

# Strategies for Economic Growth in Williamstown, Massachusetts

Recommendations to the

**Williamstown Selectboard**

developed by the

**Williamstown Economic Development Committee**

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## **I. Executive Summary**

### Purpose of Report

This report proposes strategies for increasing the probability of economic growth in Williamstown. The report and recommendations were developed between January and December, 2015 by the Williamstown Economic Development Committee (EDC). The EDC's goal was to develop recommendations that were 1) grounded in community support and values, 2) supported by data and research, and 3) vetted through review and feedback. This report incorporates broad community input, expert testimony, and research comparing Williamstown to twelve peer communities. It recommends specific actions for implementation by Town government. These recommendations have been submitted to the town's Selectboard for further action.

### Key Findings

Compared to twelve peer communities, Williamstown has low population growth and low job growth. Our resident's real income levels and growth are high, as are home prices. Williamstown is relatively far from urban areas, highways and hospitals; this is a significant negative economic driver. Another negative economic driver is the low share of population under eighteen years. On the other hand the high student to teacher ratio and high graduation rates at Mount Greylock Regional School are positive economic drivers.

### Key Recommendations

Although our community's economy is dominated by national and regional trends, there are a number of strategies available to Williamstown that will help ensure our economy remains competitive and strong.

Most important is sustained excellence at our public schools by continued investments in infrastructure, programming and educational quality. More housing should be created for low and middle income families, especially moderately priced homes. Current zoning statutes limit opportunities to create such housing. We must ensure that our business community is supported, not penalized, for operating here. Town Hall staff, Town Boards and Town Committees are asked to update policies and procedures to facilitate business growth, relocation of businesses to our community, and new business creation. We should undertake measures that will grow and diversify our population and to normalize the age demographic. Excellent schools, more accessible house prices, and the jobs provided by a strong business community will help attract more young families.

Williamstown boasts many unique cultural, educational, and recreational assets. Our community should undertake a concerted effort to enhance awareness of these assets, not only to attract tourists, but also residents and businesses. Our economic growth opportunity is

constrained by our rural location, so efforts to expand transportation options are also important.

### Conclusion

Relative to many communities in our region, Williamstown is economically healthy. Nonetheless is important that we act now to stem trends with negative economic impacts, especially population loss, a low share of people under 40 years old, and high housing costs.

## II. Introduction and Background

### A. Creation of the Williamstown Economic Development Committee

In late 2014, The Williamstown Selectboard initiated a process for the creation of an economic development plan for the town. It identified the following priorities for economic development:

- Protect the local economy, local businesses, institutions, quality of life, infrastructure, education system, and environment of Williamstown;
- Encourage investment by our local businesses, institutions, and individuals in improvements to our local economy, businesses, institutions, quality of life, infrastructure, education system, and environment of Williamstown;
- Grow our local economy by recruiting and retaining new businesses and residents through the promotion of our Town, with an emphasis on our institutions, quality of life, infrastructure, education system, and natural environment.

The Selectboard created an ad hoc committee on economic development, appointing the following eleven members of the community:

James B. Art, attorney

Tracy E. Baker, entrepreneur/proprietor

Hugh M. Daley, entrepreneur/proprietor

Paul A. Harsch, III, real estate professional

Andrew S. Hogeland, attorney, selectman

Karen Lartin, private dental practice

Thomas J. Loughman, museum professional

Frederick W. Puddester, college financial officer

Stephen C. Sheppard, professor of economics

Jeffrey D. Thomas, entrepreneur and educator

Sandra Thomas, business association professional

At its first meeting the EDC elected Andy Hogeland to serve as the committee Secretary, Karen Lartin to serve as Vice Chair, and Jeffrey Thomas to serve as Chair.

## B. EDC Organization

### 1. Mission

The EDC membership determined that its mission is to Increase the probability of economic growth in Williamstown.

### 2. Remit

The EDC membership determined that its areas of activity are:

1. Identify and prioritize strategies to improve the Williamstown economy
2. Recommend these strategies to the Williamstown Selectboard

### 3. Scope of Work

To identify and prioritize economic development strategies, the EDC determined that it should a) ask community members for their ideas, priorities, and values and b) study peer communities elsewhere in the US for perspective on strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for economic development in Williamstown. The EDC also determined that it should present its recommendations in the form of a report that identified key economic development strategies, including the rationale and suggestions for implementation.

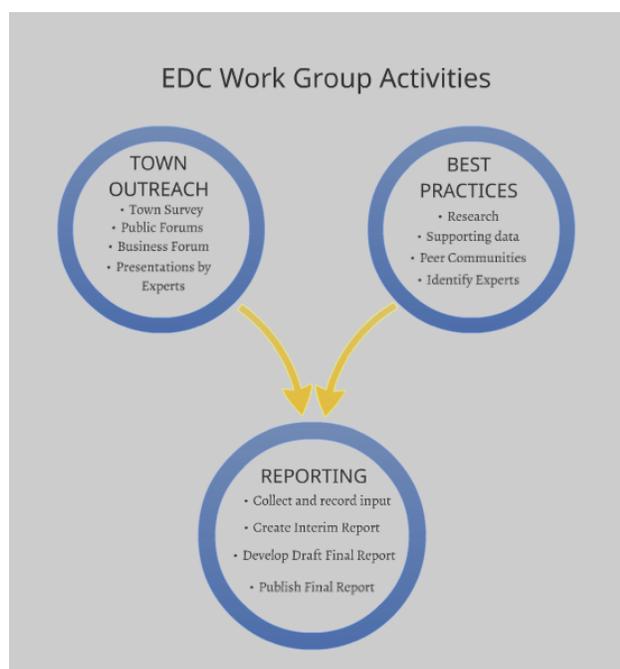
This report be should be considered as an update to the economic development element of the Master Plan as provided by M.G.L.c 41 section 81D (4).

## C. Meetings and Work Groups

The EDC's work was conducted in compliance with the Open Meeting regulations of the Commonwealth. Full committee meetings took place on the first and third Monday of each month, beginning in January 2015 and concluding on December 7th, 2015.

The eleven member EDC organized itself into three work groups:

1. The Town Outreach work group (Baker, Harsch, Hogeland, J. Thomas, S. Thomas) organized the reception of input from the community members and business owners. It conducted a Town-wide survey that elicited more than 500 responses. It organized two community forums on economic development, attended by more than 80 in total, and a business forum on economic development attended by more than 40 business owners. The survey responses and forum inputs are presented as appendices to this document



2. The Best Practices work group (Daley, Lartin, Puddester, Sheppard) analyzed twelve peer communities to help understand strengths and weaknesses of the Williamstown economy, and to identify economic strategies employed by those peer communities that might be undertaken in Williamstown. Their findings are summarized below (section III.B), and presented fully as an appendix to this document.

3. The Reporting work group (Art, Hogeland, Loughman, J. Thomas) drafted an interim report (published on the Town web site) and a draft of the final report. After a public comment period, the Reporting work group incorporated suggested revisions and prepared this final report for the Selectboard.

#### **D. Expert Input**

The Committee has heard reports from a number of individuals at its bi-weekly meetings, including:

Ruth Blodgett, Senior Vice President, Planning and Development, Berkshire Health Systems

Jonathan Butler, President and CEO, Berkshire Chamber of Commerce and Vice President/Chief Operating Officer, 1 Berkshire

Ryan Contenta, Building Commissioner, Town of Williamstown

Honorable Gailanne Cariddi, member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives for the First Berkshire district.

Merritt Collaizzi, Co-creator, DestinationWilliamstown.org web site.

Jennifer Crowell, Director of MCLA's Berkshire Cultural Resource Center

David Curtis, Economic Development Specialist at 1Berkshire

Julia Dixon, Managing Director of Berkshire Creative and member of the Berkshire Initiative for Growth (BIG) Task Force

Honorable Benjamin Downing, State Senator

Mackenzie Greer, Planner with the North Adams Office of Community Development

Andrew Groff, Director of the Town of Williamstown Community Development Department

Jason Hoch, Williamstown Town Manager

Kevin Kelly and Jacob Watt-Morse, Williams students interning at Lever Inc (reporting on strategies for attracting companies to our region)

Laurie Klefos, President and CEO, Berkshire Visitors Bureau

Stephen Majetich, Chief Financial Officer, Southwest Vermont Medical Center and resident

Thomas Matuszko, AICP, Assistant Director, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

David Metzner, resident

Mary Beth Mitts, Manager of Spouse Partner Resources at Williams College

Bobbi Orsi, Director, Community Relations Home Instead Senior Care and member of the Age Friendly Vision 2020 Task Force.

Stephen Sheppard, economist, Professor at Williams College, and EDC member

Joe Thompson, director of Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MassMOCA) and resident

Emily Watts, executive director, Williamstown Chamber of Commerce

The Williamstown Planning Board (Amy Jeschawitz, Ann McCallum, Elizabeth McGowan, Carol Stein-Payne, Chris Winters) with Andrew Groff, Town Planner.

Peter Wilmot, resident and former Spring Street business owner

## **EDC Process**

The EDC spent the majority of its time gathering input, as described above. In late spring of 2015, EDC members were themselves surveyed to understand the memberships' perspective on economic development priorities. The Reporting work group integrated these inputs into a preliminary draft of the EDC's report, including specific recommendations. Staff from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission reviewed the draft and added narrative information and comments on the draft recommendations. Each recommendation was subject to approval by a majority of EDC committee members. Only recommendations that were supported by the majority of EDC members appear in this report.

The EDC published a draft report and recommendations in early November 2014, opening a 3.5 week long public comment period. The Reporting work group collected community feedback and revised the report accordingly, Final recommendations and the final report were reviewed and approved by the EDC at its December 7th, 2015 meeting.

### **III. Findings**

#### **A. Summary of Survey and Forum Inputs**

The EDC issued a ten question survey on economic development in Williamstown. More than 500 members of the community responded. The results of the survey are presented in Appendix A.

The EDC held two community forums on economic development. More than 80 participants were asked: 1. What are the most significant economic development needs in Williamstown?, and 2. What would economic development success in Williamstown look like? The EDC also held a forum for members of the business community. More than 40 participants were asked: 1. What are your specific business challenges? and 2. What changes should be implemented to better support the business community? A summary of responses is presented in Appendix B.

