state median age of 31.1 years (see Table 5.2). By 1990, the Montachusett region's median age increased to 32.9 years, still younger than the state median of 33.5 years. Though the region's median age remains lower than the state, the Montachusett median age has increased slightly more rapidly than the state as a whole, aging by 3.1 years during the 1980's as compared to the state increase of 2.4 years. As a result the region's median age is now closer to the state median than it was ten years ago.

Median ages within Montachusett towns range from a low of 25.0 years in Harvard (home to part of the Fort Devens military base population) to a high of 39.4 years in Petersham. In keeping with its increasing median age, one of the fastest growing age groups during the 1980's were persons 65 years and older. The number of people aged sixty-five and over increased by 18.1% between 1980 and 1990. This compares with a state growth rate of 23.3% during the same period for people aged sixty-five and over. Children under five (+23.8%) and adults aged 35-44 (+60.5%) were two other fast-growing age groups during the 1980's, indicating growth in the number of young families and a "baby boomlet" among the baby boom generation (see Table 5.3).



**Table 5.2: Median Age by Community in the  
Montachusett Region: 1980 - 1990**

Community	1980 Median Age	1990 Median Age	Years Aged
Ashburnham	30.4	32.9	2.5
Ashby	29.7	33.4	3.7
Athol	33.2	33.3	0.1
Ayer	25.7	29.5	3.8
Clinton	30.4	32.9	2.5
Fitchburg	30.1	31.1	1.0
Gardner	33.2	33.9	0.7
Groton	29.7	34.1	4.4
Harvard	23.3	25.0	1.7
Hubbardston	28.5	32.0	3.5
Lancaster	27.5	31.2	3.7
Leominster	30.1	32.8	2.7
Lunenburg	32.1	35.7	3.6
Petersham	33.9	39.4	5.5
Phillipston	*	32.1	
Royalston	*	33.7	
Shirley	27.6	32.2	4.6
Sterling	30.0	34.1	4.1
Templeton	32.0	34.8	2.8
Townsend	27.7	31.3	3.6
Westminster	31.0	35.1	4.1
Winchendon	30.3	33.2	2.9
Region Avg.	29.8	32.9	3.1
Mass. Avg.	31.1	33.5	2.4

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1980, 1990.

**Table 5.3: Population in Montachusett Communities by Age Group:  
1980 - 1990**

Community	1980 Under 5	1990 Under 5	% Change	1980 5 to 17	1990 5 to 17	% Change	1980 18-20	1990 18-20	% Change
Ashburnham	287	442	54.0	968	1187	22.6	196	184	-6.1
Ashby	205	219	6.8	519	596	14.8	108	89	-17.6
Ayer	611	627	2.6	611	1043	70.7	533	363	-31.9
Clinton	904	1025	13.4	2538	1934	-23.8	708	519	-26.7
Fitchburg	2536	3321	31.0	7408	6689	-9.7	3440	2726	-20.8
Gardner	1126	1508	33.9	3274	3049	-6.9	986	722	-26.8
Groton	420	618	47.1	1629	1453	-10.8	259	324	25.1
Harvard	1135	1172	3.3	2436	2282	-6.3	1516	1536	1.3
Hubbardston	151	243	60.9	457	609	33.3	77	87	13.0
Lancaster	385	401	4.2	1552	1142	-26.4	518	570	10.0
Leominster	2283	2979	30.5	7282	5900	-19.0	1821	1514	-16.9
Lunenburg	472	609	29.0	1994	1699	-14.8	418	320	-23.4
Shirley	417	452	8.4	1157	1083	-6.4	292	232	-20.5
Sterling	437	509	16.5	1353	1323	-2.2	334	262	-21.6
Templeton	379	425	12.1	1375	1240	-9.8	301	230	-23.6
Townsend	751	713	-5.1	1709	2055	20.2	282	325	15.2
Westminster	356	418	17.4	1178	1222	3.7	198	261	31.8
Winchendon	517	876	69.4	1682	1764	4.9	361	281	-22.2
1980 Total	13372			39122			12348		
1990 Total		16557			36270			10545	
% Change			23.8			-7.3			-14.6

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1980, 1990.

**Table 5.3: Population in Montachusett Communities by Age Group:  
1980 - 1990 (cont.)**

Community	1980 21-34	1990 21-34	% Change	1980 35-44	1990 35-44	% Change	1980 45-59	1990 45-59	% Change
Ashburnham	905	1184	30.8	494	1077	118.0	591	722	22.2
Ashby	678	561	-17.3	239	549	129.7	338	355	5.0
Ayer	2123	2202	3.7	663	912	37.6	960	772	-19.6
Clinton	3007	3736	24.2	1130	1748	54.7	2043	1641	-19.7
Fitchburg	8832	10473	18.6	3454	5039	45.9	6160	4778	-22.4
Gardner	3932	5181	31.8	1563	2808	79.7	2949	2506	-15.0
Groton	1418	1505	6.1	895	1595	78.2	819	1259	53.7
Harvard	4367	3684	-15.6	1583	1960	23.8	754	1188	57.6
Hubbardston	443	650	46.7	234	562	140.2	230	358	55.7
Lancaster	1447	1652	14.2	789	1049	33.0	846	936	10.6
Leominster	8040	10296	28.1	3687	5630	52.7	5593	5181	-7.4
Lunenburg	1718	1805	5.1	1158	1646	42.1	1477	1571	6.4
Shirley	1415	1757	24.2	602	1130	87.7	729	757	3.8
Sterling	1307	1271	-2.8	768	1337	74.1	753	1001	32.9
Templeton	1243	1354	8.9	725	1017	40.3	951	977	2.7
Townsend	2184	1835	-16.0	830	1795	116.3	788	985	25.0
Westminster	1254	1178	-6.1	639	1307	104.5	781	891	14.1
Winchendon	1406	2165	54.0	760	1285	69.1	1021	1101	7.8
1980 Total	45719			20213			27783		
1990 Total		52489			32446			26979	
% Change			14.8			60.5			-2.9

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1980, 1990.

**Table 5.3: Population in Montachusett Communities by Age Group:  
1980 - 1990 (cont.)**

Community	1980 60-64	1990 60-64	% Change	1980 65+	1990 65+	% Change
Ashburnham	198	180	-9.1	436	457	4.8
Ashby	99	100	1.0	225	248	10.2
Ayer	246	262	6.5	539	690	28.0
Clinton	697	622	-10.8	1744	1997	14.5
Fitchburg	2072	1839	-11.2	5678	6329	11.5
Gardner	1068	958	-10.3	3002	3393	13.0
Groton	202	182	-9.9	512	575	12.3
Harvard	143	174	21.7	236	333	41.1
Hubbardston	58	89	53.4	147	199	35.4
Lancaster	238	228	-4.2	559	683	22.2
Leominster	1699	1675	-1.4	4103	4970	21.1
Lunenburg	411	397	-3.4	757	1070	41.3
Shirley	164	218	32.9	348	489	40.5
Sterling	197	224	13.7	402	554	37.8
Templeton	329	306	-7.0	767	889	15.9
Townsend	194	216	11.3	463	572	23.5
Westminster	268	239	-10.8	465	675	45.2
Winchendon	352	304	-13.6	920	1029	11.8
1980 Total	8635			21303		
1990 Total		8213			25152	
% Change			-4.9			18.1

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1980, 1990.



## **B. Sex**

According to the 1990 census, the region's population is divided approximately evenly between males and females. There is a slightly larger number of females overall, with this gender disparity most concentrated in the urbanized areas of Fitchburg, Gardner, Leominster, Clinton and Athol. The only town with a significantly higher proportion of males than females is Harvard, where the unusual 20-point percentage disparity is due to the predominantly male Fort Devens military base population housed there. However, the larger size of the region's female population was largely compensated for by a more rapid increase in the number of males in the population during the past decade. This trend brought all of the towns and cities with large gender differentials closer to balance by 1990.

## **C. Race**

In keeping with national trends, the Montachusett population is becoming more diverse in its racial and ethnic makeup. In 1980, whites constituted 96.3% of the population, declining to 93.5% by 1990 (see Table 5.4). By comparison, the state-wide percentage of whites was 89.8% in 1990, putting the percentage of minorities in the Montachusett Region below the state average. However, minority racial and ethnic groups represented one of the fastest growing population segments in the region, tripling from 3.8% to 11.4% of the total population during the 1980s.

While the white population grew by 7.4% during the 1980s, the black population grew 58.5% to 6,347 persons, and Asians increased by 241.1% to 3,179 persons. Hispanics number 11,067 persons within a 1990 total population of 223,865 persons. (1980 Census figures for Hispanics are not available for Montachusett towns.) Most minorities remain concentrated in the region's urban areas and their immediately surrounding towns.

According to the 1990 census, the median age for Hispanic persons in Leominster and Fitchburg, the region's largest cities, is approximately 21 years. This is more than a decade younger than the region's overall median age. This indicator points to the continuation of relatively rapid growth in the Hispanic population and to an ongoing increase in the region's racial/ethnic mix during the years ahead.

**Table 5.4: Population by Racial/Ethnic Group in Montachusett Communities: 1980 - 1990**

Community	1990 Pop.	White	% White	Black	Any Race Hispanic	Amer* Indian	1 Asian Pac Isl.
Ashburnham	5433	5382	99.1	7	42	7	24
Ashby	2717	2703	99.5	6	27	0	8
Athol	11451	11218	98.0	58	102	56	65
Ayer	6871	5730	83.4	674	340	39	217
Clinton	13222	12390	93.7	253	1032	9	133
Fitchburg	41194	36847	89.4	1411	3957	97	1057
Gardner	20125	19201	95.4	403	558	28	182
Groton	7511	7378	98.2	53	62	15	58
Harvard	12329	10160	82.4	1507	673	54	327
Hubbardston	2797	2778	99.3	8	27	4	4
Lancaster	6661	5957	89.4	431	409	20	77
Leominster	38145	35506	93.1	860	3161	71	621
Lunenburg	9117	8962	98.3	60	88	10	60
Petersham	1131	1105	97.7	7	2	3	14
Phillipston	1485	1467	98.8	0	5	4	11
Royalston	1147	1139	99.3	5	7	0	3
Shirley	6118	5369	87.8	421	269	20	183
Sterling	6481	6393	98.6	44	73	18	21
Templeton	6438	6391	99.3	26	49	3	13
Townsend	8496	8388	98.7	79	61	4	18
Westminster	6191	6140	99.2	12	37	11	19
Winchendon	8805	8679	98.6	22	86	16	64
1990 TOTAL:	223865	209283	93.5	6347	11067	489	3179
1980 TOTL:	202557	195114	96.3	4004	NA	281	932
% Change 1980-1990	10.5	7.3		58.5		74.0	241.1

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1990.

\* Includes Eskimos and Aleutians.

1 Includes Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Hawaiian, Guamanian and other Asians.

## 5.2 Educational Levels

The percentage of Montachusett residents age 25 and over who had graduated from high school stood at 71.7% in 1980, slightly under the state average of 72.2% but above the national rate of 66.3%. The region's graduation rate improved by 10.6% over the next ten years to 82.2%. This rate significantly exceeds the nation's 1990 percentage of persons over 25 with high school degrees (75.2%) and slightly exceeds the state level of 80.0%.

All Montachusett communities experienced an improvement of at least 5% in their percentage of high school graduates during the 1980s, with the exception of Harvard which began and ended the decade with the region's highest percentages of high school graduates (1980 - 95%, 1990 - 97%). Among the communities with the most dramatic improvement in their percentage of high school graduates was Winchendon, which went from 58.5% in 1980 to 76.8% of the 1990 population over age 25 in possession of a high school degree. That is an improvement of 18% over the decade. The town of Athol also increased its percentage of high school graduates significantly from 60.5% in 1980 to 74.2% in 1990.

The larger urban population centers contain lower than average percentages of high school graduates, meaning larger absolute numbers of people in cities lacking high school degrees. Fitchburg and Leominster are the only two cities for which the 1990 census also collects data on the percentage of Hispanic high school graduates, with the data showing a significantly lower than average rate. In Fitchburg, only 40.6% of Hispanics over age 25 had high school degrees in 1990, as compared with 70.1% for the city overall. In Leominster, the corresponding rates are 44.1% for Hispanics and 75.9% for the city's total population. These rates are slightly below the national average for Hispanics.



Measuring higher education, by 1990, the percentage of Montachusett residents possessing a bachelors degree had increased to 22.7%. This level trails the comparable state-wide rate of 27.2% for persons age 25 and over in 1990, but exceeds the nation-wide rate of 20.3%.

Again, the town containing the highest percentage of four-year college graduates in 1990 was Harvard (41.5%). Towns containing the lowest percentages of four-year college graduates included Templeton (10.5%), Athol (12.1%), Clinton (13.1%), Winchendon (13.4%) and Fitchburg (13.5%). Percentages of Hispanic college graduates in Fitchburg (6.4%) and Leominster (7.6%) were again significantly lower than city-wide and regional rates. (Note: comparative data were not available for the towns of Ashby, Gardner, Hubbardston, Petersham, Phillipston, and Royalston.)



**Table 5.5: Education Status by Community in Montachusett:  
1980 - 1990**

Community	Persons 25+ % HS Grads 1980	Persons 25+ % HS Grads 1990	'80-'90 % Change	Persons 25+ % w/Bach. 1990
Ashburnham	69.0	83.1	14.1	25.9
Ashby		87.9		19.7
Athol	60.5	74.2	13.7	12.1
Ayer	71.3	81.6	10.3	14.7
Clinton	65.5	76.2	10.7	13.1
Fitchburg	64.4	70.1	5.7	13.5
Gardner				
Groton	84.3	89.2	4.9	41.5
Harvard	95.7	97.0	1.3	47.0
Hubbardston		87.1		21.1
Lancaster	76.1	82.8	6.7	27.4
Leominster	64.4	75.9	11.5	19.1
Lunenburg	76.1	84.4	8.3	27.6
Petersham				
Phillipston				
Royalston				
Shirley	70.0	81.0	11.0	19.5
Sterling	80.9	88.4	7.5	32.6
Templeton	58.5	70.8	12.3	10.5
Townsend	80.4	88.4	8.0	24.8
Westminster	71.4	85.4	14.0	24.3
Winchendon	58.5	76.8	18.3	13.4
Region Avg.	71.7	82.2	14.7	22.7
Mass. Avg.	72.2	80.0	10.8	27.2

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1990

### 5.3 Income Levels

#### A. Median family income

In 1989, median family income in the Montachusett region averaged \$43,577, slightly below the state-wide median family income of \$44,367 (see Table 5.6). The region's 1989 median family income represents a 174% increase from the 1979 regional level of \$15,700. The comparable state-wide median for 1979 was \$21,329. Comparison of the

state and regional median family incomes over the 1980s shows Montachusett making significant gains, ending the decade nearly even with the state median. The overall increase in income, however, masks significant variations within towns and cities in the region.

Within the region, the contrast between urban areas and wealthier small towns ranged from a high in median family income of \$60,000 in Groton, to a low of \$32,939 in Ayer. Fitchburg (\$33,357) and Athol (\$33,263) also showed relatively low median family income levels, although other urban centers such as Leominster (\$41,927) and Clinton (\$40,139) compared favorably with many of the suburban towns.

