

**WILLIAMSTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

	<b>PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>PRIORITY</b>	<b>TIMING</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
<b><i>CREATE A CULTURE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</i></b>				
<u>Strategy 1:</u> Make permitting and Williamstown processes a model of business-friendly best practice.				
<u>Action 1A:</u> Streamline and Modernize Development Permitting and Review. Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the development services offered through Williamstown to evaluate ways in which departments, staff, and processes can be co-located and integrated to offer streamlined, customer-focused services. At a minimum, Williamstown should work immediately to: (1) update the permitting process to include flowcharts, timelines, contacts and other features to improve the clarity and transparency for developers, and (2) increase the number of forms and Williamstown services available on-line.				
<u>Action 1B:</u> Review the regulatory programs that affect business development, including regulations and processes used by the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Conservation Commission to ensure that the rules and the regulatory processes are easy to understand and do not pose an undue burden on economic development.				
<u>Action 1C:</u> Ensure that we have regulations and programs to encourage appropriate home-based businesses. This is important to many current livelihoods but is also anticipated to expand in scope as broadband infrastructure is implemented.				
<u>Strategy 2:</u> Make optimal use of tools and incentives to attract and leverage investment.				

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<u>Action 2A:</u> The Town should target investments to attract innovating industries such as technology firms and “creative economy” businesses that have a focus on arts, culture, and design. Williamstown can create targeted business attraction and retention programs that incorporate tax incentives, workforce development assistance, and infrastructure and service amenities.				
<u>Action 2B:</u> Develop Package of Small Business Programs. Work with small business community to identify and then develop small business incentive programs to help advance business success. This could include a small business ownership class to cover the basic steps of business planning, importance of savings, and making realistic growth forecasts. Participation in the class could be required in order to access other loan or funding programs, to incentivize participation. Williamstown could also explore the creation of a small business tax increment financing (TIF) program linked to the addition of employees and/or increase or relocation of business square footage to support business growth.				
<u>Action 2C:</u> Advance Ways to Quickly Connect Small Businesses to Appropriate Resources to Improve Success Rate. Facilitate one-stop process for small-business development to ensure the right connections are made from the start. Williamstown should encourage owners to take advantage of available business counseling services from outside support agencies.				
<u>Action 2D:</u> Develop municipal profile that provides important community information such as demographic, business mix, commercial space costs, available community incentives, and tax rates to help potential investors.				

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<u>Action 2E</u> : Explore Ways to Meet Full Range of Small Business Financing Needs Locally. Explore creative solutions to small business financing needs, such as a bank pool-funded revolving loan fund for small business start-ups, a Williamstown or northern Berkshire angel network, and community-based funding pools. Select and implement the right tool or package of tools in collaboration with the business community. Create Seed Funding Opportunities and Angel Networks. Foster a formal collaborative to link potential investors with entrepreneurs to cultivate new business relationships and put ideas into action. This could be sector or place-based, depending on the priorities of angel investors. Provide channels for early seed funding.				
<u>Action 2F</u> : Community-Supported Business. Build on the success of the community supported agriculture model by adapting or extending it into other sectors. This could include equity investments, micro-investments, pre-sales, crowd funding, and other community-supported business models.				
<u>Action 2G</u> : Offer Local Start-up Financing to Grow or Support Clusters. Create a seed capital fund for research and development related to local entrepreneurs, financed through private institutions/giving/management				
<u>Action 2H</u> : Leverage Investment Through Public-Private-Non-Profit Partnerships. Maximize the use of public-private-non-profit partnerships to leverage investment into Williamstown. This could include working with groups interested in investing in new development or redevelopment projects in Williamstown offering a public benefit.				
<u>Action 2I</u> : Promote social and networking events to help owners and managers connect, including trade fairs and expos and informal special events.				

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<u>Action 2J</u> : Help local businesses and nonprofits find peers and services they need through a central directory that can match volunteers from existing businesses and organizations with new ones				
<u>Strategy 3</u> : Offer commercial and industrial spaces and sites that meet a diverse range of economic activity needs and communicate that effectively and consistently to all through an open web-based platform.				
<u>Action 3A</u> : Build upon and maintain a comprehensive site inventory of vacant or occupied commercial and industrial space, including size, zoning, condition, special considerations, and other relevant information to track and market available space.				
<u>Action 3B</u> : Create working spaces and opportunities for entrepreneurs to grow their idea into a business. Offer Interactive Startup Spaces. Create flexible work space hubs for startups, other businesses, and nonprofits to support innovation, networking, and collaboration.				
<u>Action 3C</u> : Work to make sites developer-ready by proactively addressing zoning, infrastructure, or brownfield concerns.				
<u>Action 3D</u> : Develop specific plans for the productive use of vacant town-owned properties, most notably the former town garage site, and, the Spruces when it becomes available.				
<u>Strategy 4</u> : Create an Integrated Economic Development Program. Williamstown's economic development stakeholders should work together to set strategic priorities and identify who will take the lead in all aspects of the Town's economic growth and revitalization.				