Based on these inputs, the EDC determined that its work should consider the following topics as they relate to economic development:

1. **Schools.** There is a strong sentiment that the community should prioritize investment in education. A strong public school system will ensure that young families will be attracted to Williamstown, help attract businesses, and help sustain property values.
2. **Businesses.** Many in the community felt we should do more to attract and support businesses. Several residents noted there were too many vacant retail and commercial properties. Several business owners noted an “anti-business” sentiment in the community, noting restrictive zoning laws, cumbersome Town Hall processes, limited parking in key business districts, and other factors. Many felt that the community should do more to support entrepreneurs and startup companies.
3. **Employment.** Employment was identified as a key issue for economic development. Community members felt there should not only be more job opportunities here, but a broader diversity of job opportunities, especially jobs that would bring more young people to our community.
4. **Regional Approach.** Several commented that Williamstown should do more to collaborate with other communities in our region to foster economic development. Suggested topics for collaboration included tourism, education, branding, and population growth. North Adams was identified as a particularly important partner community.
5. **Town Hall Processes.** Many felt that Town Hall could do more to support existing businesses and facilitate the establishment of new business in our community. It was

suggested that the Town undertake a review of its regulations and processes to assess regulatory hurdles, including a review of zoning.

6. **Housing.** The Highland Woods and Cable Mills projects will generate dozens of new housing units that meet state qualifications for affordable housing. Nonetheless many in the community feel that there remains a shortage of housing that is affordable to low- and middle-income residents. Several pointed to the need for more housing for seniors, included assisted living options.
7. **Tourism.** The community supports expanding tourism, especially in the non-summer seasons.
8. **Population.** Comments on our Town's population focused on increasing the number and diversity of people who live here. Many noted the dearth of young people (twenties and thirties) and advocated for more active steps to attract this demographic. Others noted the attractiveness of Williamstown to retirees and suggested that more be done to attract seniors, especially on the housing front.
9. **Vibrancy and Quality of Life.** While many cited the quality of life as a primary reason that people choose to live and work in Williamstown, many also noted Williamstown's lack of vibrancy. A wide variety of suggestions were made, including creation of more public spaces, making the Town more pedestrian-friendly, and measures to enhance the downtown business district.
10. **Health Care.** Access to health care is a concern for many Williamstown residents. Several advocated for better access to primary health care services, others for expanding local specialty services.
11. **Transportation.** Williamstown is geographically remote. Access by public transportation is limited to bus services such as the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority. Some suggested the development of car transportation options such as Uber. Others encouraged Williamstown to support initiatives that would bring expanded passenger rail access to the region.
12. **Broadband.** Some members of the community have highlighted the fact that internet access speeds in Williamstown are relatively slow. This may limit the Town's ability to support businesses, especially businesses based in home offices.
13. **Parking.** While Spring Street merchants were the most vocal, many in the community felt that inadequate parking in the downtown business district was an impediment to economic growth.
14. **Tax Policy.** Though not a priority, there was some support to explore tax policy changes that might encourage business development.

15. Local Institutions. Many in the community cited the importance of Williams College and The Clark Art Institute to the Williamstown economy. A variety of suggestions were aimed at enhancing cooperation between those institutions and the Town on matters related to economic development.

The EDC took great care to document and integrate all of the community input it received. Many of the EDC's recommendations stem from this input; none of our recommendations is without support from a significant fraction of the community members who participated in our information gathering process. The EDC members are grateful to these individuals for sharing their time and wisdom to help guide our work.

## **B. Findings of the Best Practices work group: Lessons from communities like Williamstown**

### **1. Methods**

The Best Practices work group compared aspects of the Williamstown economy to those in twelve similar communities. These communities were selected based on their small size and being somewhat to very remote. Several were post-industrial towns; many – indicated by asterisks below – were college towns.

#### Twelve Comparison Communities

Granville, OH*	Oberlin, OH*
Davidson, NC*	Waterville, ME*
Hamilton, NY*	Rockport, ME
Peterborough, NH	Lenox, MA
Middlebury, VT*	Seneca Falls, NY
Cooperstown, NY	Millerton, NY

To perform this analysis, it was necessary to define economic development outcomes. The Best Practices work group defined these as:

- Population growth
- Employment growth
- Income level or growth

Comparisons were made using publicly available data collected for dates 2000-2013 (when available):

- Data on economic outcomes
- Data on economic, geographic and demographic drivers
- Concerns and policies in each community
- Differences in the business and political environment

### **2. Comparison of Williamstown to similar communities based on key economic measures**

The Best Practices work group used the above methodology to rank Williamstown among the twelve similar communities.

#### **a. Population Growth**

- Williamstown ranks low (12th) in population growth at -0.69%
- Growth rates ranged from -1.2% to 4.47%;
- (Nearby Lenox also had negative growth, supporting a regional trend)

b. Employment Growth

- Williamstown ranks low (12th) in employment growth at -1.38%
- Job growth ranged from 5.46% to -2.30%
- (Nearby Lenox ranked last, again supporting regional trend)

c. Real Income Growth (Inflation adjusted)

- Williamstown ranks at the top with a growth rate of 2.03%
- Income rates ranged from 2.03% to -1.53%
- (Lenox ranked last. Possible contributor to Williamstown rank is loss of lower income residents after Hurricane Irene)

d. Real Income Level

- Williamstown ranked relatively high(4th) at \$64,000
- Range of income was from \$99,500 for Granville, OH to \$35,500 for Waterville, ME

e. Prosperity Ranking

- The parameters above and rankings were cross compared and ranked and given a "Prosperity Ranking"
- Williamstown earned a mid-ranking of 9.5 (7th).
- Rankings ranged from high for 16- Granville, OH to low for 4-Seneca Falls, NY

### 3. Economic Drivers in Williamstown

The table below shows the strength of relationships that exist between different measures of economic development and measurable factors that influence economic development. Each of the central columns indicates a measure of economic development: population growth, employment growth, income growth, income level, and the ranking of the community according these four factors combined. Each row indicates a measurable item that influences economic growth (some of which can be affected by policy choices, like house prices). The numbers in the table are the correlation coefficients between the row variable and the column variable. These coefficients range between -1 and 1. A value of 0 indicates no relationship at all between the economic driver and the economic outcome. A negative number indicates that as the driver goes up, the economic outcome variable is reduced. A positive number indicates that as the value of the driver rises, the economic outcome is improved. Thus an increase graduation rate in the local high school is positively correlated with population growth, and an increase in the percent of the population who are "seniors" is negatively correlated.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUTCOMES AND ECONOMIC DRIVERS

Variables	Population Growth	Employment Growth	Income Growth	Income Level	Rankings	Average of Coefficients
Urban Distance	<b>-0.3052</b>	<b>-0.3623</b>	-0.1568	<b>-0.4772</b>	<b>-0.4618</b>	<b>-0.3254</b>
Seniors	<b>-0.4075</b>	-0.3011	0.1091	-0.2429	-0.0158	-0.2106
Airport Distance	<b>-0.3626</b>	-0.1508	0.0722	-0.1594	0.0846	-0.1502
Interstate Dist	<b>-0.4047</b>	-0.2422	<b>0.4478</b>	-0.0735	0.1267	-0.0682
Hospital Dist	-0.1137	-0.1054	0.2435	0.0104	-0.1259	0.0087
HPrice:Income	-0.1392	-0.1424	<b>0.3662</b>	0.1288	0.1318	0.0534
H Price Growth	-0.0285	0.1128	0.2453	0.0351	0.2199	0.0912
Multipliers	0.1559	0.2157	<b>0.3305</b>	<b>0.3481</b>	<b>0.5168</b>	0.2626
Plan Year	<b>0.4544</b>	<b>0.3915</b>	-0.0527	0.2806	0.2574	0.2685
Youth	0.2623	<b>0.4036</b>	0.019	<b>0.3984</b>	<b>0.3159</b>	0.2708
Graduation Rate	<b>0.4496</b>	0.2865	0.1307	<b>0.622</b>	<b>0.3738</b>	<b>0.3722</b>
Student:Teacher	<b>0.5421</b>	<b>0.6564</b>	<b>0.3057</b>	<b>0.4415</b>	<b>0.4652</b>	<b>0.4864</b>

Figure Legend. Correlations between economic outcomes (column) and economic drivers (rows). Negative values indicate an increase in the driver is associated with a decrease in economic outcome. Positive values indicate that an increase in the driver is associated with an economic improvement. Stronger relationships indicated in bold.

### 4. Comparison of Williamstown to similar communities based on key economic drivers

The data above illustrate how Williamstown, MA compares to our selected communities. The next task was to determine what drives the economic success of these communities. Again, Williamstown was ranked among the twelve similar communities based on a variety of economic drivers. The results were as follows:

#### a. Structure of the local economy

- Compared to similar communities, Williamstown has a fairly large multiplier of 1.66, indicating that for every dollar spent, the impact on the local economy is as if \$1.66 were spent.
- “Multiplier” is an economic measure that quantifies the change in total income as compared to the injection of capital deposits or investments which originally fueled the growth. When applied to a town like Williamstown, it measures the impact of local business expenditures on the local economy.

#### b. House price level and growth rate

- Williamstown ranks #5 in most expensive housing, behind Davidson, NC, Lenox, MA, Grandville OH, and Cooperstown, NY.
- Williamstown ranks 9th with an annual growth rate of 0.25%; rate range was 3.81% to -1.16%

c. House price to income ratio

- Williamstown ranked poorly at 10th, with an average ratio from 2009 to 2013 of 4.74. (Range: 2.12 - 7.21.)
- This rank is evenly placed between the two closest towns of Lenox, MA, 6.13 and Middlebury, VT, 4.73.
- Williamstown home prices are high relative to incomes, making it more difficult to attract new residents.
- Factors affecting home prices are supply and building restrictions.

d. Distance to urban areas

- Williamstown ranks in the mid range for distance to an urban areas and major airport.
- Granville, OH, which has a thriving economy, ranks closely to Williamstown in these categories, indicating these factors can be overcome.

e. Distance to highways and hospitals

- Williamstown ranks in the lowest third of this category.
- Focused on large hospitals (100+ beds) because they experience fewer closures and imply greater variety of services provided.

f. Demographics

- Youth (under age 18). Williamstown and three other college towns rank lowest in this category. Granville, OH, home of Dennison College, ranks highest.
- Seniors (over 65) Williamstown has 20% seniors and ranks #3 --- most college towns studied had a lower percentage of seniors than does Williamstown.

g. Education (Public High School Rankings)

- Student Teacher Ratio: Williamstown ranks #4 with 11.24
- Graduation Rate: Williamstown ranks #4, with 93.8%
- College Readiness: Williamstown ranks #7
- In these categories, Lenox MA ranks slightly higher, while Middlebury, VT ranks lower. *Quantity* is being measured with these indices, *quality* is implied. High School Profile of college bound seniors might give better indication of quality of education achieved.

h. Property taxes

- Williamstown ranks 5th in property tax rate of \$15.28/\$1000.
- Lenox, MA is lower, at \$12.07 while Middlebury is higher 27.18
- Individual property owners here might still pay more/annum, because base value is higher.

i. Broadband internet access

- Williamstown ranks 8th.
- Granville, OH, a highly successful town, ranks slightly lower than Williamstown overall internet access. However, Granville has among the highest *download* capacities of communities studied.