### **B. Per capita income levels**

In 1989, average per capita income for the Montachusett region was \$15,526 (see Table 5.6). This ranks the region above the national per capita income rate of \$13,546, but below the state-wide average of \$17,070. Within the region, per capita income in 1989 ranged from a high of \$22,832 in Groton to a low of \$12,140 in Fitchburg, the most populous community in the region. Again, Leominster (\$15,960) and Clinton (\$15,328) showed higher per capita income levels than other urban areas, indicating healthier local economies.

### **C. Poverty Levels**

The region's poverty level decreased during the 1980s, although not as significantly as the state-wide decline. In 1979, 8.3% of all Montachusett households had incomes below the federally determined poverty level. By 1989, the poverty level for the region as a whole had declined to 6.4%. State-wide, the poverty rate dropped from 9.8% in 1979 to 6.7% in 1989. Montachusett towns with the highest percentages of households below the poverty line in 1989 were the urban areas of Fitchburg (14%), Athol (11.7%) and Gardner (11.0%). In all three, poverty levels increased during the 1980s, in contrast to regional and

state trends. The urban areas of Leominster (7.2%) and Clinton (7.5%) showed lower percentages of households below the poverty line than other urban areas in the region. The town with the lowest poverty rate was Ashby (2.5%). In addition, 10 of the 22 towns in the region reported fewer than 5% of households below the poverty line.

**Table 5.6: Per Capita Income, Median Family Income and Poverty Level by Community in Montachusett: 1989**

Community	Per Capita Income 1989	Median Household 1989	Median Family 1989	Number < Poverty 1989	Percent < Poverty 1989
Ashburnham	\$15,595.00	\$42,442.00	\$45,359.00	332	6.2
Ashby	\$16,611.00	\$46,250.00	\$49,310.00	68	2.5
Athol	\$12,444.00	\$27,094.00	\$33,263.00	1312	11.7
Ayer	\$14,586.00	\$29,326.00	\$32,939.00	596	8.9
Clinton	\$15,328.00	\$34,091.00	\$40,139.00	980	7.5
Fitchburg	\$12,140.00	\$27,101.00	\$33,357.00	5461	14
Gardner	\$13,207.00	\$28,035.00	\$35,430.00	2092	11
Groton	\$22,832.00	\$55,169.00	\$60,000.00	286	3.8
Harvard	\$17,937.00	\$47,299.00	\$47,481.00	373	3.9
Hubbardston	\$15,575.00	\$42,650.00	\$46,853.00	111	4
Lancaster	\$14,619.00	\$41,552.00	\$46,924.00	306	5.5
Leominster	\$15,960.00	\$35,974.00	\$41,927.00	2713	7.2
Lunenburg	\$19,166.00	\$43,199.00	\$49,625.00	322	3.5
Petersham	\$17,542.00	\$39,063.00	\$45,855.00	61	5.8
Phillipston	\$13,216.00	\$35,573.00	\$40,069.00	114	7.7
Royalston	\$12,421.00	\$33,333.00	\$36,923.00	72	6.3
Shirley	\$15,581.00	\$38,377.00	\$43,372.00	272	4.8
Sterling	\$17,830.00	\$49,345.00	\$53,339.00	299	4.6
Templeton	\$13,347.00	\$34,395.00	\$38,074.00	284	4.6
Townsend	\$15,694.00	\$46,910.00	\$50,629.00	256	3
Westminster	\$16,798.00	\$46,292.00	\$51,986.00	274	4.4
Winchendon	\$13,143.00	\$32,362.00	\$35,828.00	790	9.1
				17374	
Region 1989 avg	\$15,526.00	\$38,901.45	\$43,576.00		7.7
Mass. 1989 MFI			\$44,367.00		
Mass. 1979 MFI			\$21,329.00		

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1990.



## 5.4 Size of the labor force

According to census figures, the total size of the labor force in the Montachusett region measured in terms of persons sixteen years and older stood at 172,680 in 1990. The census measured the civilian labor force at 113,407.

In 1989, the Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training measured total employment in the region at 78,482 jobs (see Table 5.7). This represents a total net increase of 5,997 jobs over the 1980 employment level of 72,512 jobs, or an 8.2% rate of job growth over the decade. By comparison, the census data for the decade showed a corresponding growth rate in the state-wide civilian labor force of 7.8% during the 1980s.

**Table 5.7: Job Gain/Loss by Community in Montachusett: 1980 - 1989**

Community	1980 # Establ.	1989 # Establ.	% Gain '80-'90	1980 Tot. Empl.	1989 Tot. Empl.	# Jobs +- '80-'90	% Job +- '80-'90
Ashburnham	61	88	44.3	723	735	12	1.7
Ashby	33	63	90.9	129	243	114	88.4
Athol	209	269	28.7	4956	4012	-944	-19.0
Ayer	178	259	45.5	4714	6408	1694	35.9
Clinton	270	317	17.4	5315	4852	-463	-8.7
Fitchburg	906	1089	20.2	17469	18217	748	4.3
Gardner	401	459	14.5	9886	8950	-936	-9.5
Groton	111	176	58.6	1485	1729	244	16.4
Harvard	75	135	80.0	628	962	334	53.2
Hubbardston	27	58	114.8	213	514	301	141.3
Lancaster	88	120	36.4	1536	2297	761	49.5
Leominster	745	1090	46.3	14051	16505	2454	17.5
Lunenburg	109	177	62.4	1105	1769	664	60.1
Petersham	25	32	28.0	94	137	43	45.7
Phillipston	8	15	87.5	71	106	35	49.3
Royalston	7	10	42.9	40	52	12	30.0
Shirley	62	97	56.5	1159	1100	-59	-5.1
Sterling	95	156	64.2	807	1132	325	40.3
Templeton	91	117	28.6	1298	1219	-79	-6.1
Townsend	82	151	84.1	2099	2943	844	40.2
Westminster	71	133	87.3	2858	2831	c	-0.9
Winchendon	161	203	26.1	1876	1769	-107	-5.7
Totals:	3815	5214		72512	78482	5997	8.2

Source: Massachusetts Dept. of Employment and Training, Current Employment Statistical Survey 1980-89.



## 5.5 Migration trends

Employment and population growth continued to shift away from the region's urban areas during the 1980s. The most rapid rates of growth occurred in smaller rural and suburban towns that were not heavily dependent on older manufacturing industries.

The labor force is still concentrated heavily in the region's urban areas. Measured in terms of the number of persons sixteen years and older, the five urban areas of Fitchburg (32,328), Leominster (30,167), Gardner (15,986), Clinton (10,655) and Athol (8,630) contained 56.6% of the labor force in 1990. However, employment and population growth rates increased far more rapidly in rural and suburban towns (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1990).

Within the region, seven urbanized and manufacturing-dependent towns experienced a loss of jobs during the 1980's: Athol (-19%), Gardner (-9.5%), Clinton (-8.7%), Templeton (-6.1%), Winchendon (-5.7%), Shirley (-5.1) and Westminster (-.9%). These job losses were largely a result of manufacturing decline. The latter four smaller towns are older manufacturing areas in which the closing of a few plants made a significant impact on the job base that was not made up by increases in other sectors.

The two central cities in the region experienced modest percentage increases in jobs during the 1980s. Fitchburg gained 748 jobs between 1980 and 1989, a 4.3% increase. Leominster gained 2,454 jobs, the largest absolute number in the region, spurring a 17.5% increase in its employment base. Both cities experienced job losses in manufacturing. Fitchburg lost 2,150 manufacturing jobs during the 1980s, which amounted to 35.5% of its manufacturing employment. However, a strong gain of 1,217 service jobs formed the largest part of the employment shift enabling Fitchburg to post a gain in total job numbers

over the decade. Leominster's healthier economy lost 1,364 manufacturing jobs during the same period, or 19% of its manufacturing employment. But that loss was almost entirely compensated for by a gain of 1,108 jobs in the service sector alone.

Outside the central cities, nine of the smaller towns posted employment increases during the 1980's of over 40%. Of these, Hubbardston (+141%) made the largest percentage increase, in keeping with its rapid population growth.

### **5.6 Unemployment rate**

The unemployment rate for the Montachusett region was 7.2% in 1990 (see Table 5.8). This puts the region above the state unemployment rate of 6.7% in 1990. By July of 1993 (the latest month for which Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training data is currently available), regional unemployment stood at 7.6%, still above the state unemployment level of 6.6% but below the July, 1993 rate of 8.1% for the Fitchburg-Leominster MSA.

While the Montachusett population grew by 10.5% during the 1980s, the total number of jobs in the region increased by nearly 40%. Much of this large increase, however, did not take place in the traditionally better paying manufacturing sector. Manufacturing job growth (10%) barely kept up with population growth.

At the same time, the pent-up demand for jobs created by the 1970's recession absorbed most of the jobs created during the 1980s. By 1990, the unemployment rate for many Montachusett communities was higher than it had been a decade earlier.

**Table 5.8: Montachusett and Massachusetts Unemployment Rates:  
1980 - 1993**

Community	Total Labor Force	Civilian Labor Force	Employed 1990	Unemployed 1990	% Unemp. 1990	% Unemp. July, 1993
Ashburnham	3990	2931	2723	208	7.1	8.1
Ashby	1967	1497	1425	63	4.8	6.4
Athol	8630	5386	4801	587	10.9	10.6
Ayer	5367	3534	3334	201	5.7	8.3
Clinton	10655	7287	6895	392	5.4	7.1
Fitchburg	32328	19787	17948	1839	9.3	8.1
Gardner	15986	9677	8764	913	9.4	8.6
Groton	5657	4279	4030	249	5.8	4.8
Harvard	9112	3725	3598	127	3.4	3.8
Hubbardston	2030	1535	1422	113	7.4	11.4
Lancaster	5337	3621	3393	228	6.3	4.3
Leominster	30167	21053	19533	1520	7.2	8.4
Lunenburg	7087	5141	4860	281	5.5	7.6
Petersham	912	589	566	23	3.9	5.7
Phillipston	1090	779	717	62	8	8.8
Royalston	820	562	513	49	8.7	10.5
Shirley	4725	2944	2780	164	5.6	5.3
Sterling	4809	3468	3296	172	5	6.8
Templeton	4935	3363	3067	296	8.8	8.2
Townsend	5964	4543	4373	170	3.7	6.9
Westminster	4691	3386	3160	226	6.7	8
Winchendon	6421	4320	4014	306	7.1	9.6
1990 Totals:	172680	113407	105212	8189	7.2	
July 1993 Avg:						7.6
Mass. State	1980	1985	1989	1990	July, 93	
Unemployment	4.6	3.9	4	6.7	6.6	

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1980, 1990.

(Note: Census estimates vary from Bureau of Labor Statistics data.)



## 5.7 Seasonal problems in employment

In the Montachusett region, the ski industry, parks and recreation employment, and agriculture are seasonal employment sectors, as are the construction industry and retail trade. These latter two are the main economic sectors within which seasonal fluctuation traditionally occurs and are the only sectors for which the Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training (DET) collects data on both the state and regional levels.

Retail trade exhibits a cycle with employment highs generally in June and December, and lows in August and February. For the Fitchburg-Leominster MSA (the central employment core of the Montachusett region for which Massachusetts DET collects data), retail employment fluctuated from a low of 7,900 jobs to a high of 8,600 in 1990, or within an 8% range over the year. State-wide, 1990 retail employment ranged from a low of 521,300 jobs to a high of 543,800 jobs, a 4.1% range.

The construction industry is the most variable of all major economic sectors in terms of seasonal employment fluctuation. Its lowest employment level typically occurs in February, with a peak in August or September. In 1990, the construction industry in the Fitchburg-Leominster MSA went from 1,400 jobs in February to 1,700 jobs in August, a 17% fluctuation range (see Table 5.9). In 1991 the corresponding rates were 1,000 jobs in February and 1,400 jobs in August, a 28.5% range. By 1993, construction employment ranged from a low of 700 jobs in February to a high of 900 jobs in August, a 22.2% range. State-wide, the seasonal range in construction jobs was a comparable 23.1% in 1993, but varied by only 12% and 15.7% in 1990 and 1991, well below the regional range.

In terms of absolute employment numbers, Montachusett entered the 1990-1992 recession with a 1990 average of 1,600 construction jobs. By 1993, construction employment in the Fitchburg-Leominster MSA had declined by 50%. Though regional construction appeared



to be still in decline in 1993, reflecting the contraction of the 1980s building boom that had spread west from the Boston area, state-wide construction employment had leveled off in 1993 and appeared to be making slight job gains.

**Table 5.9: Montachusett & Massachusetts Seasonal Construction Employment Fluctuations: 1990 - 1993**

	Massachusetts				Fitchburg-Leominster		
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1990	1991	1993
Jan	99300	76100	63900		1600	1100	
Feb	<b>95300</b>	<b>71600</b>	<b>61700</b>	<b>63900</b>	<b>1400</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>700</b>
Mar	95700	72100	62600		1400	1000	
Apr	99400	75900	67200		1500	1100	
May	104300	80700	72200		<b>1700</b>	1300	
Jun	10700	83800	76200		<b>1700</b>	1300	
Jul	107500	84400	76000		<b>1700</b>	<b>1400</b>	<b>900</b>
Aug	<b>108300</b>	<b>85000</b>	77700		<b>1700</b>	<b>1400</b>	
Sept	106700	83200	78200	<b>83200</b>	1600	<b>1400</b>	
Oct	100800	80700	<b>78700</b>		1500	1300	
Nov	97500	78300	77900		1500	1200	
Dec	89100	73800	73100		1400	1100	
Avg	101100	78800	72100	73550	1600	1200	800

Sources: Massachusetts Department of Employment & Training: 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993.

### 5.8 Demand for skilled labor

The decline in the region's manufacturing sector has significantly reduced the demand for skilled manufacturing labor during the 1980s (see Table 5.10). This trend is expected to continue through the 1990s. However, the plastics industry remains a regional strong point in manufacturing and, according to one employment agency, was the one manufacturing industry to survive the 1990-1992 recession relatively unscathed. Plastics manufacturers are reported to be "cautiously hiring" in 1994, though not in large numbers.

The Fitchburg Recycling Corp. is expected to bring a new high-quality paper recycling plant on line in 1994, locating at least 100 high-skill manufacturing jobs in the former James River Paper Company mill in Fitchburg. However, these represent exceptions to the

ongoing decline in skilled manufacturing jobs. Areas for possible long-term increases in skilled labor demand include the possible location of biotechnology industries in the Leominster area and industrial development on Fort Devens land.

**Table 5.10: Shift in Manufacturing (Mfg) and Service (Svc) Jobs by Community in Montachusett: 1980 - 1989**

Community	Mfg Jobs 1980	Mfg Jobs 1989	Net Change 1980-89	Svc Jobs 1980	Svc Jobs 1989	Net Change 1980-89
Ashburnham	170	136	-34	225	289	64
Ashby		51		33	40	7
Athol	2879	1628	-1251	592	788	196
Ayer	389	896	507	690	1070	380
Clinton	3082	2120	-962	660	660	0
Fitchburg	6067	3917	-2150	3532	4749	1217
Gardner	4965	3232	-1733	1373	1897	524
Groton	380	290	-90	487	607	120
Harvard	142	237	95	87	180	93
Hubbardston	73	167	94		26	
Lancaster	128	334	206	855	702	-153
Leominster	7202	5838	-1364	1873	2981	1108
Lunenburg	173	212	39	200	375	175
Petersham		0		15	25	10
Phillipston		0				
Royalston		0				
Shirley	478	161	-317	13	50	37
Sterling	165	275	110	39	102	63
Templeton	627	398	-229	200	293	93
Townsend	561	1481	920	28	111	83
Westminster	142	164	22			0
Winchendon	673	364	-309	462	328	-134
Totals:	28296	21901	-6395	11364	15273	3909

Source: Massachusetts Dept. of Employment and Training, Current Employment & Statistical Survey 1980-1989.