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<u>Action 4A:</u> Assign a permanent committee to help oversee development and implementation of a comprehensive economic development strategic plan, in conjunction with the Town's Economic Development Director. Membership of this committee should represent the Williamstown's diverse economic development interests and organization.				
<u>Action 4B:</u> Organize and develop financial and staff resources to support the Town's economic development program and strategic plan. In order to ensure that economic development activities are successful, a basic level of staffing and funding is required with specific responsibility for coordinating initiatives, tracking their progress, and publicizing successes. Sufficient staff resources can ensure that Williamstown stays on track in working towards its economic goals.				
<u>Action 4C:</u> Work With Williamstown Chamber of Commerce on Business Development. Explore the potential for establishing more resources on business development through the Williamstown Chamber of Commerce.				
<u>Action 4D:</u> Identify the specific types of businesses or industries that we would like to attract to Williamstown, and the kinds of growth we want to see. The Town should work with the business community and other stakeholders (Williams College, property owners, and adjacent communities) to conduct a comprehensive market study to identify specific businesses and industries currently missing from the community that might strengthen Williamstown's overall economic fabric. This work should include attention to the nonprofit organization sector. Incentives and marketing tools should then be developed to promote the community and attract the desired types of businesses and industries.				
<u>Strategy 5:</u> Cultivate a Local Food and Agriculture Cluster				

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<u>Action 5A:</u> Promote the economic vitality of agriculture and forestry through land conservation and current use taxation. Promote agricultural based products and businesses through access to local markets, encouragement of local collaborations and maintenance of agricultural lands and business establishments.				
<u>Action 5B:</u> Support efforts to grow a sustainable agriculture and regional food system for local consumption as well as export to larger markets.				
<u>Action 5C:</u> Continue to support the Farmers Market as an outlet for local agricultural products and as an attraction for visitors and residents				
<u>Strategy 6:</u> Smart growth principles (see <a href="http://www.smartgrowth.org">www.smartgrowth.org</a> ) should be used to support sustainable business growth while preserving Williamstown's character and protecting the environment. The following strategies address issues of zoning, infrastructure, and economic policy that can attract targeted industries to Williamstown.				
<u>Action 6A:</u> Promote infill and reuse of existing buildings.				
<u>Action 6B:</u> Develop zoning that encourages sustainable high-density mixed-use and residential development within the village center. Higher density, mixed-use development can be encouraged to enhance and revitalize the village center. Connecting and integrating residential areas with businesses and retail uses that provide goods, services, and jobs reduces infrastructure costs and transportation impacts. It creates a mutually-supportive environment in which residents have easier access to services and businesses have better access to a substantial customer base.				

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<u>Action 6C:</u> Make village center vital, attractive, and convenient to use. Physical Improvements - Attention should be paid to pedestrian amenities, streetscapes, public spaces, parking, way-finding signs, public art, and other improvements to attract more people to the village center.				
<u>Action 6D:</u> Williamstown has a relatively small amount of land area zoned for business activity. The Town should identify and increase the overall acreage of land in Williamstown zoned to allow professional and light industrial areas, as well as commercial centers.				

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<b><i>CAPITALIZE ON OUR ASSETS AND RESOURCES</i></b>				
<u>Strategy 1:</u> Capitalize on the proximity of local educational and cultural institutions to grow new business and link visitors, graduates and related institutions into the local economy.				
<u>Action 1A:</u> Grow Williams College Entrepreneurial Events such as the Williams Business Plan Competition				
<u>Action 1B:</u> Explore Innovative and Creative Challenge Events. Evaluate holding Creative Challenge or Innovation Challenge events to link entrepreneurs with existing businesses on real projects and as a means of recruitment, either in partnership with other schools or through a major employer, including those in Boston or NYC, who may have ties to the region.				
<u>Action 1C:</u> Continue to Partner with Williams and the Clark On Mutually Supportive Projects, Economic Goals and Investments. Support Williams College investment in the downtown to enhance the Williamstown's arts and cultural offerings.				
<u>Action 1D:</u> The Town, Williams College and the Clark should pursue mutually beneficial partnerships in order to promote economic development, undertake research and technology enterprises, and create more learning and job opportunities for college students.				
<u>Action 1E:</u> Promote economic development projects at Williams College that produce tax revenues for the Town. Through partnerships between the Town and Williams College, it is possible to create economic development projects that will produce additional revenues for the Town and benefit all Williamstown residents.				
<u>Action 1F:</u> Explore with Williams and the Clark whether there are businesses related to their programs or missions that might be logical adjuncts to be located in Williamstown				