## 5. Comparison of community goals and environment

Telephone inquiries to each municipal government were conducted to assess economic implementation practices. Overall comparison of communities with regard to economic goals and development policies revealed that:

Higher prosperity towns:

- Have an economic plan in place
- Tend to have fewer restrictive policies for zoning and development
- Have relatively easy business start up policies

Lower prosperity towns:

- Outdated zoning laws
- Seek outside developers
- May require public comment period or public hearing slowing business startups.

Both community types have some opposition to development and desire to balance maintaining small town character while expanding business. Representatives of the Middlebury, VT, Oberlin, OH and Waterville, ME mentioned local pressure for *more* development.

## 6. Conclusions from the Best Practices work group's analysis of similar communities

### a. Educational Quality

Williamstown should maintain a strong and unwavering commitment to public education, and should strive to improve educational outcome measures. Williamstown's education parameters rank consistently among the highest drivers. In contrast to many economic development variables that are dominated by regional factors, education can be manipulated by a locality.

### b. Increase the multiplier

Encourage business networks between Williamstown and employers and others in town and region.

### c. Housing

Increase home building to provide a wider/lower cost range of available housing.

d. Broadband

Consider cost to benefit ratio overall for town. Consider model of disparate download and upload speeds to curb costs.

e. Town Policies

Modify town policies to expedite new business entry decisions, by right or within 30 days.

## **C. Core Assets and Community Values**

### **1. Assets**

A plan for economic development should build upon the community's assets and be designed to promote the community's values. The EDC's forums and survey provided guidance on these two factors, which are reflected in many of the recommendations in this report.

Commenters repeatedly identified several assets that should serve as foundations for the economic development plan.

Institutions:

- Williams College is a leading educational institution and economic force. It is the largest employer in town; it draws visitors from around the world; it is a critical part of the cultural and educational offerings in town; and it supports other local institutions. Its alumni often visit the area, and many reside here.
- The Clark also is a significant employer; it draws hundreds of thousands of visitors to town; and it is an anchor for the cultural activities in the region.
- The Williamstown Theater Festival is a leading summer theatre organization that brings many visitors to the town during its summer season.
- MASS MoCA similarly is a cultural center and magnet for visitors to the region.
- Although other regional cultural centers are not as close to Williamstown, the EDC recognizes that cultural attractions such as Barrington Stage, Tanglewood, Colonial Theater, Shakespeare & Company and other institutions are all part of the reasons why the Berkshires attracts many visitors.

Natural resources

The natural beauty of the Berkshires was also identified as a major part of the area's attractiveness to both residents and visitors. The rural landscape and the availability of outdoor recreational opportunities are an asset of the community.

Education

The Town's commitment to education is another asset that attracts people to choose to live here. Both the elementary school and the regional middle and high school have traditionally been strong institutions. Currently, there is detailed planning underway for an addition/comprehensive renovation of the Mount Greylock Regional middle and high school. Many of the comments cited the need to upgrade that building to provide an attractive and highly functional place for education.

### **2. Values**

Several values dominated the discussion of the plan. Among these were a strong sense of environmental values, particularly as it pertains to preserving the beauty of the local environment. The Town has a long tradition of wanting to preserve open space and

encouraging retention of agricultural land. Reflecting this, comments generally preferred that economic development take place in the context of using existing buildings and not in the construction of new buildings. Numerous comments pointed out that residents enjoyed the character of the town as is, and we did not detect any interest in radical change. Any future economic development should be accomplished without detracting from the character of the town. Other frequently cited values were the importance of education and culture, which reflect the assets of the Town discussed above.

## IV. Recommendations

Presented topically, here are the EDC’s recommended strategies for economic development. Some of the recommendations suggest that the Selectboard should 'support' certain activities. Support may include financial support, but may additionally or alternatively include non-financial support such as advocacy, communication, cooperation and other types of collaboration.

### A. Public Schools

#### 1. Community perspective

In community forums, at EDC meetings, and in the public surveys, townspeople, guest speakers, and survey respondents consistently identified public education as a top economic development priority. More specifically, respondents identify the quality of education provided at the public schools serving Williamstown (WES, MGRSD, McCann, and BART) as a core asset of the community that should be preserved, promoted and maintained. Similarly, the closely related goals of building and maintaining school facilities of a similar quality emerged as highly desired components of an economic development plan.

#### 2. Supporting data

Williamstown Public Schools (Williamstown Elementary and Mount Greylock Middle and High School) have been facing steady to declining enrollment over the last 10 years.

##### SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Williamstown	454	427	407	422	392	375	390	404	403	428
Mount Greylock	666	631	625	649	636	595	581	561	579	549

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Currently Mount Greylock is one of three high schools in Berkshire County ranked at Level 1 (Lenox and Monument Mountain being the others). Level 1 schools are considered the highest performing schools and have little room for improvement. Williamstown Elementary is ranked as a Level 2 school.

Another measure of success in school is graduation rate. In 2014, Mount Greylock had a 100% graduation rate, one of only two high schools in the county, with Lenox being the other. The findings of the Best Practices work group (above) demonstrated the importance of student teacher ratio. Both Williamstown and Mount Greylock School Districts have student teacher ratios (12.5 and 11.1 respectively) close to the county average of 12.0 and below the state average of 13.6.]

### 3. Relationship between public education and economic development

Schools emerged as a key element of economic development activities not just because education is a core asset and community value of the town, but also because high-quality public schools promote economic development in the following ways:

- a. They help employers attract and retain employees to Williamstown (noted by Marybeth Mitts from Williams College, Ruth Blodgett from Berkshire Health Systems, and Steve Majetich from Southwestern Vermont Medical Center);
- b. They may help attract new employers to the town;
- c. Home values are positively correlated to performance of public school districts, which helps preserve the tax base and personal wealth, As shown in numerous reports, including one from the Federal Reserve Bank (<https://research.stlouisfed.org/publications/review/10/05/Chiodo.pdf>)
- d. Graduates of high performing public schools, especially McCann, are ready to join and contribute to the workforce. They are, or should be, ready to be recruited.
- e. Numerous studies have shown a strong link between the strength of local schools and the strength of local economies. The overall skill level of the local labor force is a primary driver of local job growth and wage growth. A recent report from the National Education Association cites several studies verifying the link between education, income and economies. State data provides further support: among Massachusetts school districts, there is a positive correlation between cost per student and graduation rate (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, BRPC).

### 4. Challenges.

It is well known that the aging Mount Greylock middle and high school (MGRSD) facility is in need of replacement or substantial restoration. While we are not aware of data that correlates the quality of school buildings with local economic development, the EDC membership believes that substantial facility improvements at Mount Greylock middle and regional high School are essential for the future of Williamstown. We believe that such an investment will help achieve many economic development goals, including attracting families to our region, strengthening the local workforce, and help continue to attract top tier talent at Williams and the Clark.

While there is deep support for public education in Williamstown both among its residents and from Williams College, there is the potential for tension between those residents who are willing and able to pay more in taxes to support public schools and those who may be less willing or less able to do so. The Mt. Greylock Regional School District is currently in the planning process for a renovation and partial new construction of its building to address well-

documented deficiencies in the physical structure and to provide a better learning environment. The cost of these improvements will add to the current tax burden.

In addition, as home values rise in districts with high quality schools because home buyers are willing to pay more to live in a town with excellent public education, it becomes more challenging to expand the supply of moderately priced housing.

## **5. Recommendations.**

The EDC recommends the town take the following steps to promote, improve, and maintain the quality of public education and public school facilities serving Williamstown:

- a. The Town should promote and support the MGRSD building project as a way to provide a better educational environment for the long term. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- b. The Town should continue to support and maintain the high quality of education delivered in its public school districts. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- c. The Town should market Williamstown as a destination with high quality public education. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.

## B. Employment and Workforce

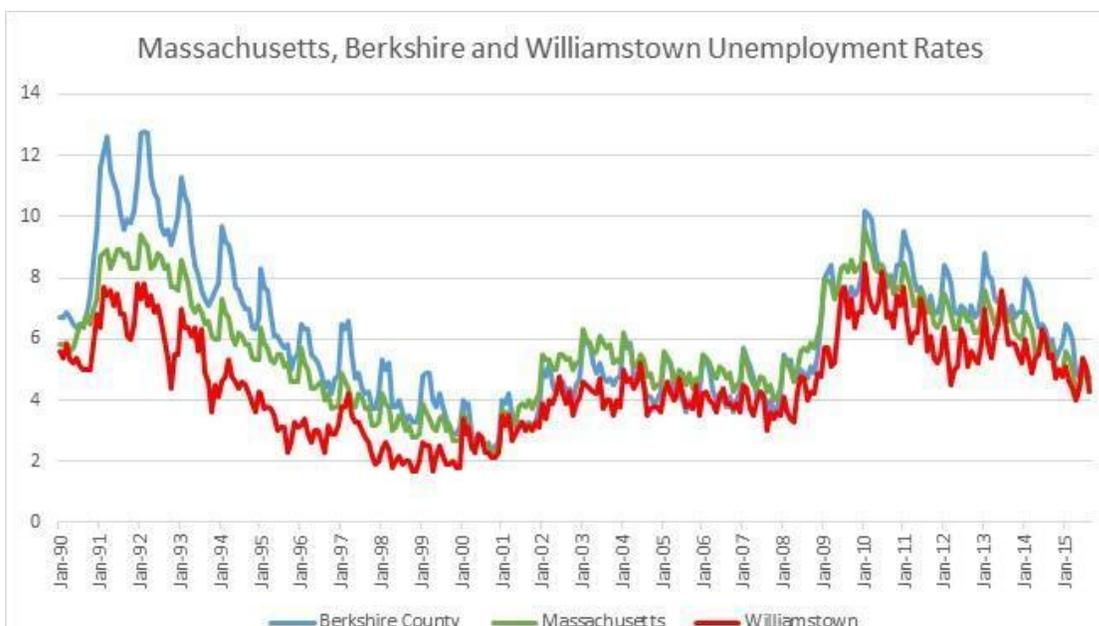
### 1. Community Perspective

Community member responses to the Town-wide survey indicated that employment is an important measure of economic growth. When asked for suggestions to keep or attract people to live and work here, one of the most common responses was to improve the job base for graduates and young families. Specific suggestions included targeted marketing to specific industries or specific demographics that would particularly benefit from Williamstown's attributes. Several advocated for utilizing the local talent pool to attract and advance businesses, concentrating on white collar jobs.