### 5.9 Location of jobs

In 1989, fully two thirds of the region's 78,482 jobs remained concentrated in the main urban areas. Athol (4,012 jobs), Clinton (4,852), Gardner (8,950), Fitchburg (18,217) and Leominster (16,505) contained a total of 52,536 jobs. However, Leominster was the

only one of these traditional urban job centers to experience significant job growth during the 1980's. Fitchburg increased slightly and the rest declined.

As noted above, new job location in the region shifted to suburban and rural towns. Those with the greatest gains during the 1980's included:

<b>Town</b>	<b>Jobs Added 1980-89</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
Ayer	1694	35.9%
Townsend	844	40.2%
Lancaster	761	49.5%
Lunenburg	644	60.1%

Within the seventeen towns surrounding the region's five urban areas, there was a net gain of 5,383 jobs and a net loss of 245 jobs in a few small towns, leaving a total net gain of 5,138 jobs during the 1980's. This compares with a net gain of 3,202 jobs in Fitchburg and Leominster, and a net loss of 2,343 jobs in Athol, Clinton and Gardner, for a total net gain of 859 jobs in the five urban centers.

Although the smaller towns represent only one third of the region's employment base, they gained more than twice as many new jobs during the 1980's than did the five urban centers, and made a total net gain of more than five times as many new jobs. And though job growth in the 1980's was not as large as the employment increase of the 1970's, it continued the trend toward locating jobs in less centralized rural and suburban communities in the region.



### 5.10 Average wage levels

Wage levels across the region averaged \$10,641 in 1980, increasing by 86.3% to an average of \$19,820 by 1989 (see Table 5.11). The town of Harvard posted the highest average wage rate of \$24,808 in 1989, with Phillipston the lowest at \$10,932.

**Table 5.11: Wage Levels by Community in Montachusett:  
1980 - 1989**

Community	1980 Avg. Annual Wage	1989 Avg. Annual Wage	% Increase '80-'89
Ashburnham	\$7,991.00	\$17,442.00	118.3
Ashby	\$6,983.00	\$16,583.00	137.5
Athol	\$13,644.00	\$20,393.00	49.5
Ayer	\$13,152.00	\$21,874.00	66.3
Clinton	\$12,464.00	\$22,035.00	76.8
Fitchburg	\$13,105.00	\$21,193.00	61.7
Gardner	\$12,367.00	\$22,161.00	79.2
Groton	\$10,953.00	\$21,479.00	96.1
Harvard	\$11,248.00	\$24,808.00	120.6
Hubbardston	\$9,417.00	\$17,769.00	88.7
Lancaster	\$9,111.00	\$21,268.00	133.4
Leominster	\$12,824.00	\$20,261.00	58.0
Lunenburg	\$13,618.00	\$20,056.00	47.3
Petersham	\$7,013.00	\$12,468.00	77.8
Phillipston	\$4,410.00	\$10,932.00	147.9
Royalston	\$4,774.00	\$12,401.00	159.8
Shirley	\$9,545.00	\$22,947.00	140.4
Sterling	\$11,775.00	\$20,944.00	77.9
Templeton	\$11,451.00	\$20,033.00	74.9
Townsend	\$12,556.00	\$21,182.00	68.7
Westminster	\$16,417.00	\$31,340.00	90.9
Winchendon	\$9,294.00	\$16,474.00	77.3
Totals:	\$10,641.45	\$19,820.14	86.3

Source: Massachusetts Dept. of Employment and Training, 1990.

Ten of the region's twenty-two towns exceeded the region's 86.3% average percentage rate of increase in wages. All of these are rural and suburban towns surrounding the region's older urban manufacturing centers. However, only four of these towns -- Groton, Harvard, Lancaster and Shirley -- had actual wage levels above the region's 1989 average



of \$19,820. The first three are the region's three wealthiest communities. The other six towns began the decade with significantly lower than average wage rates. This trend suggests that the shift of manufacturing jobs out of the cities and the shift in job growth from manufacturing to services are both resulting in an increase in lower-paying jobs.

By contrast, thirteen towns posted average wage levels above the regional average of \$19,820. However, eight of these are the towns and cities of Athol, Ayer, Clinton, Gardner, Fitchburg, Leominster, Shirley and Templeton, in which higher than average wage levels appear related to their large manufacturing sectors. With the exception of Ayer, all of these municipalities lost manufacturing jobs during the 1980s. These wage trends suggest that both the absolute decline in manufacturing employment and the shift of manufacturing jobs to rural/suburban communities may be exerting downward pressure on wages.

### **5.11 Vocational training programs**

The Montachusett Region contains a wide variety of job training and education programs. They include federal, state and non-profit agencies as well as vocational technical schools, colleges and community college programs. In a number of cases, agencies, colleges and employers have linked resources to create joint training programs.

Job training is reported to be critical, particularly in the plastics industry, which is the region's strongest manufacturing area. It is especially needed to improve the prospects of the non-college-bound 18-24 year old male population, a group with high unemployment rates. Without it, the plastics companies reportedly will not be hiring extensively within this group. Recent surveys of plastics companies have identified basic communications, math and ESL (English as a Second Language) skills as the highest priority training needs for employers. Others include expansion of the successful training offered by the NYPRO

Institute in plastics, hydraulics and molding technology; machine repair and trouble-shooting; ISO 9000 and statistical process control; and specialized training in computer aided design (CAD) and in management. Most of these training needs must be tailored to specific employers but can be offered in partnership with community colleges and trade associations.

Fitchburg Job Matching Service Center -- Fitchburg: This agency is one of a state-wide network of centers administered by the Mass. Division of Employment and Training. It also serves the city of Leominster and eight surrounding towns. Services include a job bank, employment counseling, job search workshops and computerized job matching. Programs are intended for use by unemployed professional, administrative, technical, clerical and general workers.

Job Corps -- Fort Devens: Ft. Devens was recently selected over 89 other applicants to be the site of a \$20 million federal Job Corps training center, which will provide training to 400 persons per year.

NYPRO Institute -- Clinton: The NYPRO Institute provides the highest education available in the injection molding industry and is a model for the plastics sector. Its 3,000 square foot facility features two classrooms, a state-of-the-art computer lab and an individual learning center. The Institute is affiliated with Fitchburg State College, Mt. Wachusett Community College, Quinsigamond Community College, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, UMASS-Lowell and various plastics industry associations.

Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School -- Fitchburg: "Monty Tech" is part of a state-wide network of vocational-technical institutions and provides training in twenty occupationally-related fields. Programs offered include data processing, diesel mechanics,

machine drafting, electronics, graphic arts and plant maintenance. The current enrollment of 1,200 students is drawn from the cities of Fitchburg and Leominster, as well as 15 surrounding towns. Every year, approximately 60% of seniors at Monty Tech enroll in the Cooperative Education Program, gaining work experience in their fields with some of the region's largest employers. Roughly 75% of Monty Tech graduates gain immediate employment, 15% enroll in higher education and 10% enter the military.

Mt. Wachusett Community College -- Gardner: MWCC is a two-year college with 195 full-time students and 240 part-time students. It offers 19 degree programs, seven certificate programs, and specialized training programs developed with area employers.

North Central Massachusetts Regional Employment Board, Inc. (NCMREB) -- Fitchburg: NCMREB has three major areas of responsibility: a) providing policy guidance and oversight for training, placement and employment-related education programs in the region; b) administering state and federal funds for job training, education and related services for youth and adults in collaboration with the state Departments of Public Welfare, Employment and Education, and c) fostering partnerships between private employers, community organizations, colleges and public schools designed to help students be successful in school and to promote the economic strength of the area.

Technology Transfer Center -- Gardner: The Gardner Industrial Foundation plans to develop a technical center to provide equipment and training in technologically-based manufacturing processes for industry workers. The center will be run as a partnership with Mt. Wachusett Community College. It is backed by the North Central Massachusetts Employment Board.



## 6. Area and Regional Economy

There has been a restructuring of the region's employment base through 1980-1990. Overall employment in the region increased by a mere 2.4% during this period. The economic sectors in the region for which data are available are Government, Manufacturing, Agriculture/ Forestry/Fishing, Mining, Construction, Transport, communication and Utilities, Wholesale/Retail Trade, Services and Finance, Insurance and Real Estate. Table No.6.1 shows the percentage change in employment over the last decade in each sector of the economy in the Montachusett Region.

**Table 6.1: Employment Change for Montachusett Economic Sectors:  
1980-1990.**

Sector	% change
Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing	18.50%
Mining	-23.80%
Construction	53.68%
Manufacturing	-26.14%
Transportation, Communications & Utilities	2.44%
Wholesale/Retail Trade	30.04%
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	29.46%
Services	34.53%

Source: Massachusetts Dept. of Employment & Training, 1990.

The industry sector which experienced the greatest decline in employment was manufacturing. The dominant role of manufacturing in the region has diminished significantly in relation to other sectors of the economy and this change parallels the state-wide trend in Massachusetts. The number of manufacturing jobs has faced a steady and slow decline over the past decade. The percentage share of manufacturing jobs in the economy has gone down from 50% to 36% between 1980 and 1990. Employment in the



mature industries of the region such as chemicals, plastics-products and paper is declining and plant closings are a continuing problem. The towns of Gardner, Fitchburg and Leominster were most severely hit by this trend and lost more than 1500 jobs each (Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training, 1990).

The greatest job gains were made in the service sector. The percentage share of service jobs in the economy grew from 19% to 25% during the decade. The wholesale/retail trade sector is also gaining a larger share of the region's employment, another indication that the region is experiencing a transition from a manufacturing-based economy to a service-related one (See figure 6.2 and Figure 6.1).

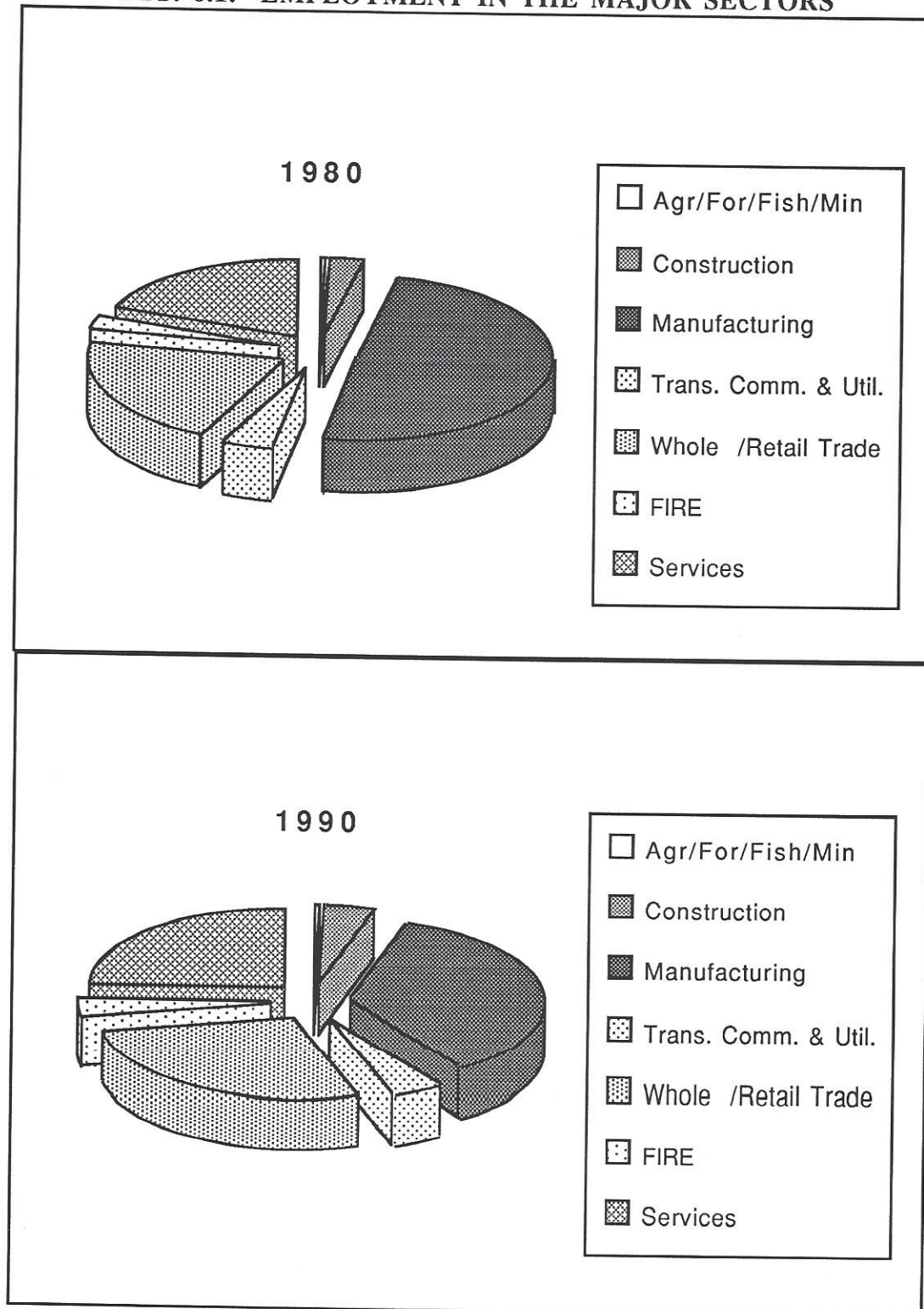
**Table 6.2: Massachusetts & Montachusett Job Growth/Decline**

	1980	1988	# Jobs +/-	% Change
Mass. Total Non-Ag & Non-Mfg Employment	2652000	3119600	467600	17.6
Mass. Total Mfg. Employment	673300	585600	-87700	-13.0
Fitchburg-Leominster MSA Total Non-Ag & Non-Mfg	38100	41400	3300	8.7
Fitchburg-Leominster MSA Total Mfg Employment	15200	12000	-3200	-21.1

Source: Massachusetts Dept. of Employment & Training, 1990 Current Employment Statistical Survey (OCES-790).

Plastics, however, remains the largest and strongest manufacturing industry within the Montachusett region. It comprises 50% of the region's manufacturing sector and 20% of all plastics manufacturing statewide. Regional employment specialists assert that plastics companies emerged from the 1990-1992 recession with fewer job losses relative to other manufacturers. Wire and cable manufacturers were identified as another strong manufacturing industry in the region.

**FIG. 6.1: EMPLOYMENT IN THE MAJOR SECTORS**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training, 1991.

The Department of Defense has announced the closing of the Fort Devens Army Base and the establishment of a much smaller Army Reserve Enclave in 1995. After the base closure and cleanup is completed in 1995, the army will retain 400 acres within the northern portion of the current base area for its reserve enclave and will continue to employ 575 people. More than 4,000 acres of land in the southern half of the base, which remains heavily contaminated, will be retained by the Army after 1995. However, over 8,000 military and civilian jobs will have been phased out between 1988 and 1995.