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<b><i>CAPITALIZE ON OUR ASSETS AND RESOURCES</i></b>				
<u>Action 1G</u> : Share College and Town facilities and resources for mutual benefit. The Town and Colleges should identify and evaluate existing assets and facilities that could be shared to further enhance quality of life in the community and attract additional economic activity.				
<u>Strategy 2</u> : Grow the region as a destination for a broad range of outdoor recreation.				
<u>Action 2A</u> : Increase Visitor Capture From Mount Greylock. Capitalize on the high volume visitation to Mount Greylock to draw people into Williamstown.				
<u>Action 2B</u> : Promote Active Outdoor Recreation Business Development. Leverage the proximity to Mount Greylock and local rivers and other state forests to grow economic activity related to active outdoor recreation options including equipment design and manufacturing, outdoor adventure tours, river recreation, and rentals.				
<u>Action 2C</u> : Increase Number of Outdoor Race Events. Cultivate a range of outdoor race events throughout the year to highlight the outdoor opportunities of the town, make healthy lifestyles more visible, and draw in new visitors.				
<u>Action 2D</u> : Create Better Connections Between Williamstown and Surrounding Trails Systems. Improve connectivity and access to trails on Mount Greylock , the Taconic Crest Trail and the Appalachian Trail and other parks from the downtown and local neighborhoods, creating new trails as appropriate to ensure connections and improving way-finding for residents and visitors through signs and maps.				
<u>Action 2E</u> : Recognize and promote our natural environment as one of Williamstown's most important assets. Identify and protect the scenic and rural landscape and open spaces especially along the entrances to Williamstown				

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<b><i>MARKETING WILLIAMSTOWN TO VISITORS, POTENTIAL RESIDENTS, AND BUSINESSES</i></b>				
<u>Strategy 1:</u> The region’s prominence as a tourist destination stems from the fact that it is a unique and beautiful region with many culture and lifestyle options. The region needs to begin to market itself to foster a sense of pride and excitement among local people, as well as among potential new residents. If the region wants to succeed as an economically diverse community, it will need to begin to highlight and uncover the strong sense of community and rich opportunities and resources residents have at their fingertips each and every day.				
<u>Action 1A:</u> Promote Alumni Business Recruitment Events. Develop a program to target Williams College alumni to build or relocate businesses locally by marketing the town to them through targeted events and providing incentives.				
<u>Action 1B:</u> Host “Return to the Berkshires” Recruitment Events in the County and in New York, Boston, and other cities. Many former residents, vacationers, campers, and students have a fondness for the Berkshires. Transition this interest and drive into action by hosting recruitment events in various locations to highlight the economic and lifestyle opportunities of the region. Suitable locations include college campuses, to capitalize on widespread attendance at alumni reunions, and major metropolitan areas such as New York, Boston, San Francisco Bay area, and Washington, D.C.				

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<b><i>MARKETING WILLIAMSTOWN TO VISITORS, POTENTIAL RESIDENTS, AND BUSINESSES</i></b>				
<u>Action 1C</u> : Communicate the Berkshires to Potential New Residents. The vast majority of websites highlighting the many assets of the region are geared towards short-term visitors and high-end second-home owners, rather than current or potential future residents. Someone looking to relocate has little information about life in the region beyond a short-term visit to entice them to choose to relocate here rather than another location. The region needs to market itself to a wider audience—potential workers, retirees, entrepreneurs—and to foster a sense of pride and excitement.				
<u>Action 1D</u> : Redesign at least the landing page of the Town website to make it more appealing to visitors and more informative about the cultural, educational and recreational attributes of Williamstown, with prominent links to relevant organizations, including <a href="http://destinationwilliamstown.org">destinationwilliamstown.org</a> .				
<u>Strategy 2</u> : Make welcoming new residents a community rather than solely employer-based effort				
<u>Action 2A</u> : To understand issues facing new residents, host focus group discussions with new residents of all types, present residents, and short-term visitors to discuss experiences and perspectives and then craft strategies for community building.				
<u>Action 2B</u> : Identify the key challenge areas faced by new residents, and develop strategies to minimize their effect now and for future newcomers. The effort should include concern for new workers, their spouses or partners and family members, retirees, and potential entrepreneurs.				