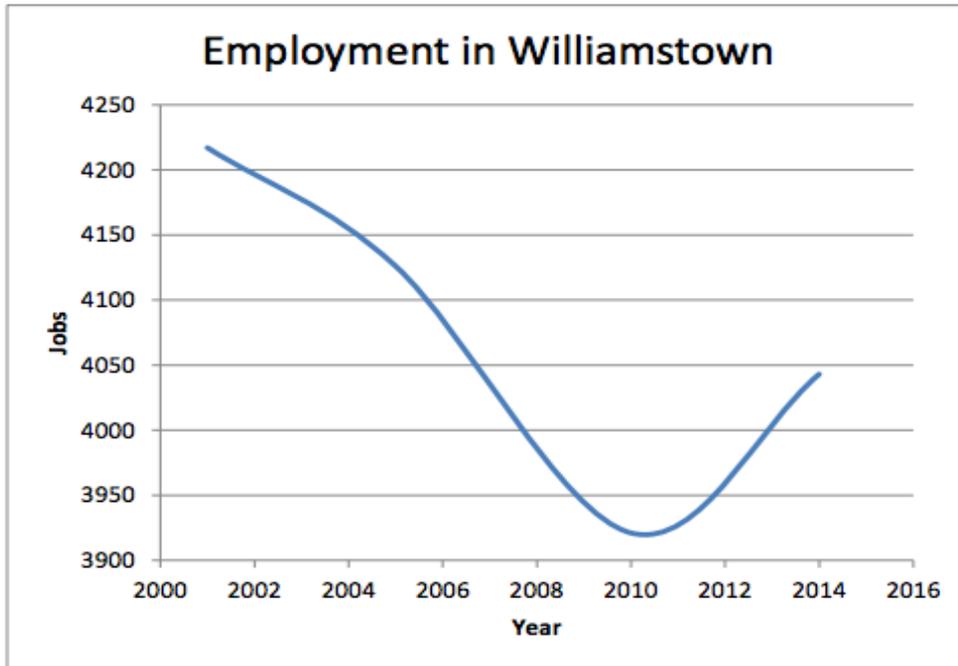
### 2. Employment and jobs data

Data provided by Heather Boulger, Executive Director of the Berkshire Regional Employment Board (BREB) revealed that unemployment in Williamstown has been generally lower than state- and especially county-wide unemployment. The following chart illustrates the trends:

- In Williamstown (June 2015) there are 3,289 people in the labor force (67,936 Berkshire); 3,113 people employed (64,427 Berkshire); and 176 people unemployed (3,509 Berkshire). In 2010 the Williamstown population was 7,754, which includes about 2000 college students.
- According to Job Quest (Massachusetts free job listing website) there are 1,782 jobs posted in Berkshire County and 208 in Williamstown as of 7/31/15.
  - Sixty-six percent of these jobs require post-secondary training and/or degrees.
- There are 278 establishments in Williamstown, with average employment at 3,922 and average weekly wage of \$904
- Williamstown's largest employers are:
  - Williams College (500-999)
  - Sweetbrook Care Center (250-499)
  - Williamstown Commons (250-499)
  - Steinerfilm (100-249)



- Williamstown Accounting (100-249) (Town government and services)
- Williamstown Public Schools (100-249)
- Clark Art (50)



Data developed by Steve Sheppard, Professor of Economics at Williams College, shows that employment in Williamstown has risen steadily since reaching a low in 2010, but that the overall number of jobs is substantially less than it was ten to fifteen years ago.

## Williamstown Employment and Wages by Sector

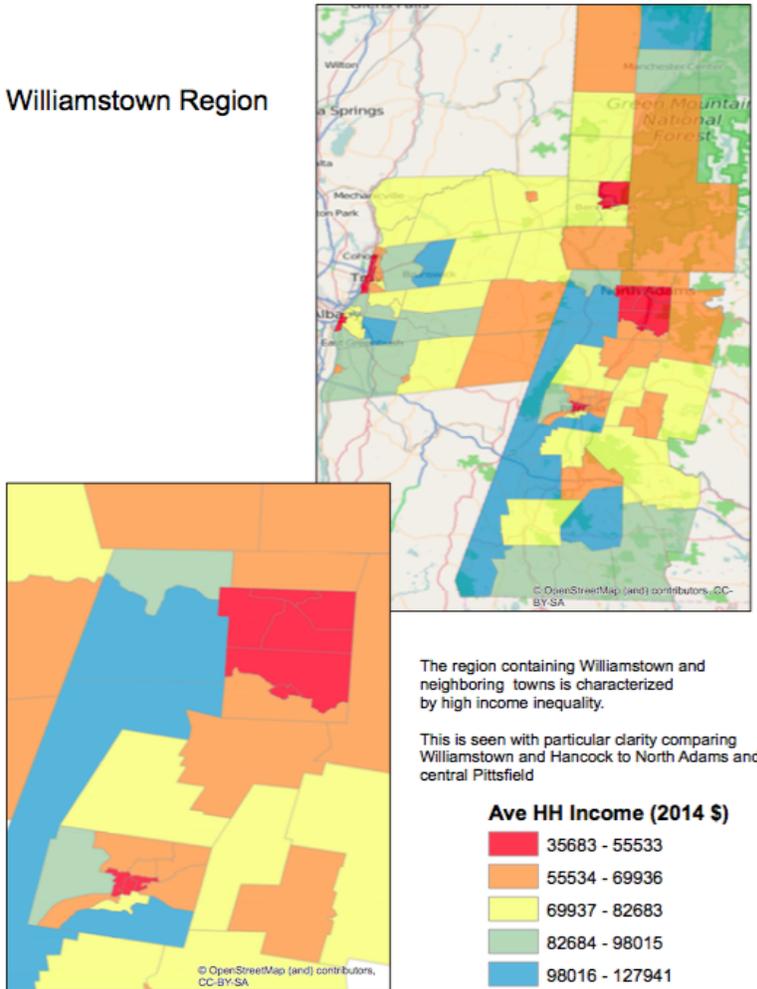
Sector	2001		2005		2010		2014		% Empl Change	Absolute Change
	Employ	AWW	Employ	AWW	Employ	AWW	Employ	AWW		
11 - Agriculture					38	\$437	25	\$304		
23 - Construction	100	\$449	109	\$633	98	\$684	107	\$594	0.52%	7
31-33 - Manufacturing Durable Goods Manuf Non-Durable Manuf					37	\$576				
22 - Utilities										
42 - Wholesale Trade			9	\$1,088						
44-45 - Retail Trade	229	\$374	209	\$347	204	\$409	203	\$449	-0.93%	-26
48-49 - Transport and Storage	67	\$490	52	\$610	42	\$634	48	\$568	-2.57%	-19
51 - Information	27	\$811	30	\$1,072	38	\$656	48	\$1,010	4.43%	21
52 - Finance and Insurance	192	\$954	123	\$1,104	111	\$1,278	84	\$1,277	-6.36%	-108
53 - Real Estate and Rental	22	\$1,007	57	\$3,207	23	\$841	14	\$569	-3.48%	-8
54 - Professional and Technical Svc	100	\$860	129	\$1,008	111	\$1,080	166	\$1,007	3.90%	66
56 - Administrative and Waste Svc	70	\$533	93	\$681	97	\$753	133	\$397	4.94%	63
61 - Educational Services			1,585	\$888						
62 - Health Care and Social Assist.	716	\$533	638	\$585	570	\$629	568	\$658	-1.78%	-148
71 - Arts, Entertainment, and Rec			197	\$658	209	\$803	234	\$1,526	1.91%	37
72 - Accommodation and Food Serv	501	\$243	493	\$249	498	\$302	544	\$323	0.63%	43
81 - Other Services	129	\$417	126	\$364	119	\$471	88	\$466	-2.94%	-41
92 - Public Administration					70	\$852	85	\$808		
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>4,217</b>	<b>\$610</b>	<b>4,126</b>	<b>\$725</b>	<b>3,921</b>	<b>\$808</b>	<b>4,043</b>	<b>\$863</b>	<b>-0.32%</b>	<b>-174</b>

The chart above ([attribute source](#)) shows Williamstown employment trends by sector over the past fifteen years. The number of professional, technical and administrative, and information technology jobs has increased. The number of transportation, finance, insurance, real estate jobs has decreased. We note that a large fraction of Williamstown jobs are in sector 72 - Accommodation and Food Service, however the average weekly wage in this sector is among the lowest reported. Efforts focused on job creation should prioritize high quality jobs: jobs that pay well and provide health benefits.

### 3. Income

Data below were developed by Professor Sheppard, showing that Williamstown has a higher average household income than any of its neighbor communities.

## Williamstown Region



The region containing Williamstown and neighboring towns is characterized by high income inequality.

This is seen with particular clarity comparing Williamstown and Hancock to North Adams and central Pittsfield

### 4. Attracting young people to Williamstown

Many community members feel that more should be done to attract young people to our region. They note that while large numbers of young people come from elsewhere to attend our outstanding colleges and private K-12 schools, few choose to stay in our area after graduation.

The EDC's research identified three primary reasons that young people elect not to stay: 1) a preference to live in major metropolitan and urban areas 2) the small number of career opportunities here for recent college graduates and 3) limited social opportunities owing to the relatively small number of young people here.

MCLA's Berkshire Hills Internship Program (BHIP), led by Berkshire Cultural Resource Center Director Jennifer Crowell, has had notable success in attracting recent college graduates to our region. Ms. Crowell reported that the nine-year-old program offers twelve internships each year in arts management roles in Berkshire County. BHIP has drawn participants from around the country and from as far away as Japan, and 30 percent of BHIP participants have found full-time employment in the region. Ms. Crowell reported that nearly half of the current year's interns are interested in staying in this region, attracted by the potential between Williamstown and North Adams. Though they have access to some of the most qualified professionals in arts management, their biggest obstacle is finding a job.

## **5. Recruiting challenges at local anchor institutions**

Williams College, our towns' top employer, recruits scholars and staff members to join its faculty ranks. In many cases, the partners or spouses of these new Williams employees have advanced degrees, specialized skills, and a desire to participate in the regional work force. Mary Beth Mitts, Manager of Spouse Partner Resources at Williams College, presented her program to the EDC. She noted that jobs in development were easier to find, but jobs in financial services or above mid-management were difficult. She said it was easier to help partners and spouses find jobs in academia. There are 30 higher education institutions within a 50-mile radius of Williamstown. However, spouses and partners are generally reluctant to travel more than an hour for work. Although some spouses/partners would like to have work or lab space at Williams, such space is very limited so Williams is not able to help provide such space in college facilities. She also noted there had been some history of faculty candidates declining jobs at Williams because there were not sufficient job opportunities for the spouses/partners.