The impact of this closure will be felt in the towns of Ayer and Shirley which immediately border the base, and by many towns and cities throughout the Montachusett Region. The largest number of the current base employees (4,615 military and 2,140 civilian) of Fort Devens live in Leominster, Ayer, Shirley and Fitchburg. After the base closure, the loss of these jobs will inevitably affect unemployment rates, housing vacancy rates and population levels in the region. Impacts on the towns of Ayer, Fitchburg, Shirley and Leominster will be the most severe. It has been estimated that 2500 people will move out of the region, which will reduce government revenues and expenditure in the region. One spin-off effect will be that local firms are expected to lay off employees and thus the economy will face both the direct as well as the indirect impacts of the base closure (Auburn Associates, 1993).

Digital Equipment Corporation and James Paper Company were other major employers. Their operations closed down during the last decade. The city of Gardner, which was formerly known as the furniture capital of the country, is no longer a primary manufacturer of furniture. Most of its remaining furniture industries deal with furniture that is made elsewhere, then imported to Gardner and packed there.



## **7. Infrastructure and Services**

### **7.1 Housing**

The Montachusett region experienced a housing boom in the last decade which has subsided considerably. The total number of units increased by 15.8% during the 1980-1990 period. The largest increase occurred in the smaller rural communities of Phillipston (107.5%), Hubbardston (64.5%), and Sterling (28.7%), while the least growth took place in the towns of Ayer (3.1%), Lancaster (4.2%), and Fitchburg (8.5%).

Housing has become much more expensive in the region in the last decade. The median value of single family homes increased by 230% from \$43,500 in 1980 to \$143,600 in 1990 whereas the median household income went up only by 109% rising from \$18,600 to \$38,900 in the same period. The average cost of housing in each town ranged from a low of \$94,900 in Athol to a high of \$431,300 in Harvard. The other communities in the region with average 1990 home prices above the regional median are Groton (\$203,900), Sterling (\$171,400) and Lancaster (\$160,000).

The median rental costs for the region exhibit the same trends as single family housing. The median rental cost in 1990 was \$466.00 per month as compared with the median rental cost for 1980 of \$182.00 per month. The percentage increase in median rent cost over the decade was 156%. The rapid rise in the average cost of housing was accompanied by a decrease in affordability. As a result there was an overall decrease in affordable sales in the region. Affordable housing sales are defined as those housing values no higher than three times the median income level for the region. (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, 1987). The estimated average affordable home price should have been approximately \$86,800 in 1990. But the actual median house value of \$143,600 was



nearly \$56,800 more. The home cost to income ratio rose from 2.5 in 1980 to 4.1 in 1990 which was much higher than national average.

Vacancy rates for dwelling units also increased significantly during the last decade, reaching 7.1% in 1990. The vacancy rate in 1980 was 4.7%. However, vacancy rates varied dramatically among towns within the region, from a low of 3.6% in Templeton to a high of 19.5% in Ashburnham. The communities of Phillipston (13.9%), Royalston (12.7%), and Petersham (12.7%) also had high vacancy rates. Furthermore, the impact of the closing of Fort Devens will have an impact on the vacancy rates in Ayer.

The Montachusett region contains an older housing stock (See Table 7.1). The median year for all housing built in the region is 1955 (and this date is generously skewed on the newer side as towns with a median housing age in the 1939 and earlier range are listed as 1939). Fully 40% of all housing in the region was built before 1939.

The older urban manufacturing centers have the highest percentage of their housing stock built before 1939. These include the communities of Athol (59.4%), Clinton (62.4%), Fitchburg (52.5%), Gardner (57.5%), and Winchendon (59.1%). And though housing age by itself is not an accurate determinant of housing quality, in towns such as these that have lost a significant portion of their manufacturing base and have higher than average unemployment and poverty rates, housing age does correlate with visibly higher rates of housing deterioration, vacancy and abandonment. These five communities contain a total of 38,116 units, or 45.3% of all housing in the region.

The one urban area that stands as an exception to this trend is Leominster. Only 26.1% of its housing stock was built before 1939. This may be attributed to the fact that much of Leominster's growth coincided with the post-WWII development of its plastics industries,

a relatively newer industry than the paper, tool and furniture industries which built Montachusett's older urban centers. As a result most of Leominster's housing stock is post-1940 vintage, and the comparative continuing good health of the plastics industry has helped to give Leominster fewer housing quality problems than other urban centers in the region.

In contrast to most of the urban areas, virtually all of Montachusett's smaller and wealthier rural and suburban towns have a much smaller percentage of pre-1939 housing. In nearly all of these communities, at least 18% of their housing stock was built during the 1980s alone. The town with the highest percentage of its housing built during the 1980s is Hubbardston (39.8%).

The closure of Fort Devens is going to have a sharp impact on the housing markets of Ayer and Shirley. The average price for single family home in these towns has dropped nearly 21% from 1989 to 1992. It has been anticipated that situation will substantially worsen once the large layoffs begin forcing people to leave the region in search of new jobs. Large impacts have already occurred in Ayer and Shirley due to Military reassignments. Vacancy rates among multifamily listings is as high as 50%.

**Table 7.1: Age of Montachusett Housing Stock by Community**

Community	89-90	Year 80-88	Housing 60-79	Built 40-59	< 39 #	< 39 %	Total Units	Median Age
Ashburnham	37	437	361	330	669	36.5	1834	1957
Ashby	15	151	243	205	278	31.2	892	1955
Athol	79	226	315	770	2032	59.4	3422	1939
Ayer	64	224	727	677	975	36.6	2667	1950
Clinton	43	327	389	461	2048	62.7	3268	1939
Fitchburg	139	1504	3047	3222	8753	52.5	16665	1939
Gardner	64	950	2377	2184	7550	57.5	13125	1941
Groton	74	610	654	585	654	25.4	2577	1961
Harvard	10	414	1249	879	589	18.8	3141	1962
Hubbardston	36	344	225	107	242	25.4	954	1973
Lancaster	16	165	646	452	631	33.0	1910	1956
Leominster	196	2762	4829	5684	4754	26.1	18225	1960
Lunenburg	35	425	852	270	670	29.8	2252	1956
Petersham							0	1939
Phillipston							0	1971
Royalston							0	1949
Shirley	75	420	670	426	479	23.1	2070	1963
Sterling	95	478	738	410	467	21.3	2188	1969
Templeton	52	382	477	606	758	33.3	2275	1951
Townsend	99	429	1142	443	648	23.5	2761	1971
Westminster	42	354	716	550	513	23.6	2175	1961
Winchendon	13	126	341	175	941	59.0	1596	1950
Region Totals:	1184	10728	19998	18436	33651		83997	1955
% of Total Units	1.4	12.8	23.8	21.9	40.1		100.0	

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1990.

## 7.2 Utilities and Public Services

Fitchburg Gas and Electric Company and Mass Electric company are major suppliers of electricity in the region. Fitchburg Gas and Electric Company also supplies gas to most of the region along with Boston Gas Company (North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, 1993).

Water and sewer services are limited in most of towns except in the larger communities of Ayer, Fitchburg, Leominster and Gardner (See table 7.2). Residents of smaller communities have individually drilled wells for water and have septic tanks or cess pools

for sewage disposal. Most of the towns also have public libraries, full time police departments fire services and a system of weekly trash collection available to them (MISER, 1994).

**Table 7.2: Percent of Montachusett Communities with Public Water and Sewer Facilities.**

Community	%Municipal sewage	%Septic Tanks	%Public water	%Individual wells
Ashburnham	5	95	57	43
Ashby	0	100	0	100
Athol	78	22	88	12
Ayer	85	15	98	2
Clinton	98	2	99	1
Fitchburg	93	7	95	5
Gardner	6	94	40	60
Groton	95	5	97	3
Harvard	47	53	48	52
Hubbardston	5	95	5	95
Lancaster	25	75	80	20
Leominster	94	6	98	2
Lunenburg	6	94	51	49
Petersham	0	100	0	100
Phillipston	0	100	2	98
Royalston	15	85	15	85
Shirley	22	78	69	31
Sterling	6	94	67	33
Templeton	39	61	76	24
Townsend	13	87	66	34
Westminster	18	82	49	51
Winchendon	53	47	73	27

Source: Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research, 1994.



### **7.3 Solid Waste Disposal Sites**

All communities in the region use landfills or send their solid waste to incinerator facility for disposal (see Section 3.3). However, only five towns in the region send their solid waste outside their community to incinerator facilities. Many of the landfills are reaching capacity. Large amounts of capital will be needed to create new landfills so there is an increased need for recycling. Any kind of development in the region will further increase the stress on these landfills. The town of Shirley is presently building a state - of - the - art incinerator facility similar to a one operating in Paris, France.

### **7.4 Educational Institutions**

The educational institutes in the region offer a broad range of academic opportunities, up to and including graduate studies (see also Section 5.13 for vocational and job training institutions). The main colleges in the region are Atlantic Union College (Lancaster), Fitchburg State College and Fisher Junior College (Fitchburg), Mt. Wachusett Community College (Gardner) and Nichols College (Leominster) (North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, 1993). Groton School and Lawrence Academy in Groton and Cushing Academy in Ashburnham are well known prep schools.

### **7.5 Industrial Parks and Major Industries**

Industrial land is found in eighteen of the twenty-two municipalities. They are the three cities of Fitchburg, Gardner, and Leominster, and the towns of Ashburnham, Ashby, Athol, Ayer, Clinton, Groton, Harvard, Lancaster, Lunenburg, Petersham, Shirley, Sterling, Townsend, Westminster, and Winchendon. Of the those Athol, Fitchburg, Leominster, and Shirley are readying for new industry or looking to expansion. Industrial parks are located in nine of the municipalities, they are Ayer, Fitchburg, Gardner, Lancaster, Leominster, Lunenburg, Shirley, Sterling, and Westminster. Some towns would prefer to see industry phased out of their jurisdiction altogether, even those located

in 19th century mill buildings, which is in fact where the only industrial use is permitted in these towns, holdovers from the industrial age. The following information naming and locating the industrial parks for the region was obtained from the 1987 Regional Planning Grant Completion Report prepared by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, and municipal planning agencies. Updated information was received from some municipalities through the Montachusett Regional Transportation Planner. Information for other towns was incomplete due to personnel, schedule or information access constraints.

Ashburnham has 42 acres zoned for industrial use in the town and no industrial parks. Ashby has a total of 25.16 acres zoned industrial and no industrial parks. Athol has approximately 176 acres zoned for industrial use, most are adjacent to Route 2, or have nearby access to it. There are no industrial parks in the town at present, but there are older industrial buildings available. A grant was recently won to develop the former Union Twist Drill Company site into a business incubator facility. In Ayer there are 446 acres designated for industrial use, and 406 acres designated for light industry. The town has two industrial parks, one is Stony Brook, the other is New England Way. Fitchburg has a total of 1,427 acres set aside for industry, and 1,095 acres for light industry. The newest industrial park is called 2/31, designating also its location near those highways, and contains 40 acres; the Montachusett Industrial Park has 42 acres; the LaCava industrial and commercial complex site has 11 acres; Falulah Road has 4 acres; Battle Street, 10.5 acres; Mount Elam Road, 28 acres; Temple Street, about 25 acres; Stickney/McIntire, 48.7 acres; and east of the 2/31 industrial park is another 63 acres. In the not too distant future Fitchburg hopes to see construction begin on the Fitchburg Technology Park, occupying 160 acres, after a long period of planning. All the developed space has been occupied, and there is little other land designated for industry, aside from that of the mature industries located along the North Nashua River that were built in the nineteenth century and lie in the flood plain. Gardner, the center city for the western part of the region, has twenty-seven



acres total, not including their mature industries built last century in the central portion of the city. There is the East Gardner Industrial Park with twenty acres, and the West Gardner Industrial Park with seven acres. Both are full, and there is no other undeveloped industrial land available in the city. A limited access road was recently built for Route 140 to bypass the center of Gardner. While this has made undeveloped land in that newly accessed sector of the city more accessible, it is unavailable as zoned currently for residential use. In Groton there are 183 acres dedicated to industrial use. A single company, the Lone Star/ San-Vel Corporation owns a large parcel, otherwise there are a few largely spot-zoned mature active industries in west Groton along the Squannacook River. Harvard has 309.9 acres currently in use for industry through "grandfathering" of the land use; there is no industrial zoning. Lancaster has 101.13 acres for industrial use; 860 acres for light industry. Lancaster Technology Park and Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) occupy a large area, while in the northern part of town, bounded by Route 2 to the north and I-190 to the west, are 200 undeveloped acres. Thirteen and one half acres are located in south Lancaster. Leominster has a total of 1125 acres of industrial land, and 375 acres designated for light industrial usage. There are seven industrial parks: Tanzio uses 35 acres; Jytek, 30; FBC 2; Pioneer, 50; Melrose Development Center, 20; Fitzgerald, 80; and Jungle Road, 244. Leominster is situated with the best highway access to the north, south and east making it a very attractive location for industry. Lunenburg's 717.5 acres are zoned for industry and office parks. Pioneer Park, lying mostly in Leominster, has only two companies in the Lunenburg section, the rest are in Leominster. Additionally, the P.J. Keating Company occupies a large industrial tract. Petersham has no industrially zoned land. Shirley's figures for industrial land total 119. Mountain Laurel Industrial Park is listed as the only industrial park in the town. Sterling's industrial acreage is at 2239.5 acres; zoning is for light industry only. They have the Beverly Drive Industrial Park, the W.P. Spratt Industrial Park, and the Spring Valley Industrial Park. Townsend is listed as having 40 acres zoned industrial, and no industrial parks. Westminster's acreage

dedicated to industrial use totals 791.77. It has three industrial parks, Westminster Business Park, Business Park at Westminster, and the Simplex warehousing plant (formerly DEC). In Winchendon 590 acres are zoned for industry with no industrial parks.

## **7.6 Hospitals and Clinics**

The major hospitals in the region are Burbank Hospital (Fitchburg), Leominster Hospital (Leominster), Nashoba Community Hospital (), Clinton Hospital (Clinton), Heywood Memorial Hospital (Gardner) and Naukeag Hospital Rehab in Ashburnham (North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, 1993).

## **7.7 Cultural and Recreational Facilities**

Mt. Wachusett ski area is an important recreational area in the region. However, there is virtually no spin-off commercial activity in the nearby town of Westminster. An expansion plan for the ski area is now being developed and this may help generate commercial activity for the surrounding towns. The ski area needs expansion and can have a positive impact on the region. Heritage Park in Gardner, Leominster State Forest and Cogshall Park on the Mirror Lake in Fitchburg are other major recreational areas in the region. There are five golf courses in the region and various swimming pools in Athol, Gardner, Fitchburg and Leominster.

In regard to cultural resources, the Fitchburg Art Museum hosts a variety of exhibitions and Stratton Players, the New Players Theater Guild, and Theatre at the Mount offer a range of theatrical performances. Concerts are held at Upper Common, Fitchburg and Fitchburg State College. The Wallace Civic Center in Fitchburg seats more than 3,000 persons for concerts and houses a fine planetarium. The Mayor's Concert is held in Dunn Park in Gardner in the summer. Among other cultural activities are the Strawberry festival in Lancaster and the Yankee Street Fair held in Westminster in the summer.