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<u>Action 2C:</u> Work with current multi-cultural organizations to develop an action plan for improving the multicultural environment in the region. This includes strategies to cultivate culturally competent school, work, and leadership experiences as well as general accessibility as in translated materials and ESL courses.				
<u>Action 2D:</u> Continue to host Berkshire Young Professionals program and networking events across the county to help young professionals connect and build relationships in the region.				
<u>Action 2E:</u> Capitalize on accompanying partners as talent opportunity. Work with employers to identify backgrounds and skills of accompanying partners to help link them into existing vacancies, small business entrepreneurship, or volunteer opportunities within the larger economy. Particular focus should be made on linking them to networking opportunities with others in their community and field of interest.				

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<b><i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i></b>				
<u>Strategy 1:</u> Address infrastructure costs or limits through strategic investment and collaborative action.				
<u>Action 1A:</u> Negotiate with Utilities to Control Energy Costs. Continue to collaborate for energy purchasing at the municipal level to achieve more competitive rates for all account holders within that jurisdiction.				
<u>Action 1B:</u> Support Broadband Expansion. Continue to support broadband planning and implementation efforts. Improve and expand internet communication/broadband (including wireless availability) throughout the Town, including high-speed connections (Internet2 and other state of the art technology). Many communities around the country are pursuing technological advantages that can give them an edge in attracting and retaining businesses and enhancing quality of life for residents. Williamstown should undertake steps to ensure that all areas are covered by high-speed internet providers. The Town should also examine the possibility of offering expanded free wireless connection in strategic locations, such as the downtown.				
<u>Action 1C:</u> Strengthen Regional Transportation Connections. Strengthen infrastructure connections - both railroad and bus- within the region as well as between the region and adjacent counties and mid-size cities (Albany and Springfield-Hartford) and nearby major metropolitan areas (Boston and New York).				
<u>Action 1D:</u> Continue to promote and expand biking lanes, bike paths and parking facilities to make Williamstown a bike-friendly town.				
<u>Action 1E:</u> Continue to analyze opportunities for accessible housing stock so that residents can be able to live and work in Williamstown.				

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<b><i>GROW A SKILLED WORKFORCE TO MEET ECONOMIC NEEDS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE</i></b>				
<u>Strategy 1:</u> Offer a diverse range of internship, apprenticeship, and on-the-job training opportunities in Williamstown. Current Williamstown employment opportunities do not adequately support those interested in occupations (trades and other professions) other than education. There is the concern that long-time residents and their children are being driven out of Williamstown in search of work and, eventually, other places to live. Education, training, and mentoring opportunities can be used to enhance Williamstown's workforce base and increase the Town's economic prosperity.				
<u>Action 1A:</u> Strengthen Internship Network. Work with local businesses to identify potential internships for high school and college students in the area to provide support to local businesses, provide learning opportunities for youth, and help forge professional linkages between graduates and area employers. Identify methods to encourage businesses to transition internships to jobs				
<u>Action 1B:</u> The Town should work cooperatively with local business owners and merchants and with the Williamstown Chamber of Commerce to develop mentoring programs that help increase the likelihood of success of new businesses in the area.				

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<p><u>Action 1C</u>: Utilize McCann Technical High School for Emerging Workforce Training Opportunities. Leverage the presence of McCann as a key workforce development component in the region through enhanced programming, apprenticeship programs and other venues. Consider emerging vocational interests and opportunities, such as an agricultural training program (utilize neighboring farm land) and historic preservation construction techniques (given the existing building stock needs in Williamstown).</p>				

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<b><i>ENSURE EXCELLENT EDUCATION AND HEALTH SERVICES</i></b>				
<u>Strategy 1:</u> Ensure that educational opportunities and health services in the region will support the economic vitality of the northern Berkshire region and attract potential new businesses and residents.				
<u>Action 1A:</u> Provide Excellent K-12 education and Enable Additional Higher Education Opportunities. Ensure that Williamstown’s Pre-K-12 education system is one of the best in the region. Encourage the public schools to offer innovative and attractive programs of study such as music, theater, science, and place-based learning. This should include enhanced use of Williamstown’s natural and cultural assets for field trips.				
<u>Action 1B:</u> Ensure Health Care Delivery Fits Community Needs. As the northern Berkshire community demographics shift over time, Williamstown and region should work to ensure that health services are in place at the right scale and mix of services to meet community needs in collaboration with other regional health services in southern Vermont and Pittsfield.				
<u>Action 1C:</u> Enhance Preventative Health Programming. Promote community wellness through supportive programming on preventive medicine, and healthy lifestyle options.				