Berkshire Health Systems (BHS) provides health care services county-wide. It focuses on hiring from the area and encourages employees to live in the county. When BHS recruits from outside the area, the non-job related issues that arise in attracting candidates include trailing spouse/partner challenges. BHS prioritizes having candidates visit the area to see the lifestyle benefits, which makes recruitment much easier.

Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC) CFO and Williamstown resident Stephen Majetich highlighted the challenges of recruiting new physicians " we've lost four good physicians ...[because] there was no work for the spouse." Mr. Majetich also identified the poor condition of the high school as a factor that determined where SVMC live, as there is a highly rated, recently-built high school in Manchester Vermont, roughly equidistant from SVMC as Williamstown.

## **6. Job Training and Career Development Resources**

Heather Boulger from BREB shared with the EDC its Adult Learning Center's "Guide to Job and Training programs in the Berkshires". There are a wide variety of programs offered in our region, including employment agencies, online resources, one to twelve-month training programs, and college readiness programs. MCLA and the Berkshire Community College are important adult education resources that serve our region The preponderance of the programs

are offered from Pittsfield locations. Notably, only one such program mentioned in the Guide has a presence in Williamstown: Northern Berkshire Adult Basic Education has placed resources in the Williamstown public library.

## **7. Attracting companies to Williamstown**

Jacob Watt-Morse and Kevin Kelly, both rising juniors at Williams College, presented to the EDC their research as interns at Lever, Inc. a new entrepreneurship center in North Adams. They identified three major obstacles to attracting companies to Williamstown: limited amount of developable space (16.9 acres based on the Berkshire County Economic Development Sites Strategy 2014), geographical challenges to accessing major markets, and challenges identifying skilled workers and technical talent. They pointed out that compared to other states, including New York, Massachusetts offers relatively few statewide tax incentive programs to attract companies.

Kelly and Watt-Morse identified four sectors of businesses that are particularly well suited to Williamstown, including “Berkshire Brand” companies (such as Overland), E-commerce companies (for example, BoxCar Media), niche manufacturers (like SteinerFilm), and Business Process Outsourcing companies (for example, DR2). They recommended that recruitment efforts focus on business-to-business companies with CEOs committed to the Berkshires.

## **8. Tax Burden to Growth**

Data from Berkshire County communities comparing tax burden (% of median household income that goes to average single family tax bill) to employment growth, show a negative correlation between tax burden and employment growth. Within Berkshire County, all communities over 5.2% tax burden have seen a decrease in employment since 2000. Williamstown currently has a tax burden of 7.1% (fourth highest in the county) and has lost 21.2% of its employees since 2000. (source: BRPC)

BRPC research indicates that property taxes can also influence decisions about relocating businesses. However property taxes are one of many factors. Access to suppliers, access to customers, skilled labor, etc. may be more important.

## **9. Summary**

Williamstown enjoys relatively low unemployment and relatively high household incomes compared to other communities in our region. The two major employment sectors in Williamstown are 1) education (Williams, Buxton, Pine Cobble, Williamstown Elementary School, Mount Greylock Regional High School) and 2) health care (Sweetbrook, Williamstown Commons). Growing employment sectors include information technology and other professional technical jobs.

Job creation should be an ongoing priority for Williamstown, especially jobs that will help attract and retain younger people. However, compared to other strategies for economic development, there are relatively few mechanisms by which a municipality can take measures to directly impact job creation. Williamstown's best opportunity to support job growth is through general support of its business community.

## **10. Recommendations**

- a. Partner with groups like the Berkshire Regional Employment Board to expand job training and career development in Williamstown, especially for high school graduates. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0
- b. Support efforts to recruit businesses to relocate to Williamstown. Town efforts may include facilitated development of commercial space, and modified zoning, as described more fully in the Town Hall Processes section of this report below. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- c. The town should consider strategies for recruiting new businesses to town, including active funding of marketing and recruitment experts. See the Marketing section of this report. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0
- d. Support Williamstown companies that wish to grow and add staff. Efforts may include amending zoning by-laws to encourage greater flexibility and allowance of more uses by right or special permit rather than by variance. The EDC approved this recommendation approved 10-0-0.

## C. Population

### 1. Community Perspective

Among the topics of great concern—expressed by many and, indeed, one of the reasons contributing to the empaneling of the Committee—is the population dynamics experienced by our community over the past two decades. In brief, population in the northern part of our county has been in steady decline since its apogee around 1900, and Williamstown’s population has receded since a recent peak in around 2000 (8424 residents, per the 2000 US Census) by approximately 10% (7599, per the 2013 US Census update). Simultaneously to the recent ebbing of Williamstown residents, the number of wage earners (known as Total Employment) in Williamstown has declined by more than 15% (from 3783 in 2000 to 3125 in 2013); the youth population (those  $\leq 17$  years old) of the local population base has declined (from about 18% to 15%); and the percentage of seniors within the population has stayed about the same (about 20%). Yet at the same time, real income growth (median household income, adjusted for inflation) has increased by more than \$17,000 in the period (an annualized, real growth rate of over 2%). In short, there have been a number of dynamics at play in the local population at a time when the need for regrowth and renewal seems ever more essential. One presentation before the Committee put the matter squarely, “good ideas can be financed ...the people to drive those ideas have to start from within our talented community.”

Concerns about population are myriad. Fewer residents is seen as a major contributing factor to the general sense of the town’s vitality—vacant housing and commercial space, under-utilized infrastructure—and is the opposite of growth by definition. A receding population gives many pause when considering large planning projects (e.g. building new facilities—regardless of whether they are private developments or government ones), real estate transactions (buying and selling, as well as long-term leases), and the creation of retail businesses. There are other points of view about the ideal demographic mix of the community, with some holding a bias towards young families with children (defined, notionally, as parents under 45 and 2-3 children) and others advocating a further shift to the town accommodating and serving more senior citizens.

Entrepreneurship within the town’s population is also expressed by some as desirable, with wealth-generation and employment gains within small business (sub-40 employee) and home-base business enterprises. It has been remarked that the local housing market and retail enterprises are particularly imperiled by the critically low in-town population and the wildly seasonal nature (summertime being disproportionately high) of the town’s vitality. All of these factors are inextricably tied to the majority of the other topics covered elsewhere in this report (e.g. housing stock variety, workforce, quality education, tax policy, access to transportation, access to healthcare) and a consciousness of the realities of these dynamics within Williamstown and the region will inform the wisdom of different approaches to economic development planning, including the modes (i.e. regional v. town-specific) of that planning and implementation.

## 2. Supporting Data

Data analyzed by the Committee’s Best Practices working group, including a study conducted by C3D/Center for Creative Community Development, examined the circumstances of Williamstown specifically within the context of 12 peer communities. The findings of that study suggest that, upon examination of the economic and demographic drivers seen in that peer set, Williamstown is more prosperous than the peer towns that lack a college, that housing costs are higher as a percentage of earnings than the majority of its peer towns, and that Williamstown’s Total Employment is shrinking at a rate faster than all of its peers except Lenox, MA. Data from the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board indicate that unemployment in Williamstown has been consistently lower than in the rest of the county for the past 25 years (though slightly higher, 5.4% as of June 2015, when the county rate stood at 5.2% and the Commonwealth’s at 4.9%) yet, notably, there is a “persistent [high] job vacancy rate in Berkshire County”—defined as a lack of alignment between workforce characteristics and workplace needs—a condition to which Williamstown is not immune despite remarkably high education levels (highest in the county) and relative affluence (among the highest median household income levels in the county) to the surrounding communities.

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission recently surveyed young adults and older adults in the county to gain a better understanding of their needs. The results for both surveys can be found online at [www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org).

For young adults, the respondents indicated that young adults enjoy living in the Berkshires. They enjoy the natural scenery, the outdoor recreation and the cultural activities. They are mostly here because their families are here and secondarily because they have jobs here. They enjoy the rural environment and the urban downtowns. These are things that need to be promoted as the region works to retain and attract more young adults. There are things, however, that cause concern. Respondents cite a lack of quality jobs in the fields they went to college for, a lack of quality moderately priced housing, a lack of things to do and too much of a focus on tourism. They cite a lack of opportunities, lack of diversity, and too many illegal drugs. Some of these things may be more of a perception than a reality, however they need to be addressed to make our region more attractive to young adults.

The Age Friendly survey (age 50+) found that the biggest concern for older adults was health care and the lack of options within the region. Transportation to cultural, social and medical events as well as housing were major issues as well. Respondents reported the desire to stay in their communities, but even more importantly they wanted to be able to stay in their own homes. Many respondents have a desire to live in accessible condos, apartments or townhouses as they age, but based on county housing numbers, the region faces a shortage of these.

### **3. Recommendations**

- a. The Town should develop strategies to increase the overall number of residents, and incorporate a mindfulness of this goal in all of its planning efforts. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- b. The Town should develop strategies that encourage age diversity, and which particularly stimulate the growth of the under 45-year-old segment of the population (currently receding). The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0
- c. The Town should examine more closely the needs of seniors to identify actions that may help the Town be an age-friendly community. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- d. The Town should review the Berkshire Young Adult and Age Friendly Survey results for recommendations that can be implemented within Williamstown. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.

## **D. Town Regulations and Administration, including Zoning and Planning**

This section addresses two related topics. The first topic is what changes should be made to town regulations and processes to facilitate economic development. The second is what planning and coordination with other parties should the Town undertake to promote the economic vibrancy of the town.

### **1. Community Perspective**

Regulations and processes. One critical component to facilitating economic development is to ensure that the applicable regulations are fair, reasonable and achieve their proper goals without undue burden on businesses and individuals subject to them. This means that both the regulations, and the processes by which they are administered, should be clear, predictable and efficient. In Williamstown, some of the applicable regulations are state regulations which are implemented by town boards or departments, and others, notably the town by-laws, are implemented by the voters of the town. The town can influence the manner in which both are administered.

The EDC received comments from the public forums and the survey on topics related to the regulations and bylaws administered by town departments and the various town boards with regulatory authority. Some of the comments perceived the regulations as burdensome, and that some zoning regulations would benefit from a review of purpose and implementation. Many respondents felt that the Town's regulatory and administrative responsibilities could be administered in a more collaborative and efficient manner.

The research of the Best Practices Work Group found a positive correlation between economic prosperity indices and permitting processes that promised a result within a specified time, such as 30 days

Planning and Coordination with Other Stakeholders. The long term economic vitality of the town depends in part on planning for the future and coordinating with stakeholders. The EDC received many comments on the need to assure the vibrancy of the town, and one particular focus of attention was the Village Business District in the Spring Street and Water Street area. Commenters wanted this area to be a center of activity, possibly including by having better connections between Spring Street and Water Street. The need for additional parking in this area was a primary subject of the comments. A related series of comments suggested the Town focus on development of businesses in existing buildings, rather than building new ones. Similarly, respondents to the survey placed a lower value on the idea of expanding business districts. Commenters suggested working with the Chamber of Commerce, and perhaps modifying its activities to include more effort on business development. Multiple commenters said the Town should be cooperating with The Clark and Williams College to look for areas of mutual economic interest.