## 7.8 Services for Low Income and Elderly

There are a wide variety of services available for low-income and elderly people in the region. The Montachusett Home Care Corporation provides personal care, medical transportation, home delivered meals, chore, companionship, and nursing visits. It also provides foster care, rest homes and nursing homes. The Adult Day Health Care provides care for adults living at home with limited impairments. The Farmers Home Administration provides loans and grants to low income persons. The Fundamental Action to Conserve Energy provides energy audits and energy saving information. The New England Farm Workers Council runs a fuel assistance program. The Montachusett Opportunity Council (MOC) also provides energy services, as well as a food stamp program, Head Start program, Community Action Commissions, and elder ride and day care services. MOC also administers the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program. MOC branches are located in Athol, Clinton, Gardner, Leominster, and Winchendon.

The Louis Ressijac Center, The Gables of Fitchburg Limited, and Clarence Durkin Apartments run congregate housing for elderly. HMOs provide comprehensive health services and medical care for participating members based on fixed prepaid sum. The Leominster Housing Authority provides assistance in housing and there are agencies for legal help as well. In Gardner the Heywood-Wakefield furniture factory has been successfully converted into mixed income housing, including senior housing, subsidized and market rate housing (Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging, 1991).

According to housing authority sources in the region, trends in subsidized senior housing coincide with general regional housing trends. That is, demand is greater in the eastern side of the region. Weaker demand in the western portion of Montachusett corresponds

with higher vacancy rates, shorter waiting periods and problems of housing management and quality.

The largest cities in the region -- Fitchburg and Leominster -- offer an illustrative contrast. The Fitchburg Housing Authority supervises 177 federal Section 8 housing subsidy certificates and 900 housing units, of which 457 units are for seniors located in 4 housing complexes. In the early 1980s the waiting list for these units was as long as 4-6 years. Although the senior population is growing in the region, demand in Fitchburg has dropped considerably in recent years, with the waiting list down to 30 days. To contend with a high vacancy rate, Fitchburg is marketing its senior units as widely as Framingham and Boston.

The Leominster Housing Authority by contrast, manages 326 senior housing units, a smaller number of reportedly more desirable units. As a result, demand is stronger and there is a 3-6 month waiting list for its housing. Better management and tenant selection were cited among other factors creating stronger demand for senior housing in Leominster. In the market for senior housing, housing quality and management appear to stimulate demand more strongly than declining rents and short waiting lists. (Gene Cappocia, 1994 and Bob Pacetti, 1994)

## **7.9 Public Transport**

The region is served by a commuter rail service from Gardner to Boston which stops in Fitchburg, Leominster, Shirley and Ayer. The service consists of 60 round trips weekly to North Station in Boston. In addition, there are three railroad companies currently operating freight lines in the Montachusett region. These are Guilford Transportation Industries (GTI), Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) and the Providence and Worcester Railroad Company (P&W).

In 1979, a public transit service was implemented by the newly organized Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART). Fixed route service in Fitchburg and Leominster initially included service along three trunk lines between the two cities, six intra-city routes in Fitchburg, three intra-city loops in Leominster, and two routes in Gardner. Since then, MART has expanded its operations to provide for Montachusett's elderly and disabled population. Programs include Dial-A-MART, Council on Aging transportation services, complementary Americans with Disabilities Act paratransit services, and special brokerage services.

Two inter-city bus service operators travel through the Montachusett region. Peter Pan operates out of the MART Intermodal Center connecting Fitchburg with Worcester and New York. Vermont Transit Lines leaves twice daily from Leominster for Montreal.

#### **7.10 Central Business Districts**

For many years, commercial and industrial vacancy rates have been rising in the region, particularly in the older, manufacturing-centered cities and towns. Business departures from the downtowns of communities like Fitchburg, Gardner and Leominster have spurred plans for downtown revitalization. The following sub-sections outline these plans.

Gardner: The vacancy rate for commercial properties in Gardner reached 12% in 1993. Twenty-three businesses left the downtown area between 1988 and 1992, leaving over 350 people unemployed. Two municipal parking areas need additional lighting and require repair. There are landscaping needs and 4000 square feet of sidewalks must be replaced. The city has recently received funding of approximately \$259,000 from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Communities and Development (EOCD) for the completion of infrastructure improvements, for establishing and implementing of revolving commercial signs, and for a facade program.



Leominster: The central business district in Leominster is in good shape and does not have a lot of vacancies. Some renovations are taking place in the downtown. A restaurant will be opened and the old Rubins building will be converted to an office building.

Fitchburg: The city of Fitchburg has launched a plan designed to stabilize its community and improve its mix of residential, business, institutional and recreational land use. The plan prepared for the city by Saratoga Associates of Springfield, MA covers approximately 70 acres in the southeastern section of in-town Fitchburg. Community goals for the area include expanded recreational facilities, increased involvement by residents, and development of family support services such as day care and after school programs.

## **8. Planning and Economic Development**

The cities of the Montachusett Region are each economically dependent on a traditional local industry - Fitchburg on paper, Leominster on plastics, and Gardner on furniture. A fundamental issue facing the region as it attempts to diversify its economy is the uncoordinated development of sixteen public and private industrial parks in the region (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, Regional Transportation Plan, 1993, 71). Furthermore, Gardner and Fitchburg have recently developed individual Overall Economic Development Programs (OEDP) of their own.

There is little industrial land available that can be developed for new businesses. While vacant factories are in plenty, few lend themselves to modern manufacturing uses because they have associated drawbacks, such as multiple stories, poor condition, hazardous material on site, high heating and maintenance costs, or less than advantageous locations. Some are still in good condition and lend themselves to industrial re-use, especially those built in the Twentieth Century. Some sites can be considered for mixed-use applications, such as mixed-income housing, artist studio/housing, office/warehouse, office/housing, or



commercial mixed-use combinations. These constraints in re-use point to the need for more industrial land for new construction and special mixed-use zoning for full utilization of existing buildings.

A variety of public and private organizations are involved in planning and economic development in the region. This OEDP reflects the continuing striving for a comprehensive effort aimed at economic development for the twenty-two towns as a whole. Some organizations are directly involved with planning while others are indirectly involved by way of policy-making and/or funding. In section 8.3 there follows a list which, though not exhaustive, provides the names of those organizations that form the basis for the planning and economic development in the region by jurisdiction.

## **8.1 Economic Development Initiatives**

### **Athol**

- The Downtown Partnership is actively seeking to stimulate interest in and economically revitalize its center through grants from the Athol Community Development Office.
- The Millers River Community Development Corporation has recently moved its offices into the former UTD plant serving as an incubator manager for small business start-ups.

### **Ayer**

- An Office of Economic Development has recently been created, and a director recruited.
- The town received designation as an Economic Target Area and Economic Opportunity Area under a new Massachusetts Economic Incentive Program which gives participants various tax benefits and priority standing for state capital funding.
- The town received investment tax credits for two companies which are expanding and creating 32 new jobs.

- An Industrial Finance Authority was established to administer a revolving loan program for small businesses located in or locating to.
- The local development permitting process is being streamlined, and a guidebook is being prepared for businesses and individuals.
- A debt exclusion article was passed providing funds for the construction of water treatment facilities at a town well which will allow an increase in the water supply that could accommodate new development.

### **Fitchburg**

- The Fitchburg Recycling Corporation will convert the idle James River plant, with rail service to the interior of the building and a private water supply, to a facility that recycles office and computer paper from the northeast. It is expected to be on line in 1995 and to provide approximately 100 jobs.
- The city is pursuing plans for a possible Route 2 connector with state agencies and MRPC to provide direct access to Fitchburg center which would also benefit newly developed industrial sites.
- The Community Development Corporation (CDC) is working on an active Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) proposal to create a micro-loan program and provide small business with working capital.
- The Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel and Trade Center (La Cava) complex was completed in 1990. Several events have taken place there, and a busier schedule is anticipated. Future construction will include office space and research and development facilities (Center for Economic Development, 1993, 22).
- The Fitchburg Technological Park is in the final approval stages with construction slated to begin in the near future (Center for Economic Development, 1993, 22).
- The Blueberry Lane Industrial Park was completed by the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority (FRA) for the city and is full (Center for Economic Development, 1993,22).

- The Montachusett Industrial Park , a private development, was also assisted by the FRA and is full also.(Center for Economic Development, 1993, 22).
- The city, Montachusett Regional Transportation Authority (MART) and the Metropolitan Boston Transit Authority (MBTA) are working to create a new commuter rail platform on lower Main Street as part of a major revitalization effort for that section of the city.

### **Fort Devens**

- Several communities including Ayer, Harvard, Lancaster and Shirley are involved in studying future uses of the site to be vacated by the U.S. Army by 1995. Rehabilitation of the hospital complex on the site to future use as a medical facility for a proposed medium security federal prison will begin in the fall of 1994.
- A Job Corps Training Center valued at approximately \$15 million will be established. The project will involve new construction.
- An Army Reserve Enclave on a portion of the base will be retained by the military.
- Affordable housing is to be provided by rehabilitating units that will become available as part of the base closing.
- The intermodal freightyard located on the site is to undergo a proposed expansion.

### **Gardner**

- Superior Friction, an industry that makes brake parts, located its facility in an existing vacant industrial site in 1993.
- The Summit, a 125-acre site was rezoned from residential to industrial use, and twelve sites created (Center for Economic Development, 1993, 52).
- A minimum security state prison now occupies the site of the former Gardner State Mental Institution.



- The former Heywood-Wakefield furniture factory was rehabilitated for residential use with a mix of subsidized and luxury apartments. A third phase of rehabilitation construction to create congregate housing for the elderly, is advancing through the planning phase in conjunction with HUD.
- Walmart is constructing a store in South Gardner off Route 68. It is scheduled for completion in the Fall of 1994.
- The Gardner Partnership Program through the Executive Office of Community Development (EOCD) offers programs and makes funds accessible for sustainable development in the local economy through grants.
- An Overall Economic Development Program was completed in 1993.
- The five-year Open Space Plan will be updated in the summer.
- A Route 68 bypass is being developed to divert heavy trucks from and reduce congestion in the downtown.
- The Rear Main Street Project involves clearing and removing several old industrial buildings to construct a thoroughfare parallel to Main Street from Central Street to the Route 2 exit.
- The Gardner Technology Transfer Center, through the Gardner Industrial Foundation and Mount Wachusett Community College.

### **Lancaster**

- An open space/recreation plan was completed in the fall of 1993.

### **Lunenburg**

- A Walmart store is under construction on Route 13. In the process a stone crushing operation has been set up to utilize the significant quantity of rock on the site.
- A Route 13 bypass is in the planning stages which, if constructed, might help alleviate the congestion on Route 13 and eliminate some congestion on Route 12.

## **Shirley**

- A trash to energy facility with its prototype from Paris has had its environmental impact plan finished, the permits obtained. Construction is expected to begin in Fall 1994.

## **Westminster**

- The Mount Wachusett Ski Area, a privately-run facility in a state park, is proceeding with plans to expand; the environmental impact report will be prepared as part of the project.
- The Kennetuck Company, relocated from Connecticut, operates a facility that burns wood waste from New England to produce power which is returned to the Fitchburg Gas and Electric Company.
- The Simplex Corporation will utilize the recently vacated Digital Equipment Corporation plant for warehousing.

## **8.2 Other Planning and Economic Development Opportunities**

- Extend Rte. 2 improvements from Athol, where it becomes a two-lane secondary highway, to I-91 in Greenfield. This would link the region more effectively with the Rt. 495 corridor and the Boston area, and the I-91 corridor in Western Massachusetts (Northern Worcester County Chamber of Commerce (NWCCC), 1993, 3-4).
- Extend I-190 north for improved transportation access to cities in New Hampshire, in what would constitute a third-tier transportation ring in relation to Boston.
- The New Hampshire border is an economic asset with the four cities of Keene, Nashua, Manchester, and Concord in close proximity.
- Enhance opportunities for international trade for the region by utilizing intermodal transportation capabilities present especially at Fort Devens or one of the other airports in the region (Northern Worcester County Chamber of Commerce 1993).
- Incorporate the "Walk to Wachusett" plan, which proposes a trail from Concord to Mt. Wachusett taking a path followed by Henry David Thoreau, into an overall tourism and recreation plan to expand the benefits of that industry. This trail plan could even be

expanded to a larger "Freedom Way" concept linking tourism in the region to the existing Freedom Trail and Concord/Lexington/Walden Pond attractions. The towns of Harvard and Lancaster are involved with others along the proposed path in discussing an open space greenway following Thoreau's path.

- Tie in a Proposed Federal Fish And Wildlife Visitors Center which has a high level of local support to the "Freedom Way "proposal.
- Support a budding recycling industry that already has three operating or proposed businesses in the region: the Kennebec wood to energy plant, the proposed Shirley trash to energy plant, and the proposed Fitchburg Recycling plant for paper.
- Design a regional community development corporation (CDC) and economic development commission (EDC) that would reflect the diversity of economic needs and interests for the entire area, and could assist the individual CDC's and EDC's and coordinate efforts (NWCCC,1993, p. 3).
- Construct a commuter station/parking deck/retail complex in the immediate vicinity of the existing station in, including additional public parking, and quality retail space through public/ private partnerships.
- Make improvements to the existing commuter rail station in Shirley.

### **8.3 Federal Planning and Economic Development Participants**

- Federal Congressional Representatives
- The U.S. Army/Department of Defense involved in the close-down of the Fort Devens Military base.
- The Economic Development Agency funds infrastructure repairs, small business loan pools, and feasibility studies.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development involved in administering regulations and funding for housing.
- Agriculture, farming, and food processing resources.



#### **8.4 State Planning and Economic Development Participants**

- The legislative contingent of the region; see section 4.
- The Massachusetts Land Bank, involved in planning the re-use of Fort Devens.
- The Executive Office of Economic and Community Development administering regulations, funding and economic development programs for communities. The Department of Environmental Management which acquires and oversees various parks, trails, and recreation areas.
- The Massachusetts Development Incentive Program, administered by EOCD, holds informational workshops, seeks to establish business zones, provides planning grants and is developing a handbook on local economic development..
- The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife which also oversees tracts of environmentally sensitive land, makes acquisition of them, and polices them.
- The Metropolitan District Commission which regulates watershed land and water supplies to the Metropolitan Boston area, such as Wachusett Reservoir in Clinton and Quabbin Reservoir abutting Petersham.

#### **8.5 Regional Planning and Economic Development Participants**

- The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), one of several state-wide that provide planning services to their particular region.
- The Montachusett Regional Transit Authority oversees a transit network serving the region.
- The Montachusett Opportunity Council which provides a wide range of programs and services to assist women and children, low-income residents, and elders.
- The North Central Massachusetts Community Reinvestment Act Coalition.
- The Housing Allowance Program which provides assistance to low-income consumers.

- The Fort Devens Enterprise Commission which is comprised of members from affected towns to plan re-use options for Fort Devens.

## **8.6 Local Planning and Economic Development Participants**

- The twenty-two municipalities and their planners and planning agencies.
- The County Commissioners for Middlesex and Worcester Counties.
- Local watershed councils; Nashua River Watershed Association.
- CAP agencies which provide a variety of services to needy residents.
- Gardner Community Action Committee, Fitchburg-Leominster Community Action Center, and Winchendon Community Action Committee.
- Gardner Redevelopment Authority
- The local housing authorities which administrate various housing programs by town under the auspices of EOCD and HUD. Includes Athol, Ayer, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Groton, Leominster, Lunenburg, Templeton, and Winchendon.
- Economic development offices are found in the towns of Ayer (Office of Economic Development and the Massachusetts Small Cities Office), Athol (Community Development Office and Downtown Partnership), Clinton (Community and Economic Development Office), Fitchburg (Economic-Industrial Development Office), Gardner (Office of Economic Development), Leominster (Economic Development Office), and Winchendon (Economic Development Office).
- Industrial development offices are located in Athol (Industrial Development Commission), Gardner Redevelopment Authority and Fitchburg (Economic-Industrial Development Office), Ayer will have an Industrial Development Finance Authority in June of this year.
- School districts, both regional and local; Nashoba Regional School District, Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School District.

### **8.7 Private Planning and Economic Development Participants**

- Business associations including the Athol-Orange Community Development Corporation, the Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce, the Ayer Industrial Association, the Montachusett Regional Private Industrial Council, the Greater Ayer/Devens Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce, the Leominster Chamber of Commerce, the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, the North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce, the Winchendon Chamber of Commerce, and the Shirley Business Association.
- Community Development Corporations (CDC) are located in Fitchburg, Gardner, and Athol (Millers River CDC).
- Square II in Gardner is an affiliate of the Chamber of Commerce there and is dedicated to the rejuvenation of downtown Gardner through small business advocacy, commercial improvements, training, marketing, and fund-raising events.
- The Greater Gardner Development Corporation is a community based organization serving low- and moderate-income residents with housing and economic development issues.
- The Greater Gardner Industrial Foundation and the Gardner Industrial Development Corporation.



## **B. Evaluation**

### **1.Strengths of the Montachusett Region**

#### **1. Location.**

Montachusett has a central location in Massachusetts and in New England Proximity to Boston: the eastern part of the region is approximately 30 miles from the Boston Metropolitan area.

The Montachusett Region borders New Hampshire.

#### **2. Transportation.**

Montachusett has a strong transportation network of highways, especially in the eastern part of the region, airports and rail networks (commuter and freight).

Public transportation is provided by the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority, (MART).

#### **3. Workforce.**

Montachusett has a skilled and multifaceted labor force with a strong work ethic.

#### **4. Recreation.**

The area has a wealth of cultural and recreational resources.

#### **5. Industrial Base.**

The region has a diverse industrial base of both traditional and high tech industries.

There is a tradition of entrepreneurship in the region.

An industrial cluster has established around the plastics industry.

#### **6. Education.**

Montachusett has many public and private learning institutions, including two and four year academic institutions as well as technical vocational schools.

#### **7. Natural Resources.**

Montachusett has a plentiful water supply and a wealth of open space that includes state parks, forests and agricultural land.

## **8. Developable Land.**

The area has an abundance of developable land. This includes the Fort Devens military base and abandoned mill space.

## **9. Government.**

There is a positive political climate in the region coupled with a well established planning community.

## **10. Quality of life**

Montachusett is an area of great diversity yet it has preserved much of its rural New England character.

The area has a well established health care system.

Land is affordable.

## **2. Weaknesses of the Montachusett Region.**

### **1. Government.**

There is relatively poor intertown cooperation in the region and a fragmentation of the governmental agencies (the towns of Ayer, Shirley, Harvard and Lancaster, however, have recently come together over the reuse of Fort Devens). This leads to a lack of real action on a regional level.

Some of the communities have an anti-growth mentality.

Over regulation is a problem at the state and local levels

There is an overdependence on state and federal government.

### **2. Environmental Issues.**

The area lacks a regional waste management facility.

21E regulations make reuse of older industrial sites difficult.

### **3. Cost of Living.**

Montachusett has high energy costs, high tax rates and some areas within the region lack affordable housing.

#### **4. Economy.**

The closure of Fort Devens military base will have a significant impact on the economy of the region in terms of job loss.

Montachusett has a lack of usable space for industry.

The region suffers from an eroding manufacturing base which has resulted in the loss of large industry leading to layoffs and increasing unemployment rates.

#### **5. Image.**

The region lacks an integrated marketing strategy.

The urban and industrialized areas suffer from a poor image.

Lack of signage is a constraint on tourism and recreation.

#### **6. Social.**

Montachusett has a high incidence of social ills. These include high teenage pregnancy, crime and high school dropout rates.

Minority groups represent one of the fastest growing sectors of the population yet their needs have not been sufficiently addressed.

#### **7. Transportation.**

Public transportation facilities are limited and need to be expanded.

Route 2 needs to be upgraded in the western part of the region.

There is poor north south access.

Fitchburg needs a connector from Route 2 to its downtown.

#### **8. Education**

There is a lack of targeted job training in the region.

#### **9. Financial Mechanisms.**

There is a lack of credit available for businesses.

#### **10. Infrastructure.**

Existing infrastructure is antiquated or lacking altogether in some of the rural areas.

The housing stock is old and there are lead paint issues.



### III. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

During the month of April the OEDP Committee was involved in preparing goals and objectives for the overall plan and then identifying economic projects in the region which could be accomplished in a one to two year time frame. Prior to formulating a list of potential projects, the committee identified a framework for successful economic development. It includes establishing a system for one stop shopping where a project could go to one office and obtain all the permits necessary for the project to proceed; utilizing a bottom up approach so that the needs of local government are identified rather than determined by state or federal government. Funding is also needed from the state for the planning process to continue and flourish. Communities need to work together to attract businesses which will benefit the region overall.

Prior to ranking the projects, the Committee listed the following economic development areas for consideration:

#### **Projects**

- 1) Lancaster Industrial Park (500) - NA
- 2) High Speed Rail - Not EDA Eligible
- 3) Inventory of Employers - "Buy In" - feasibility
- 4) High Quality Training Program - feasibility
- 5) Technology Park - Fitchburg - infrastructure (already funded)
- 6) Loans - Micro-Loan  
Needs Assessment
- 7) Jungle Road Industrial Park - Leominster - infrastructure
- 8) Orchard Hill Industrial Park - Leominster - infrastructure
- 9) Industrial Parks - new location - feasibility
- 10) Borden Chemical - recycling- sustainability - feasibility
- 11) Clustering concept for the region - feasibility
- 12) Summit Industrial Park - Gardner - infrastructure

- 13) Route 13 Connector By-pass - not EDA eligible
- 14) Upgrade Route 2 - not EDA eligible
- 15) Regional Marketing Strategy - feasibility
- 16) Revitalize/raze old structures - CDBG/not EDA
- 17) Regional Waste Approach - feasibility
- 18) Visitor Center on Route 2 - not EDA eligible

### **Goal 1:**

To create a framework for coordinated economic development and land use planning at the regional level by participating in the dialogue that is currently shaping the proposed "growing smart" legislation, the Mass Planning and Development Act, to ensure the interests of North Central Massachusetts are heard and considered.

### **Objectives:**

The proposed legislation must address the following:

#### **Short term:**

- create more certainty in the permitting process with revisions to Chapters 40A and 41 which will provide for a consolidated permitting system
- review of the RPA boundaries and consideration of sub regional boundaries to help communities feel less remote from each other in terms of shared interests

#### **Moderate term:**

- adequate resources from the state for local planning efforts with an emphasis on capacity building at the local level

#### **Long term:**

- a standard of compatibility as opposed to consistency among local plans of abutting communities, the region and involved state agencies and authorities.

## **Goal 2:**

**To upgrade the overall regional rail transportation system through innovative, high speed rail appropriate signalization and freight accommodation.**

## **Objectives:**

### **Short term:**

- locate a site for a commuter rail station in the Ayer/Devens area to provide parking for up to 400 cars.
- improve and upgrade all existing commuter rail stations the region
- begin the necessary steps to accommodate double stacked cars on existing rail lines
- continue to upgrade and expand rail lines and signalization

### **Long term:**

- extend commuter rail services to Greenfield from Boston by the year 2000
- utilize existing abandoned rail lines at Fort Devens for experimentation to assure that adequate testing of high speed rail occurs
- link Fort Devens with both Worcester and Manchester, New Hampshire airports through high speed commuter rail
- reduce or eliminate interstate commerce barriers to assure that New England is in the most competitive trading position



### **Goal 3:**

**To expand the region's tax base in order to create revenues for municipalities to provide needed services for the community.**

#### **Objectives:**

##### **Short term:**

- within three months convene a meeting represented by all cities and towns in the Montachusett Region to address the issue of expanding the region's tax base
- present a final plan for industrial growth including cluster industrial zoning, industrial parks and revenue and cost sharing within one year
- create a municipal pool of funds to be used to promote the area and attract industry
- target industries and specific companies to relocate in the area and attract industry.

### **Goal 4:**

**To preserve existing housing, and develop new opportunities for affordable housing.**

#### **Objectives:**

##### **Short term:**

- advocate the development of more affordable housing
- work with city officials to ensure the planning and development of more affordable housing
- support programs that rehabilitate existing abandoned buildings
- develop programs that create homeowner opportunity for low and moderate income people.

##### **Moderate term:**

- continue programs that create homeowner opportunity for low and moderate income people

## **Goal 5:**

**To provide transitional financing for individuals and companies until they become self-sufficient, or can obtain conventional financing.**

### **Objectives:**

#### **Short term:**

- North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation will seek grants and investments from, and partnerships with:
  - a) government and its funding agencies
  - b) labor unions and trade associations
  - c) banks, industry and individuals
  - d) Community Development Corporation
- create a loan pool which will provide technical assistance and transitional financing to individuals and companies.

## **Goal 6:**

**To strengthen and expand the region's manufacturing base:**

### **Objectives:**

#### **Short term:**

- support municipal and regional planning efforts
- establish and regularly update a regional inventory of industrial land and buildings
- encourage the most productive use of existing industrial land and buildings
- identify and rezone as appropriate new industrial land uses
- link capital improvement planning to industrial growth
- assist with the growth of existing manufacturing firms
- aggressively market the Region to new manufacturing firms

- consider the development of center for plastics technology to assist research and development and technology transfer within the plastics industry
- streamline the municipal permitting process for planned industrial developments
- coordinate industrial development planning with regional utility companies
- pursue a regional designation under the State's Economic Development Incentive Program.

### **Goal 7:**

**To provide, manage and use adequate resources to promote, achieve and maintain a high quality of life.**

### **Objectives:**

#### **Short term:**

- to provide adequate funding and community involvement for building a strong education system - reduce high school drop out rates by 10% each year
- drug awareness training for children, parents, teachers and community leaders - reduce drug availability on the street and establish drug free communities within five years
- provide automated information systems supplies, equipment and training in elementary and high schools for all students
- provide community programs to promote cultural, family and moral values
- integrate community activities within the region that are of yearly common interest
- education awareness of correctional institution activities, responsibility and safety for communities in the Region
- job training initiatives for employment opportunities for current industries
- development of a coordinated and comprehensive public transportation network and improved highway and railway infrastructure



- provide water quality and waste management programs for controlling and preserving natural resources
- provide programs for economic development to create new tax revenue and employment
- promote the Region and develop plans to attract the minimum of five new industries annually
- promote tourism by developing plans for an environmentally clean area restoring greenways, riverways and recreation areas

**Long term:**

- develop plans, programs and pride in community to make the Montachusett Region a proud place to live by making it the best region in Massachusetts by the year 2015.

**Goal 8:**

**To support and promote a regional strategy for waste management.**

**Objectives:**

**Short term:**

- to support the existing programs for waste separation and recycling
- to assist in developing programs to expand the existing programs
- to assist in developing programs to integrate the locally based system into a Regional Program
- to encourage the expansion and development of recycled paper, glass and plastic products.

**Long term:**

- to encourage the development of alternative energy systems which utilize the various waste stream components as the energy source

## **Goal 9:**

**To support, improve and promote locally based community health systems:**

### **Objective**

#### **Moderate term**

- to support and assist in developing a regional approach to the utilization of these facilities
- to support the formulation and implementation of a Service Development Plan addressing:
  - a) improving the health status of the community
  - b) health maintenance and promotion
  - c) primary care
  - d) home care
  - e) community/neighborhood based services
  - f) long-term care
  - g) locally based insurance program
  - h) high tech care
- to support comprehensive zoning in the member communities geared to meet the needs of the Community while protecting the health, safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the member communities
- continue to upgrade and expand rail lines and signalization

#### **Long term**

- to support the development of a comprehensive review of the Physical Plant assets of the Health Care Delivery System in the member communities
- to support reinvestment and redevelopment of these businesses in accordance with the regional goals and objectives
- to establish a community-based health center

## **Goal 10:**

**To develop a strong educational system which meets the needs of a diverse student population and which prepares students for the world of work;**

### **Objectives:**

#### **Short term:**

- to design curricular and other school-based programs which assess students' current levels and use these levels as the starting point for implementing change
- to provide extensive professional development for staff in dealing with changing racial and economic populations
- to provide more diverse role models for children: undertaking aggressive affirmative action programs
- to plan career development programs
- to increase parental and community involvement in schools: jobs programs, school councils, world of work in the classroom projects.
- utilize community resources, such as Fitchburg Art Museum, Plastics Museum, historical societies, libraries etc.
- Plan to share resources of various school systems so that services are not replicated
- work at implementing the state's common core of learning so that all graduating seniors have a common base of knowledge, skills and abilities
- examine educational alternatives, including regional boarding schools, and develop programs within the schools which meet the needs of pregnant and parenting teens and students in need of remedial services
- develop and implement methods of measuring whether goals have been met at the individual school level
- increase opportunities for extended day care programs within the schools and in after school programs



- advocate lifelong learning through participation in adult and basic education programs, participation by adults in vocational programs and offering practical arts and retraining programs
- eliminate high schools' "general track" and establish tech prep type programs so that all students graduate with a skill or an occupational plan
- aggressively seek local, state, and federal funding to expand programs
- establish English as a second language programs

**Moderate term:**

- redesign curriculum to reflect a multitude of historical perspectives, rather than exclusively American and European viewpoints

**Goal 11:**

**To develop comprehensive infrastructure which will serve emerging industry and make the region accessible to all business interests.**

**Objectives:**

**Short term:**

- to create an intermodal transportation station in Fitchburg

**Long term:**

- to create a Route 2 connector to downtown Fitchburg
- to create a limited access upgrade highway along Route 2 to the junction with I-91 in Greenfield
- to create a new regional commuter rail station to provide parking for up to 400 cars and extend the double rail line to both Ayer and Fort Devens
- To continue the I-190 corridor to New Hampshire creating an essential third loop to complement Routes 495 and 128
- To improve access and operation along Routes 13, 68, 117 and 119

- To provide and improve access to downtown Gardner by constructing a thoroughfare from Central Street to Route 2 exit running parallel to Main Street. Project involves clearing and removing several old industrial buildings in the rear Main Street.

## **Goal 12:**

**To work towards full employment through the retention of existing businesses and through the development of diversified, quality employment opportunities.**

## **Objectives:**

### **Short term:**

- development of a data base which would include;
  - \* a regional inventory of existing vacant industrial and commercial land
  - \* a regional inventory of vacant industrial and commercial buildings
  - \* analysis of employment patterns and trends
  - \* journey to work characteristics
  - \* identification and follow up on grant opportunities
- development of additional commercial and industrial space, such as Fitchburg Industrial Park, Leominster I-190, Orchard Hill Park, Fort Devens Reuse and the Summit Industrial Park
- promotion and marketing of the region for business and industry. This would include the designation of the region as an Economic Target Area, the encouragement of trade shows and the development of a regional visitor reception center in Phillipston
- the promotion of small business development which would include the marketing of a micro-loan program, the development of local industrial incubators and the networking of start-ups
- increase workforce competitiveness and productivity through retaining and upgrading skills, an increased emphasis on transferable skills and technical education, the development of a technology transfer facility and program for

existing businesses and collaboration between educators, employers and economic developers on workforce development issues.