Supporting local agriculture was also recommended. Agriculture has played an important part in the town's history, and is still a key factor in today's economy. According to the Town

Agricultural Commission, there are approximately 21 commercial farms in Williamstown. They produce milk, Christmas trees, maple syrup, lumber, firewood, vegetables, fruit, replacement heifers, beef, pork, poultry, equine services, eggs, cheese, fiber, and hay. These farms employ approximately 32 full time, 32 part time, and 9 interns. This does not account for occasional labor farmers hired for seasonal needs.

2. Supporting Data EDC received numerous comments indicating a perception that improvements to some of the Town's regulations and administrative processes would be beneficial. The Best Practices Work Group found that towns with regulatory processes that were easier to follow, or which had deadlines for decisions, had a positive correlation with economic prosperity. They also noted that zoning and building regulations could be challenging for small businesses to navigate independently.

### **3. Recommendations**

The EDC recommends several steps to be taken to enhance the ability of the Town's regulatory boards and administrative staff to facilitate economic development. It also recommends several actions for better planning and coordination with stakeholders.

- a. Each town board or department should review its regulatory programs that affect business development, including town regulations and the processes by which both state and town regulations are administered. The goal of the review is to ensure that the rules and the regulatory processes are easy to understand and do not pose an undue burden on economic development. Applicable boards and departments include the Office of Community Development, the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Sign Commission and the Conservation Commission. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- b. The Office of Community Development should review its permitting processes to: identify those which can benefit from better explanation and guidance on how applicants can comply with the requirements. Suggested measures include web-based applications, deadlines for department action, consolidated proceedings, having forms and checklists on-line and having flow charts to illustrate the processes. The Selectboard should endeavor to create effective feedback mechanisms to assess public opinion of department operations. The EDC approved this recommendation 7-1-0
- c. Zoning by-laws should be reviewed to determine whether there are unnecessary obstacles to allowing a full range of housing, including moderately priced housing (not just subsidized Affordable Housing), multi-family housing, retirement and assisted living facilities. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0
- d. The Town should develop regulations and programs to encourage appropriate home-based businesses as of right without having to go through a permitting process. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0

- e. Zoning should encourage sustainable high-density mixed-use and residential development within commercial districts and promote infill and reuse of existing buildings. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0
- f. Develop a municipal profile that provides important community information such as demographics, business mix, commercial space costs, available community incentives, and tax rates to help potential investors. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- g. Build upon and maintain a comprehensive site inventory of vacant or unoccupied commercial and industrial space, including size, zoning, condition, special considerations, and other relevant information to market available space. Once established, work to make such sites developer-ready by proactively addressing zoning, infrastructure, or brownfield concerns. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.
- h. The town should identify dilapidated or underutilized parcels that are privately owned but have the potential to be assets for economic development. The town should consider the need to supplement enforcement options to address privately owned dilapidated buildings. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- i. The Town should develop and implement plans to make business districts vibrant , attractive, and convenient to use. 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 business districts. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.
- j. The Town should develop a current parking study and develop a comprehensive parking management program in the Village Business District. The EDC approved this recommendation 10-0-0.
- k. The Town should 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. Topics for attention include: linking investors with entrepreneurs; identifying small business educational and financing programs; developing a small business start-up guide or identifying resources that can provide that guidance; promoting business support services such as the Franklin County Community Development Corporation , the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center and Berkshire Enterprises. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- l. The Selectmen should consider assigning a committee with appropriate resources and authority to oversee development and implementation of this economic development strategic plan, in conjunction with the Town's staff. Membership of this committee should represent Williamstown's diverse economic development interests and organization. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.

- m. The Town should organize and develop financial and staff resources to support the Town's economic development 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. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0
- n. The Town should continue to support local agriculture, including the Farmers Market as an outlet for local agricultural products, and as an attraction for visitors and residents. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0
- o. The Town should continue to collaborate with Williams and The Clark on mutually supportive projects. Major institutions should be encouraged to promote purchase of goods and services from local vendors to better support the local economy. Support Williams College investment in the Town and to enhance Williamstown's arts and cultural offerings. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0
- p. 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. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- q. The town should consider whether to have second regular town meeting so that changes to municipal regulations can be achieved on a more timely basis. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.

## **E. Marketing the town**

### **1. Community perspective**

In the town survey, respondents rated “marketing the town to prospective businesses” as the number one priority for economic development. A smattering of specific suggestions emerged from the surveys and public forums, including the following:

- “The Town should undertake a marketing program to promote it and the region’s assets to tourists, potential residents, and businesses.”
- “A marketing program should consider attracting Williams alumni as well as alumni from Bennington College and MCLA.”
- “The marketing program should focus on businesses that could benefit from being near Williams or the Clark.”
- “Market Williamstown winters as a positive . . . .”
- “Hire a marketing expert; target population that you want to visit and hopefully live here.”
- “Market Williamstown to Williams alumni and other retirees who are looking for a small college town environment.”
- Develop, brand, and market a cultural corridor extending north from New York City.
- The town’s web presence needs improvement.

### **2. Uncertainties**

From all of this, the following questions emerge:

1. What are we trying to market? A tourist destination? A nice place to retire? A good place to raise a family? A place to relocate your business? A good place for telecommuters to live and work remotely? All of the above?
2. What are Williamstown’s core strengths and assets that we are trying to sell? See Core Assets and Community Values section, above.
3. What is our target audience?
4. Who is doing the marketing?
5. How are we marketing?
6. Who is paying for it?

### **3. Recommendations.**

The EDC recommends the Board of Selectmen take the following actions:

- a. Develop over the course of 2016 a recommended marketing plan. The plan should be based on input from representatives from local stakeholders and cultural institutions including: Destination Williamstown, The Williamstown Chamber of Commerce, The Clark, Williams College, MASS MoCA, the Williams College Museum of Art, the Williamstown Film Festival, and the Williamstown Theatre Festival. The town should consider marketing in conjunction with the Berkshire Visitors Bureau. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.

- b. Consider whether to develop a line item or other appropriation for marketing expenses to be included in the municipal budget for FY 2017. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- c. Identify strategies to promote Williamstown to potential new residents. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.

## **F. Regional approach**

### **1. Community Perspective**

Many survey respondents and forum participants suggested that Williamstown collaborate with other communities in the region to achieve economic development goals. This perspective reflects the small population and size of our community, which will limit the impact of measures it might take to alter its economy. In many regards, the Williamstown economy is dominated by macroeconomic and regional trends. Many in the Williamstown community feel that the Williamstown economy has particularly strong links to North Adams.

### **2. Linkage to the Regional Economy**

Williamstown is economically linked with other communities in Berkshire County, in Southwestern Vermont and New York state communities east of the capital district. Many residents of those communities work in Williamstown, and vice versa. Corporations and non-profits in Williamstown purchase goods and services from corporations in regional communities, and vice versa. Tourists who visit Williamstown are likely to visit nearby communities, and vice versa.

For example, Berkshire County entered recession in late 2004 or 2005, and saw declining economic output until 2010. The period of recovery since 2010 has been slow, and while the local economy is growing we have yet to regain the level of local output achieved in 2004.

### **3. Regional Economic Development Initiatives**

The EDC heard from North Adams City Planner Mackenzie Greer about the [North Adams Vision 2030 plan](#), adopted in May 2014. There has been progress on several fronts. Notably, in the last six months, the former Carriddi Mill and the Redwood Motel, both located in North Adams on the Route 2 corridor near Williamstown, were purchased by separate real estate development entities that are actively revitalizing these sites. Earlier this year, MASS MoCA announced it would double its exhibition space in 2017. Joe Thompson, Director of MASS MoCA addressed the Williamstown EDC and predicted that the expansion will result in an increase in the number of overnight stays by visitors, which will in turn result in increased revenues for hotels and restaurants in the region. It seems likely that these North Adams development projects will help increase economic activity in Williamstown.

The Town of Adams, Massachusetts recently [established](#) an economic development commission that will use an anticipated \$100,000 per annum from local meal and hotel tax revenue to fund economic development projects there. The [Bennington County Regional Commission](#) serves its seventeen towns and villages by fostering economic prosperity, among other goals. Pittsfield Massachusetts boasts a number of organizations focused on economic development. The Pittsfield Economic Revitalization Corporation (PERC) offers several programs as assistance to entrepreneurs locating or expanding businesses in Pittsfield and Berkshire County. Each program has project eligibility requirements and most require a job creation commitment. The Pittsfield Economic Development Authority (PEDA). [1 Berkshire](#), is a strategic

alliance of the [Berkshire Chamber of Commerce](#), [Berkshire Creative Economy Council](#) (aka Berkshire Creative), the Berkshire Economic Development Corporation, and the [Berkshire Visitors Bureau](#) (BVB). Berkshire is focused on economic development and marketing for Berkshire County.

The [Berkshire Regional Planning Commission](#) (BRPC), also based in Pittsfield, is an area-wide planning agency assisting community and regional land use, transportation, economic development and environmental planning in the county. Another regional initiative BRPC is leading is the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) planning process. The CEDS planning process is an on-going regional economic development effort focused on identifying regional economic goals and objectives, identifying strategies for implementation, facilitating the implementation of those strategies and measuring progress in the region. The town already participates in other regional programs such as the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership., both coordinated through the BRPC. [Note: BRPC staff assisted the Williamstown Economic Development Committee with the development of this report.]

Southern Berkshire County must also be considered. Jacob's Pillow, Tanglewood, the Norman Rockwell Museum, and other cultural destinations draw visitors who might also visit The Clark, the Williamstown Theater Festival.

#### **4. Economic Development Resources**

Several state-funded programs are available to support regional economic development initiatives. However the BRPC notes that the Commonwealth's support for regional economic development programs tends to fluctuate. For fiscal year 2016, the Commonwealth has funded the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program that provides funding to the various regional planning agencies who in turn provide technical assistance to member communities. One major emphasis of the DLTA program is "Planning Ahead for Growth" which focuses on encouraging and supporting economic development opportunities at the regional and local level. Many communities have taken advantage of the DLTA program for economic development related projects. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission typically sends out a solicitation for projects to the communities each November. The Community Innovation Challenge grant program and the Community Compact Cabinet program are two additional programs of the Commonwealth that support regionalization efforts, which may include regional economic development initiatives, but are not entirely focused on economic development.

Small business entrepreneurs are supported by a number of regional agencies, including [Berkshire Enterprises](#) (affiliated with the Berkshire Community College), the Berkshire Regional Office of the [Massachusetts Small Business Development Center](#) Network (affiliated with UMass Amherst), and the [Franklin County CDC](#), which has a North Adams office and supports north Berkshire business.