- to facilitate transition to work through school to work transition programs, improved mechanisms for exchange of information on labor market conditions

### **Goal 13:**

**To strengthen downtown revitalization efforts within the Montachusett Region**

### **Objectives:**

#### **Short term:**

- to offer support and assistance to individual communities looking to secure funds for revitalization efforts
- to generate pride within the region for support and use of businesses within downtown districts and to discourage outside spending when possible
- to determine the regional market demand for services and products and communicate these findings to communities where appropriate
- to support and encourage historic preservation and identify unique opportunities within each community for business use
- to collaboratively market the region for downtown opportunities separate from the shopping mall, strip mall development projects
- to increase CBD awareness by developing a comprehensive signage program for Route 2

#### **Moderate term:**

- to build a partnership between the business sector and the public sector of the region to better understand the value of the individual communities undergoing revitalization efforts
- to operate the region as an economic unit for downtowns and work towards efforts in support of each communities individual needs

- to cooperatively work towards enhancing the existing business base in the downtowns in order to retain these businesses, first in their respective communities and second, in the region
- to work to recognize and appreciate business clustering designed within each community and help to assist where necessary



## **IV. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The program strategy actions relate primarily to physical infrastructure projects which are defined as short term that can be undertaken within one to two years. In addition efforts will be made to expand the existing loan pool which was funded through both the Economic Development Administration and the Executive Office of Communities and Development. One further element that will be pursued includes the submission of a 302a planning grant to pursue several planning projects in the region.

The Overall Economic Development Program Committee defined projects to be implemented within a short term time frame (1 to 2 years). The projects are identified in three areas below:

### **Short Term Priority Projects:**

#### **IV.1. Industrial Site Development**

Fitchburg Technology Park, Fitchburg (project identified in Fitchburg OEDP: already funded)

Summit Industrial Park, Gardner (project identified in Gardner OEDP: funding applied for)

Leominster I-190 Industrial Park, Leominster (will apply for funding)

Orchard Hill Park, Leominster (will apply for funding)

Fort Devens Reuse, Ayer, Harvard, Lancaster, Shirley (will apply for funding)

The Regional OEDP has incorporated OEDPs for both the City of Fitchburg and the City of Gardner. Both cities have already applied to the Economic Development Administration for

funding of the Fitchburg Technology Park and Summit Industrial Park. The City of Fitchburg has already received funding for its technology park while Gardner's application is moving forward. It is the intent of this effort to integrate all prioritized economic projects which have received funding in the past, have funding applications which are pending, or which will be submitting funding packages in the near future. This is particularly important with the impending closure of Fort Devens located in the communities of Ayer, Shirley, Harvard and Lancaster as well as the departure of Digital Equipment Company in the town of Westminster.

#### **IV.2. Regional Loan Pool**

The regional loan program will assist small business throughout Northern Worcester County and will be administered by the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce. At present the North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation has received one million dollars for a regional loan pool. This figure must be increased to twenty million dollars for the region.

#### **IV.3. Multi-Faceted Feasibility Study Through EDA's 302(A) Program**

Investigation of Reuse Options for Borden Chemical in Leominster and inventory of all old industrial buildings for re-use.

Regional Marketing Strategy to include specific components for downtown revitalization.

Regional Waste Management (Disposal and Recycling)

Identification of New Sites for Industrial Parks, Availability of Infrastructure, and  
Utilization of Clustering Concept

## **IV.1. Industrial Park Development**

### **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.Implementation Plan**

A Considerable amount of work has already been completed for the park, including the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement, the execution of detailed engineering plans and specifications, and the acquisition of approvals and permits from federal, state, and local agencies. In the next year, the short-range goals are to:

- a. purchase the land within the project area that are not currently owned by the city;
- b. advertise and award the construction contract; and
- c. implement a marketing plan

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

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

#### **Summit Industrial Park, City of Gardner**

##### **1.Rationale**

The region has for some time experienced a severe erosion in employment, mostly in manufacturing sector. The proposed Summit Industrial Park has great potential to create new jobs, with positive impacts throughout the region. This park will provide competitive industrial lots for emerging industries, and thereby assist in diversifying the employment base. Engineering and market studies indicate that this facility can generate 750,000 square feet of new industrial building space and approximately 750-1360 new jobs. The site currently contains about one-half mile of roadway with supporting infrastructure and needs an additional 6000 feet of roadway, looping of a water line and a traffic light.

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

The City of Gardner has rezoned the parcel for industrial use. The project has received full support from the Mayor and City Council, and is listed as the first priority for short term development under the Gardner LMA OEDP in 1993. Feasibility funding has been received from the Massachusetts Government Land Bank. The project has also received funds from EOCD for additional engineering studies.



### **3.Implementation Plan**

To date, the project has cleared a 21E review and received a State sewer discharge permit. If approved by the City of Gardner, the town of Ashburnham will tie into the Gardner sewer treatment facility via this industrial park project. The plan has received preliminary subdivision plan approval from the Gardner Planning Board. Studies to be completed by the Fall of 1994 include the preparation of a definitive plan, final cost estimates, and marketing and management plans. Application for state and federal financing has commenced and will continue through August, 1994. Ground breaking in the Spring of 1995 for roadway completion and additional infrastructure is anticipated. The estimated cost for direct and indirect construction costs is between \$1,000,000 and \$1,300,000.

### **4.Responsibility**

The Economic Development Coordinator for the Gardner Redevelopment Authority will be responsible for the project, in cooperation with the City of Gardner.

## **Fort Devens Reuse, Towns Of Ayer, Shirley, Harvard, Lancaster**

### **1.Rationale**

The impending closing of Fort Devens will have a substantially negative impact upon the local economy of its four host communities, Ayer, Harvard, Shirley and Lancaster, as well as a larger region consisting of 44 municipalities. These impacts will be felt acutely in 1995-96, as the base reaches full closure levels, but has already been felt in the past two years as personnel levels have been reduced. The effects include job elimination, retail and service business losses, rises in private market vacancy rates for housing, and other economic impacts which have been documented in professional studies. Bold steps are required to remediate the situation.

## **2. Local Interest**

A comprehensive planning and reuse process began more than two years ago, and the degree of local interest has been broad based, intense and continuous. The four base towns formed a Joint Boards of Selectmen organization early in the process, which continues to function as a partner with the Massachusetts Land Bank, the state agency charged with implementation of this complex project. The Planning Boards of the towns also unified at an early stage and have been involved on an ongoing basis. As further indication of local interest, there is a large, multi-tiered participatory process, which encompasses parties of interest from the towns, the region and the state, and is organized variously along topical, technical and/or general participation lines.

## **3. Implementation Plan**

The reuse process is complex on a facility that includes in total some 14 square miles and more than 900 existing buildings. Highlights of the process in its current progress are as follows:

- a. There has been a Reuse Plan on which general consensus has been reached since January, 1994.
- b. That Plan is going through a detailed process of refinement during the spring and summer of 1994, for adoption by the towns concurrently with Bylaws.
- c. Bylaws pursuant to that Plan are being prepared for consideration by a "super town meeting" in the early fall of 1994 (simultaneous meetings will be held in the three most directly impacted communities).

d. A parallel environmental process has been occurring during this period, involving hazardous waste/site remediation studies; a federal Environmental Impact Statement coordinated through the Army Corps of Engineers and culminating during 1994; and a state Environmental Impact Report for the MEPA process, which will culminate later in 1994.

e. The Fort Devens Commission Act passed at the end of 1993, which establishes in 1995 a regional regulatory body with membership from the base towns and the region. In conjunction with the Land Bank, which will hold title to much of the land and will act as an economic development and financing agency for the future development of the property, a comprehensive regional mechanism will be in place.

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

As discussed in the preceding paragraph, The MA Government Land Bank and the Devens Enterprise Commission will implement the project.

### **Leominster I-190 Industrial Park**

#### **1.Rationale**

The Leominster I-190 Industrial Park is strategically located within North Central Massachusetts. The Park is located one (1) mile south of the I-190/Route 2 Interchange. The Park was re-zoned in 1991 as a Planned Development District (PDD) which accommodates large scale industrial, office, and Research and Development uses. The PDD was also approved for like uses under the City's Biotechnology Ordinance. The 300 acre Park is ideally located so as not to conflict with surrounding landuses and environmentally sensitive areas. The Park includes direct railroad (Conrail) access.

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

The Leominster I-190 Park has been identified as a priority location for industrial development under the City's 1992 Growth Management Plan. The City and the Region



are currently experiencing a critically low inventory of industrial land and a low industrial vacancy rate. The Park will provide for a much needed expansion of the City's and Region's industrial base.

### **3.Implementation Plan**

- a. Utilizing the recently completed Park Feasibility Study, prepare infrastructure specifications and costs;
- b. Develop a formalized public/private partnership between the City's Industrial Development Commission (IDC) and private property owners;
- c. The City will determine the appropriate disposition of its land within the Park location;
- d. The IDC working in conjunction with property owners and the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce will develop a marketing strategy for the Park.

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

The Leominster Office of Planning and Development's Economic Development Coordinator will be primarily responsible for coordinating the implementation of the plan with the oversight of the Mayor, City Council, and the IDC.

### **Orchard Hill Park, City of Leominster**

#### **1.Rationale**

The Orchard Hill Industrial Park is located 1/2 mile east of the I-190/Route 2 interchange with direct access from Harvard Street in Leominster. The Orchard Hill Park site is situated on a 78.3 acre parcel and is under single private ownership. The park is a Planning Board approved subdivision consisting of 594,000 gross square feet of proposed



buildings for manufacturing, office, research and development, and a potential hotel. The site is zoned general industrial and is bordered by the former Boston & Maine Railroad.

## **2. Local Interest**

The Orchard Hill Park Subdivision Plan received unanimous approval from the City's Planning Board. The City prepared a Community Development Action Grant (CDAG) application to the State of Massachusetts in support of needed sewer infrastructure improvements. The proposed Park also precipitated a design study of the adjacent Route 2/Harvard Street interchange which would accommodate proper access to the site and of surrounding industrial land located in the Town of Lancaster.

## **3. Implementation**

- a. The City will review existing engineering plans for the proposed sewer extension to determine specifications and costs;
- b. The City will continue to work with the Massachusetts Department of Public Works (MDPW) and the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to ensure that improvements to the Route 2/Harvard Street interchange are a regional priority;
- c. The City's Industrial Development Commission (IDC) and the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce will work with landowners to develop a marketing strategy.

## **4. Responsibility for Implementation**

The Leominster Office of Planning and Development's Economic Development Coordinator and the City's DPW Director will be primarily responsible for coordinating the implementation of the plan with the oversight of the Mayor, City Council, and the IDC.

## **IV.2. Regional Loan Program**

### **1.Rationale**

Unemployment has been high in north central Massachusetts over the past decade. Recent down-sizing of major employers such as Digital Equipment has added substantially to the problem. The scale down and eventual closing of Fort Devens will exacerbate the situation. Conventional lenders (banks) are no longer able to address the needs of relatively small borrowers who wish to go into business for themselves due to the cost of administering these loans under recent regulatory pressure.

### **2.Local Interest**

Community surveys have shown that substantial job development could take place if qualified individuals were able to obtain seed money to begin or expand their small businesses. The North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation is being awarded the first one million dollars to establish a lending capacity to begin addressing this need. This loan pool is estimated to being able to serve only 50 to 100 small businesses at a time and will need to be substantially increased over the near term future.

### **3.Implementation Plan**

The North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation will seek grants and investments from and partnerships with: government and its funding agencies, labor unions and trade associations, banks, industry and individuals. These funds can then be matched to create loan pools large enough to have significant impact on the economic health of the entire region.

### **4.Responsibility**

The North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation is establishing a small loan administration capacity which will assure loans are made to appropriate individuals, tailored

to the unique cash flow requirements of each situation, while safeguarding the principle so that it will be repaid and available to re-lend to others.

### **IV.3. Multi-Faceted Feasibility Study**

#### **1.Rationale**

A comprehensive approach is needed to market the region and attract new business. This will work to facilitate economic growth and full employment.

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

Area Chambers of Commerce, educational institutions, the regional planning agency and industrial development directors have made commitments to work together to devise a marketing strategy for the region while also providing appropriate educational/training programs for existing and future industry. The RPA will investigate clustering of similar companies as well as new locations for industry/commercial development.

#### **3.Criteria**

The Feasibility study will include several components (identified in implementation strategy below). It will ultimately create employment while expanding the tax base and establishing a regional identity. Educational institutions will coordinate their efforts to be certain the area's labor force possesses the necessary skills and background to compete today and in the future. Specific projects include reuse of a former chemical company and regional solid waste management.

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

Short range goals and implementation include:

- a. Investigate the possibility of reusing the former Borden Chemical Plant located on Lancaster Street (Route 117) in Leominster. The amount of available space, status of



clean-up, and necessary rehabilitation to existing structures will be determined. In addition, prepare an inventory of existing abandoned industrial buildings within the Montachusett region and a plan to use those structures in the future.

b. Collect data and analyze the possibility of introducing clustering for industrial/commercial uses. Identify new sites for industrial parks as well as the availability of infrastructure. Link and coordinate training/education programs with the North Central Massachusetts Regional Employment Board, Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical school, local school systems, area colleges, and area employers.

c. Develop regional marketing strategy for the area. This will be done in collaboration with area Chambers of Commerce, educational institutions, industrial development directors, and the regional planning agency. As part of this regional marketing strategy look closely at downtown areas to consider revitalization, upgrading and improvement to make them a resource for marketing our region.

d. Prepare an inventory of how communities dispose of their solid waste and how much tonnage is generated. Work with the Coalition for North Central Waste Management, Inc. (organization of community representatives) on recycling in the region as well as local solid waste committees and solid waste haulers. Efforts will be made to work with both state and private concerns to establish markets for recyclable goods to be used in the manufacturing process.

## **5. Responsibility**

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission will apply for 302(a) funding through the Economic Development Administration. This effort will lead to job creation and retention and an expanded tax base.



## Appendix I

### Major Industries:

The following lists major industries for the region by town. Major industries are defined for current purposes as those companies with gross yearly earnings of five million dollars or more.

#### Ashburnham

Name: Spectra Polymer Co., Inc.  
Gross sales: Over \$10 million  
Product: Color concentrates and plastic compounds

#### Athol

Name:	Progressive Controlled Environments, Inc.	Starrett, L.S., Company
Gross sales:	\$5 to \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	Corrosion, odor, & air filters	Precision measuring tools, steel tapes, etc.

#### Ayer

Name:	Air Power of New England, Inc.	Diagnostic Instrument Corp.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	N/A	N/A

Name:	Allen Associates, Inc.	Epic Enterprises, Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	N/A	N/A

Name:	BMA, Inc.	Horn Corp.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:		Corrugated boxes, packaging

Name:	Boston Gas Co.	Horn Packaging Corp.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	N/A	Wood boxes, corrugated cartons, etc.

Name:	Cains Foods, Inc.	Hybricon Corporation
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	Salad dressing, mayonnaise, pickles	N/A

Name:	CPF, Inc.	Kleenit, Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	N/A	N/A

Name:	J.M. Coull, Inc.	Merrimac Warehouse Co.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	N/A	N/A

**Ayer (continued)**

Name:	Moore Lumber Co.	Optometrics USA, Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	Wood products	N/A
Name:	Nashoba Valley Express Co.	Shanklin Corp.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	N/A	Packaging machines
Name:	New England Milling Co.	Tri-Moore Discount Bldg. Materials
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:		Wood products

**Clinton**

Name:	Amory Packaging Corp.	Nylco Corp.
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	\$10 million & over
Product:	Plastic containers & lids	Coaters, textile & plastic lamimators
Name:	Automated Assemblies Corp.	Nypro
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	Over 10 million
Product:	Auxiliary plastics equip., robotics	Custom precision injection molding
Name:	Clinton Plastics, Inc.	Parker & Sons, Inc., AC
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	Over \$10 million
Product:	Painting related plastics	Milk
Name:	Delta Suprenant Wire & Cable, Inc.	Pyrotherm
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	\$5 to \$10 million
Product:	Insulated wire cable	Custom injection molders
Name:	Glas Technic Co.	Res-tech Corp.
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	\$5 To \$10 million
Product:	Fiberglas machine parts	Injection molding, electronic & medical components
Name:	Injectronics, Inc.	Standard Fin Pipe Radiator
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	\$10 million & over
Product:	Thermoplastics and assembly	Radiation equipment
Name:	Mark IV Co., LFE Corp.	Standard Sign & Signal Co.
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	\$5 to \$10 million
Product:	Analog & digital instruments	Reflectorized signs
Name:	National Perforating Corp.	U.S. Chemical Co.
Gross sales:	\$5 to \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	Perforated metal	Color concentrates, olefin and styrenic compounds
Name:	Nortech	Van Brode Group Co.
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	Over \$10 million
Product:	Color additives & concentrates	Plastic cutlery products

**Fitchburg**

Name:	American Can Co.	Household Mfg. Corp., Division of Simonds
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	\$10 million & over
Product:	Special machinery	Metal & woodcutting products
Name:	American Tool & Machine Co.	L&M Stress Relieving Corp.
Gross sales:	\$5 to \$10 million	\$10 million & over
Product:	Coating & laminating equipment, repairs	Stress relieving, heat treating
Name:	Anwelt Corp.	M.D. Valentine Paper Co.
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	Over \$10 million
Product:	Shoes	Specialty paper
Name:	The Asher Company	Modu Form, Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	Men's Trousers	Furniture ,PVC cushions
Name:	Barkley & Dexter Labs, Inc.	P.W.A. Decor Co.
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	Over \$10 million
Product:	Production equipment, systems	Paper
Name:	Boutwell, Owens & Co., Inc.	P.W.A. Rolland Decor, Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	Printing/ packaging	Laminated paper
Name:	Cano Corp.	Riegel-Fitchburg, Div. James River Corp. of Virginia
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	\$10 million & over
Product:	Office system furniture, panels	Specialty paper
Name:	Century Plastic Co., Inc.	Rohm Tech, Inc.
Gross sales:	\$5 to \$10 million	Not available, 99 employed
Product:	Custom thermoplastics	Acrylic Polymer emulsions, textile auxiliaries
Name:	Crocker Technical Papers	Sanitoy, Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	Paper manufacture	Injection & soft goods for babies
Name:	Custom Paper Group	Simonds Industries, Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	Specialty papers	Saws, machine knives, cutters, etc.
Name:	Derby Co.	Spectro Analytical Instrument, Inc.
Gross sales:	\$5 to \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	Acrylic polymer emulsions	Metal, emission spectrometers
Name:	General Electric Co.	Steel-fab, Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	\$5 to \$10 million
Product:	Steam turbine drivers	Steel fabrications, weldments, etc.



**Fitchburg (continued)**

Name: Vogue Wall Coverings, Inc.  
Gross sales: \$10 million & over  
Product: Wall coverings

Wachusett Potato Chip Co.  
Over \$10 million  
Potato chips, snack foods

**Gardner**

Name: Bent S. & Brothers, Inc.  
Gross sales: Over \$10 million  
Product: Solid hardwood furniture

Collier-Keyworth Co.  
\$10 million & over  
Office chair mechanisms, juvenile furniture

Name: Brewster Corp., Nichols & Stone, Co.  
Gross sales: \$ 5 to \$10 million  
Product: Wood & upholstered furniture

Name: C.W. Fabricators, Inc.  
Gross sales: over \$10 million  
Product: Heavy steel & metal fabrications

Gem Industries, Inc.  
Over \$10 million  
Contract & dormitory furniture

Name: Conant-Ball Co.  
Gross sales: \$10 million & over  
Product: Household furniture

Kirk-Eastern  
Over \$10 million  
Welded steel tubing, etc.

Name: Gardner News, Inc., The  
Gross sales: Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Product: Publishers, daily newspaper

Kott Mfg. Co., Inc.  
\$10 million & over  
Furniture

Name: Gardner Screw Corp.  
Gross sales: Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Product: Furniture hardware, screw machine products, etc.

Modern Contract Furniture  
Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Upholstered furniture, desks, chairs, etc.

Name: Harrington & Richardson, Inc.  
Gross sales: \$10 million & over  
Product: Sporting firearms, tackle

Modern Furniture Upholstering  
\$10 million & over  
Chairs, sofas, tables, etc.

Name: Hartshorn, C.H., Inc.  
Gross sales: Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Product: Family & healthcare furnishings

New England Wooden Ware Corp.  
Over \$10 million  
Corrugated cartons and sheets

Name: Ikonen Tool & Die Co., Inc.  
Gross sales: \$1 to \$10 million  
Product: Production machining

Nichols & Stone Co.  
\$10 million & over  
Chairs, tables, case pieces

Name: Jandris, Adolf & Sons, Inc.  
Gross sales: Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Product: Concrete products, steel fabrication, septic tank blocks

Simplex Time Recorder Co.  
Over \$10 million  
Attendance recorders, monitor control fire alarm system, etc.



**Groton**

Name: Canner, Inc.  
Gross sales: Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Product: Urethane products, decorative mirrors

Insko Corp.  
Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Custom gears & gear systems, drive components

Name: Gro-lex, Inc.  
Gross sales: Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Product: Fabricating sheet metal work

New England Business Service  
Over \$10 million  
Business forms

**Harvard**

Name: Manchester Corp.  
Gross sales: Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Product: Waste water treatment systems, air pollution control systems

Mod-Tap W Corp.  
Over \$10 million  
Communication

Name: Tensitron  
Gross sales: \$10 million & over  
Product: Tension indicating, recording & controlling devices

**Hubbardston**

Name: Curtis Lumber Co.  
Gross sales: Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Product: Pallets, skids & lumber

Wain-Roy, Inc.  
Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Backhoe attachments & buckets

**Lancaster**

Name: Atlantic Graphic Services, Inc.  
Gross sales: Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Product: Commercial printing

Lord Construction Systems, Inc.  
Over \$10 million  
Conveyors, custom coal crushing & screening equipment

Name: Bestway of New England, Inc.  
Gross sales: Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Product: Wood preserving

Sterling Manufacturing Co., Inc.  
Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Injection molding of engineered thermoplastics

**Leominster**

Name: A&L Graphics, Inc.  
Gross sales: \$10 million & over  
Product: Office lithograph printing

Buckley, Inc.  
\$10 million & over  
Plastic fabricators

Name: Acro-matic Plastics Corp.  
Gross sales: Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Product: Custom injection molding

C Plastics Corp.  
Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Custom plastic molding of lightpipes, medical products

Name: Aero Plastic, Inc.  
Gross sales: Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Product: Plastic housewares

Cardinel Comb  
Between \$1 & \$10 million  
Hairpins, combs, brushes, etc.

# **Leominster (continued)**

Name:	Anjon Industries, Inc.	Carpenter, E.R., Co., Inc.
Gross sales:	Between \$1 & \$10 million	Between \$1 & \$10 million
Product:	Injection thermoplastic molding for electronic, medical, etc.	Urethane foam
Name:	Art Plastics Co., Inc.	Central Plastic Corp.
Gross sales:	Between \$1 & \$10 million	Between \$1 & \$10 million
Product:	Plastic products, wheels, household items	Injection molding plastic products
Name:	Banner Mold & Die Co., Inc.	Clear Shield National
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	Special dies & tools, jigs, etc.	Miscellaneous plastic products
Name:	Barker-Davis Machine Co., Inc.	Crisci Tool & Die, Inc.
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	Between \$1 & \$10 million
Product:	Special machines, tools for plastics industry	Plastic injection molds
Name:	Basque Plastics Corp.	D/E Corporation
Gross sales:	Between \$1 & \$10 million	Between \$1 & \$10 million
Product:	Custom injection molders, etc.	Air conditioning, heating, refrigeration, ventilation, etc.
Name:	ESP Lock Corp.	Lasko Company, The
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Between \$1 & \$10 million
Product:	Key blanks, pins, locks, etc.	Packaging equipment
Name:	Envirocraft Corporation	Leaktite Corp.
Gross sales:	Between \$1 & \$10 million	Between \$1 & \$10 million
Product:	Industrial sheet metal work, etc.	Painting containers
Name:	Quibecor Prtg./Eusey Press, Inc.	Leominster Die Svc., Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Between \$1 & \$10 million
Product:	Commercial printing	Special dies & tools, sets, etc.
Name:	F & D Plastics	Leominster Home Beverage
Gross sales:	Between \$1 & \$10 million	\$10 million & over
Product:	Custom compounding of plastic colors	Soft drinks & carbonated water
Name:	First Plastics Corp.	Leominster Tool Co., Inc.
Gross sales:	Between \$1 & \$10 million	Between \$1 & \$10 million
Product:	Custom injection molding	Die cast molds
Name:	Fosta-tek Optics, Inc.	Lockwood Products, Inc.
Gross sales:	Between \$1 & \$10 million	\$10 million & over
Product:	Ophthalmic goods	Plastic flower pots
Name:	Foster-Grant Co., Inc.	Lolli Mfg. Co.
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	Between \$1 & \$10 million
Product:	Plastic sunglasses, combs, etc.	Special dies & tools, jigs, etc.

**Leominster** (continued)

Name:	Gary Chemical Corp.	Lyons/Posco, Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	PVC compounds	Direct mailing & inserting, color commercial printer, etc.
Name:	Global Products Corp.	Mar Lee Mold Co.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	PVC compounder	Molds for the plastic industry
Name:	Hilltop Plastics Corp.	Mark Technical Mold, Inc.
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Injection molding	Molds for the plastic industry
Name:	James River Corp.	Mi-Lor Corp.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Miscellaneous plastic products, Dixie cutlery	Dental plastic products
Name:	Key Plastic, Inc.	Miles Kedex Co., Inc.
Gross sales:	Between \$1 & \$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Products packaging	Frames, folders, plaques
Name:	Kingman, E.B., Co.	Modern Dispersions, Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	Plastic injection molding	Thermoplastic compounding
Name:	Mohawk/CDT Wire & Cable	Renzi, AJ Plastic Corp.
Gross sales:	Between \$1 &\$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Simple. coaxial, & multi- conductor cables, constructions for voice/data systems	Plastic banks & toys
Name:	Moore's of Leominster, Inc.	Rogers Printing Co., Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Home center	Commercial printing
Name:	Nasoya Foods, Inc.	S A Y Packaging, Inc.
Gross sales:	Between \$1 &\$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Tofu products	Plastic containers
Name:	Golden Grain	Sancor Industries
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Grain mixes, Turkish coffee	Chemical specialties
Name:	Novacor Chemicals, Inc.	Specialty Polymers, Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Acrylic copolymers, resins	Industrial products, circuits
Name:	NU Plastic Corp.	Spectro Coating Corp.
Gross sales:	Between \$1 &\$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	Plastic processors	Textile & flocked products



**Leominster** (continued)

Name:	Omnirel Corp.	Sportsmen's Plastics, Inc.
Gross sales:	Between \$1 &\$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Manufacturing electronic companies	Plastic products & molds
Name:	Paragon Plastics, Inc.	Superior
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Plastic parts, close tolerance grinding	Plastic products
Name:	Plastican Inc.	Star Container Corp.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Over \$10 million
Product:	Plastic products, chemicals, paints	Corrugated & solid fiber boxes
Name:	Polysar, Inc.	Tamor Plastics Corp.
Gross sales:	\$10 million & over	Over \$10 million
Product:	Polystyrene	Plastic products
Name:	Professional Brushes, Inc.	Thermoplastics Engineering Corp.
Gross sales:	Between \$1 &\$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Toothbrushes, floss, travel items	Plastic extrusion machinery
Name:	Rand-Whitney Packaging	Tri-Sum Potato Chip Co., Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Folding cartons & specialty boxes	Potato chips & other snacks
Name:	Tucker Housewares, Inc.	Victory Button Co., Inc.
Gross sales:	Over &10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Plastic housewares	Custom molders
Name:	Union Products, Inc.	Wiltec, Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Molded plastics	Plastic housewares, custom mold
Name:	Vertipile	
Gross sales:	Between \$1 &\$10 million	
Product:	Flock	

**Lunenburg**

Name:	Knowlton Iron Works Co.
Gross sales:	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Structural steel, weldments, etc.

**Shirley**

Name:	Bemis Associates, Inc.	Herfco, Inc.
Gross sales:	Over \$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Thermoplastic adhesive films	Custom deep drawing, presses

**Sterling**

Name:	Carbolon	Stromberg Tool & Machine Co.
Gross sales:	Between \$1 &\$10 million	Between \$1 &\$10 million
Product:	Injected molded plastic	Special dies & tools, jigs, etc.



**Sterling (continued)**

Name: Lee Plastics, Inc.  
 Gross sales: Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Product: Custom injection molding

Wireway Co., Inc.  
 Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Woven wire partitions

Name: Polyflow, Inc.  
 Gross sales: Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Product: Plastic bonded abrasive

**Templeton**

Name: Adams Printing Corp.  
 Gross sales: Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Product: Commercial printing

Lilly Industries, Inc.  
 Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Lacquers, enamels, varnishes, etc.

Name: Custom Quality Upholstery, Inc.  
 Gross sales: Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Product: Colonial furniture

Seaman Paper Co. of Mass.  
 Over \$10 million  
 Ground wood printing papers, etc.

**Townsend**

Name: Carielorz, Inc.  
 Gross sales: Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Product: Needlework kits

Sterilite Corp.  
 Over \$10 million  
 Plastic household containers

Name: Johnson Creative Arts  
 Gross sales: Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Product: Needlecraft supplies & kits

Williams, Inc.  
 Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Needlecraft products

Name: Neilsen & Bainbridge  
 Gross sales: Over \$10 million  
 Product: Picture frame molding

**Westminster**

Name: Advance Coatings Co.  
 Gross sales: Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Product: Coatings & adhesives for paper, polyester resins

Ranor, Inc.  
 Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 CNC & general machining, fabricated metal weldments

Name: Fitchburg Welding Co., Inc..  
 Gross sales: Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Product: Custom steel fabrications

TRW Co.  
 Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Precision steel injection molds for plastics industry, etc.

**Winchendon**

Name: DuFault Sawdust & Excelsior, Inc.  
 Gross sales: Over \$10 million  
 Product: Sawdust

Ray Plastic, Inc.  
 Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Plastic molding

Name: General Repair Service  
 Gross sales: Over \$10 million  
 Product: Pallets & skids

White Mountain Freezer, Inc.  
 Between \$1 &\$10 million  
 Food preparation equipment

(Sources: Directory of New England Manufacturers 1993-1994 and Mac Rae's State and Industrial Directory: Massachusetts and Rhode Island, 1991).

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