#### **5. Recommendations**

Williamstown's economic development initiatives should, whenever possible, leverage assets, activities and economic development projects elsewhere in the region. For example, the BVB recently launched its "Life is Calling" campaign to promote the Berkshire County lifestyle. Many Williamstown residents cite lifestyle as one of Williamstown's most attractive features, but none cited the BVB campaign. This example underscores a theme uncovered by the EDC's work: there is a general lack of awareness of economic development programs in our region.

Jonathan Butler, VP of 1Berkshire, discussed the relative role of town and regional organizations in addressing economic development issues. He recommended that the town should work with regional groups on some issues. While town organizations are key to a issues such as creating a welcoming atmosphere, downtown issues, building projects, zoning and permitting, he noted that regional groups can better address issues such as workforce alignment, energy costs, and business recruitment and retention.

By necessity, the Williamstown EDC's recommendations to the Selectboard are focused on initiatives that can be undertaken by the Williamstown municipal government. As such, the EDC's recommendations may be perceived as parochial or even insular. To address this, whenever economic development is discussed in our region, Williamstown should "be at the table" to ensure a) awareness b) influence and c) that Williamstown benefit from regional economic development programs. This underscores the importance of the following recommendations:

a. The Town of Williamstown should participate more actively in regional economic development programs. This may include, but should not be limited to:

- Membership in regional economic development organizations
- Participation in regional economic development funding proposals
- Receipt of regional economic development funding dollars
- Direct liaison activities with economic development interests in regional, and especially neighboring communities.

The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.

b. When possible "regional" economic development planning should not be limited to Massachusetts and should include our neighbor communities in Vermont and New York, including Pownal and Bennington. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.

c. Work with regional groups to address issues such as workforce alignment, energy costs, and business recruitment and retention. The EDC approved this recommendation Approved 10-0-0.

## **G. Internet Access**

### **1. Community Perspective**

Williamstown is currently served with basic cable access. In recent years, through the Massachusetts Broadband Initiative, fiber optic cable has been installed throughout Massachusetts, including Williamstown, but only to an initial few Community Anchor Institutions (CAI). Broadband has not yet been extended significantly beyond the CAIs and is generally not available to residents and businesses.

Numerous comments were received at the forums and through the survey advocating the installation of a fiber optic network system to be generally available to the residents and businesses in town. Proponents noted that the availability of broadband would be very important to several current businesses, and would serve to attract more residents and businesses that needed high speed reliable internet access. Other commenters seemed satisfied with the current level of service. It should be noted that many towns in Western Massachusetts with poor internet access are in the process of installing fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) networks with significant support from state funding. Williamstown currently cannot take advantage of the state funding because its access is not poor enough to meet the funding criteria. If these other towns do proceed to install FTTH, then Williamstown could be disadvantaged if it did not install FTTH. In the absence of this technological tool, the Town may be limited in its capacity to compete in some sectors of the economy, such as financial services, software engineering, and intellectual enterprises.

### **2. Supporting data**

Although there are economic advantages to having broadband access, we have not yet determined the extent of those advantages. We did learn that several types of businesses depend on very good and fast internet access, and having such access may attract businesses to Williamstown compared to other towns not having such access. The Best Practices study found a positive correlation between broadband access and economic prosperity. Other studies of the broadband industry confirm this correlation, and indicate that towns with broadband access have a better business environment and higher real estate values compared to communities without broadband. See, studies collected in The Next Generation Network Connectivity Handbook, Levin and Linn, July 2015. Over the longer term, the absence of broadband access would likely put Williamstown at a competitive disadvantage in retaining and attracting businesses and residents. The town should initiate steps to address this issue so that it does not become less attractive to residents and businesses due to not meeting expectations on broadband access.

At this point, Williamstown does not have specific information on system costs for construction and operation, what the usage charges would be, and what would be the best way to pay for and manage the infrastructure. The Selectmen are initiating an inquiry into answering these questions so the residents can have a more informed basis for deciding how to proceed. The

EDC views broadband access as a potentially favorable asset to the economic potential of the town to attract residents and businesses, but that further information should be developed.

### **3. Recommendation**

The town should continue to investigate the potential of broadband access to be a community asset for both residents and businesses, and to understand the project scope, costs, benefits and organizational options for such a project so that an informed decision can be made whether to pursue broadband access. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.

## H. Housing

### 1. Community Perspective

One of the consistent themes of comments at public forums and in responses to EDC surveys was a desire for greater diversity of housing options, from starter homes and duplexes, to townhouses and multi-family units, to assisted living residences. The high cost of Williamstown's housing relative to the surrounding area limits who can live here, as well as stay here as they get older. Moreover, it is evident that the characteristics of the current housing stock do not fit with the needs of residents of all incomes and ages. Survey respondents reported that Williamstown's housing market is more expensive than surrounding towns' and has a shortage of moderately priced housing.

### 2. Supporting Data

Williamstown's housing stock is dominated by single-family homes, with much smaller percentages of two-family, multi-family, town houses, and condominiums. Eighty-four percent of the homes are owner-occupied; about one-fourth of all renters live in single family home. About 31% of owned units were build prior to 1940; homes; 41% of the rental units. Over 73% of owner occupied home have three or more bedrooms. There is an increasing mis-match between the larger homes and the decreasing size of the family unit.

- Housing Ownership- The cost of home ownership in Adams and North Adams are less than one-half of what they are in Williamstown. The majority (71%) of the housing in surrounding communities is valued at less than \$200,000, while only 26% of the homes in Williamstown are valued at less than \$200,000, so it can be implied that a majority of the employees who travel to Williamstown cannot afford to live in Williamstown. With a median home listing (September 2015) of \$504,500 and an average listing of \$654,864, it is evident that lower and moderate income workers in Williamstown will have trouble finding housing they can afford.
- Rental Rates- rents in Adams and North Adams are 30-60% lower than Williamstown. The BRPC, in its Sustainable Berkshire Report, reported that 44.1% of rental households in Williamstown are considered "rent burdened" because they pay more than 30% of their income on rent. (Sustainable Berkshires Report, available at: [http://berkshireplanning.org/images/uploads/documents/Sustainable\\_Berkshires\\_-\\_Housing\\_and\\_Neighborhoods\\_-\\_20140320.pdf](http://berkshireplanning.org/images/uploads/documents/Sustainable_Berkshires_-_Housing_and_Neighborhoods_-_20140320.pdf).)

According to the 2013 US Census Journey to Work data, there are currently 2,099 Williamstown residents who work in Williamstown. There are 2,717 residents from other communities that work in Williamstown. There are 915 Williamstown residents who currently work outside of Williamstown. This indicates that there is insufficient housing in Williamstown for those who work in Williamstown. The bulk of these employees who live outside of town live in the surrounding communities (884 in North Adams, 442 in Adams, 216 in Lanesborough, 157 in Pownal, etc.).

In comparing the ratio of median household income to the cost of the average single family home, Williamstown has a ratio of 4.95. This ratio throughout the US is much lower at 3.42 and the Berkshire County ratio is 4.17. As this ratio gets higher, families will have harder times affording homes, up to an undetermined point where the cost of the home is irrelevant to income. With the surrounding communities all having ratios of less than 3.5 (and in many cases less than 3), Williamstown may have trouble attracting young families due to the surplus of more affordable housing in surrounding communities.

Paradoxically, Williamstown has the fourth highest residential vacancy rate in Berkshire County at 9.9% (non seasonal). The other three high residential vacancy communities are close to Williamstown (Hancock, Cheshire, North Adams), indicating a significant surplus of housing within Northern Berkshire county.

There is a limited inventory of affordable housing- Until recently, the availability of housing for low and very low income populations has been quite limited, totaling only 147 subsidized units, or about half of the standard set by the state. Tropical Storm Irene further restricted the inventory of housing for those with lower incomes when severe flooding destroyed homes at the Spruces mobile home community and ultimately forced its impending closure. The BRPC, in its Sustainable Berkshire Report, also identified Williamstown as one of the towns that should be a high priority for affordable housing development. These towns, “with easier access to employment, served by transit . . . , higher performing schools, and served with water and sewer, should be targeted for new affordable housing development.” (Id.) “In these areas, more affordable housing would expand opportunity to lower-income residents and help supply a close by workforce for employers.” (Id.)

There is some movement on this front. At the time of writing of this report 61 apartments are under construction in the Cable Mills development, with 13 units restricted to subsidized affordable housing. In addition, at the Highland Woods apartment complex, 40 units of subsidized affordable housing for senior also are nearing completion. A second phase of the Cable Mills development includes 21 dwelling units in market-rate town houses and duplexes, likely to be sold as condominiums. A developer is in the initial phases of planning for subsidized affordable housing on the former Photec site on Cole Avenue.

The town needs to take a close look at housing issues— particularly at access to housing that is affordable. This issue extends beyond the needs of those with low and very low incomes because access is also a challenge for middle income residents, especially as they get older. In order to address the future housing needs of the community in a thoughtful and integrated manner, housing plans need to be developed that clearly document the needs of various sub-populations (e.g., seniors, young families, people with special needs). In addition, we note that the Planning Board has started to review the current zoning bylaws and subdivision rules and regulations and to explore whether the regulations unnecessarily inhibit the development of diverse housing types that the community seems to desire.

### **3. Challenges**

While there is broad support for a greater diversity of housing stock in Williamstown, the development of higher density housing in areas dominated by single-family homes creates a potential for tension among neighbors and developers. The challenge will be to find a way to encourage or permit a diversity of new housing options that are developed in a manner that does not diminish the character of the town and its neighborhoods.

As noted, the characteristics of the current housing stock do not, and will not meet the needs of the Town's aging population, especially for those with low incomes. Nearly half of all seniors live alone; about 30% of all senior households (and 2/3 of all senior renters) would qualify as Very-Low Income, earning less than 50% off the area median income. Also, at the moment, seniors with larger, older homes have limited options on how they can "downsize" their current living situation and continue to live comfortably in Williamstown - small, single-family homes, especially with one-level living (and close to town) are not widely available.

### **4. Recommendations.**

The EDC recommends the town take the following steps with respect to housing:

- a. Encourage the town, perhaps led by its Affordable Housing Committee and Affordable Housing Trust, to update the housing needs assessment with recommendations for how to address the identified needs. Clearly research, update, and document the need for housing in the community, including (1) more moderately priced housing for middle income homeowners of all ages, (2) subsidized housing for those with incomes below 80% of the area median income and (3) the housing options needed by the Town's population over the age of 65. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.
- b. Encourage the Planning Board in its regulatory review of the current zoning bylaws and subdivision rules and regulations and to explore whether the regulations inhibit the development of diverse housing types that the community seems to desire, in consideration of the assessment recommended above. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- c. Encourage the Planning Board to explore where in town various housing types may be most appropriate. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- d. Continue to support the development of Subsidized Affordable Housing (SAH) at the former Photec site on Cole Avenue and other subsidized housing options if needed. Small scale projects that fit the character of the local neighborhood and the community should be pursued if possible. The EDC approved this recommendation 7-1-0.

## **I. Health care**

### **1. Community Perspective**

The EDC received many comments at the public forums, and from the surveys, on the importance of having good access to health care. Commenters cited the recent closing of several services at the North Adams Regional Hospital, and the difficulty of finding primary care physicians, as two of the gaps that should be addressed. Having adequate access to health care is one of the fundamental features of a community that potential residents would consider as they evaluate Williamstown as a place to live. In light of the aging population, note was also made of the need for assisted living, skilled nursing and home health care options. Health care is also an economic consideration since many area residents work in health related fields, and new health care employers could be a source of job growth.

### **2. Supporting Data**

The Best Practices group analysis showed that Williamstown was at the higher end of distance from a major hospital than the other towns studied, but that overall there was a low correlation between distance to major hospital and economic prosperity, at least within the ranges of distances evaluated.

The EDC heard presentations from Berkshire Health Systems and the Southern Vermont Medical Center. Both organizations are taking a regional approach to ensure adequate health care services, and are expanding it as appropriate, including the BHS effort in restoring some services to the North Adams hospital campus. An oft-mentioned part of the need was for primary care physicians.

The lack of primary care physicians and specialists were also listed in the Berkshire County Age Friendly Survey as major issues. Many respondents reported having to wait over 6 months for initial appointments with specialists.

### **3. Recommendations**

The EDC recognizes the importance of health care for area residents, and as a source of job retention and growth. The town, however, by itself has limited ability to ensure good health care or to promote additional health related businesses. The role of the town should be as an advocate with other parts of the region to promote the availability of health care and the expansion of businesses in health related fields.

- a. The town should be an advocate with regional political and health based institutions to ensure adequate access to a broad range of health care services. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.

- b. The Planning Board should review the zoning bylaws to determine if there are any unnecessary barriers to health related uses, including businesses in home health care, skilled nursing and assisted living. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.

## J. Tax and Public Financing Programs to Support Economic Development

### 1. Community Perspective

Williamstown does not currently have any of its own programs for tax relief or publicly funded grant or loan programs to support business growth. The survey asked about these programs and the respondents' level of support was distinctly lower than for all other topics listed on the relevant survey question. There were several comments at the public forums in favor of having some form of public financial support programs, but support was not widespread.

### 2. Property tax burden

At \$15.61 / \$1000 assessed value in FY2015, Williamstown has the eighth highest property tax rate among 30 Berkshire County towns. Residents pay a Fire District tax rate of \$0.59 per \$1,000 of valuation based on full and fair cash value as of January 1, 2015. Compared to the 12 peer communities studied by the Best Practices work group, Williamstown's property tax rate is slightly above average. Williamstown has significant tax capacity with \$739,756 of tax increase available before a Proposition 2 ½ override is required. This amounts to 4.7% of their Levy Limit, which is \$15,711,420. Williamstown also has significant room above the levy limit (\$8,677,605) that is available with an override vote.

	Tax Rate/\$1000	Average Single Family Tax Bill	Average Single Family Home Value	Median Household Income	Tax Burden (% of MHI that goes to Ave Single Family Tax Bill)
Williamstown	15.61	5,552	355,677	73750	7.5%
Berkshire County		3,429	254,592	50211	6.8%
Massachusetts		5,214	369,113	69160	7.5%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, US Census American Community Survey, BRPC

### 3. Recommendations

a. The EDC does not recommend development of town-based tax relief or financial support programs. Although state and federal programs that give income tax relief maybe effective sometimes, the amount of tax relief or financial support that Williamstown might be able to offer on its own would be modest – most likely based on real estate tax relief and possibly on a town-funded grant or loan program if town meeting voted for such a program. Example of programs include Tax Increment Financing, creation of a Business Improvement District to help fund projects, and establishment of a revolving loan fund. It does not appear that the amount of money available under such programs would by itself be large enough to motivate a business's decision to stay in, or move to, Williamstown. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.

b. While acknowledging the constraints of local government funding, we recommend the town pursue state and federal funding sources to assist in attracting and/or retaining businesses in the community. The EDC approved this recommendation 10-0-0.

## **K. Transportation**

### **1. Community Perspective**

Question 2 of the Town-wide survey asked residents to rank fourteen topics based on importance to economic development. “Having public transportation to major cities” ranked fourth; “Having public transportation locally” ranked fifth. When asked for suggestions for programs to attract people to live and work in Williamstown, many respondents called for Improved regional transportation options— to both NYC and Boston, as well as readily available public transportation within the county. These themes were echoed at the community forums. There was support for developing alternative transportation such as ride-sharing, car-pooling and car services using smartphone apps, especially to help those without cars. Bike paths were also recognized as an amenity that should be pursued further.

### **2. Supporting Data**

The need for better regional transportation is documented in BRPC's recently prepared [Regional Transportation Plan](#). Because transportation issues are best addressed as part of a regional solution, we encourage continued interaction with BRPC on advocating for regional improvements to bus, rail and bike infrastructures.

### **3. Recommendations**

We recommend the following strategies:

- a. Encourage the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority to expand public bus service in Williamstown and surrounding communities. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.
- b. Participate in BRPC’s regional transportation process and support the increase of state and federal funding for improvements to Berkshire County's transportation system. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- c. Collaborate with other groups to advocate for passenger rail service to the region. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.
- d. Encourage initiatives to develop car-based transportation options using new technology. Models may include ridesharing and carpooling web sites. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.
- e. Encourage the expansion of bike trails in the Northern Berkshire region to include Williamstown. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.

## **L. Tourism**

### **1. Community Perspective**

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. A significant part of the economy depends upon visitors to local institutions such as The Clark, Williams College, MASS MoCA as well as the cultural attractions of central and southern Berkshire County.

In the forums and the survey, multiple respondents identified tourism as a key component of our economic vitality, and made suggestions for improving conditions for its growth. These suggestions included trying to develop programs for the 'shoulder' seasons before and after the summer to prolong the tourist season, looking at creative temporary living space to accommodate temporary high demands, and make sure the regional cultural institutions coordinate their marketing efforts. Joe Thompson of MASS MoCA noted several of these points, as well as the recognition that having visitors extend their stay even from one night to two nights, could have a cumulatively significant impact.

### **2. Supporting Data**

The impact of non-profit organizations, which includes arts and cultural institutions, were studied by Stephen C. Sheppard and Kay Oehler for the Berkshire County Chamber of Commerce. Their results are published in their report Berkshire County Non-profits: Recession and Recovery (February 2015). The study found that there were approximately 922,400 visitors from outside Berkshire County to the 14 largest arts and culture non-profits. These visitors generated \$97.51 million dollars in increased economic activity and supported an additional 1,091 jobs in Berkshire County. Although the data is not specific to Williamstown, it is clear that organizations in Northern Berkshire County such as The Clark, MASS MoCA and the Williamstown Theatre Festival are contributors to this economic impact.

Laurie Klefos of the Berkshire Visitors Bureau (BVB) gave an overview of BVB's programs to promote tourism in the Berkshires. As part of her presentation she noted that visitors to the Berkshires bring in about \$403 million annually in direct spending, as part of a total impact of \$645 million. She recommended Williamstown join the BVB marketing effort, use a portion of the meal/lodging tax to fund that support, and to choose a single site to which visitor traffic should be directed. She also noted BVB had just started a program in conjunction with the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce to promote business development in the Berkshires. Further information on the economic impact of tourism can be found in a report prepared for the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (September 2014) on the BVB's website at <http://www.massvacation.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/economic-impact-travel-to-ma-2013.pdf> .

### 3. Recommendations

- a. The region needs to begin to market itself to foster a sense of pride and excitement among local people, visitors as well as among potential new residents. The town should highlight and uncover the strong sense of community and rich opportunities and resources residents have at their fingertips each and every day. As part of the marketing plan recommended above, recognize and promote our natural environment and cultural attractions as among Williamstown's most important assets. Coordinate with the marketing by our cultural institutions. Identify and protect the scenic and rural landscape and open spaces especially along the entrances to Williamstown. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- b. Support efforts for 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. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.
- c. 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 special events, outdoor adventure tours, river recreation, and equipment rentals. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.
- d. Work to take advantage of the cultural district as designated by the Massachusetts Cultural Council to promote the town as an attraction for visitors. The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.

## **M. Energy Costs**

During the public comment period, some community members commented that the EDC's recommendations should include strategies for reducing energy costs. The EDC learned that both local and regional strategies for energy cost reduction are available, and encourage the Selectboard to explore these opportunities. The EDC approved this recommendation 10-0-0.

## V. Assessment and Monitoring of Economic Development

The first question of the EDC's Town-wide survey asked residents to indicate which measures of economic growth were most important. The community identified 1) the **strength of the business community** and 2) **job growth** as the most important indicators. Tourism, population growth, and to a lesser extent, per capita income growth were also felt to be important measures. A similar question was included in a poll of EDC members, however this poll included additional categories not present in the Town-wide survey owing to space limitations. Like the Town-wide survey, the EDC membership felt that measures of the strength of the local business community, including job growth, was very important. However EDC members ranked "**quality of public schools**" as the most important indicator of economic growth that we should strive to improve upon. It also prioritized measuring the **number of tourists** visiting our community. Many community members, especially members of the business community cited "Town Hall processes" as an impediment to economic growth. Selective assessment of the various Town Hall processes, for example, the time it takes for Inspection Services to approve a building permit, can provide objective measures to concerned parties.

**The EDC encourages ongoing assessment and monitoring of economic growth in Williamstown.** Periodic review will help the Town identify successful economic development activities and respond to negative trends. Moreover, the ensuing dialog will help ensure that economic development remain an active topic. The EDC appreciates assessment and monitoring will require an allocation of resources over time. Measurement of economic growth must occur over a multi-year timespan, sometimes a decade or more, to identify trends, ensure veracity, and engender confidence.

Economists employ a wide range of measures of economic growth. The EDC recommends that the Selectboard focus on just a few. Based on 1) the priorities of the community (as determined by the Town-wide survey and community forums); 2) the EDC member poll; 3) additional priorities identified by the EDC's work, and 4) feasibility/ease of measurement, the Williamstown EDC recommends that on an annual basis, the Board of Selectmen develop the following measures of economic development:

### 1. School performance measures, including

- Enrollment
- Standardized test scores
- College acceptance rates
- State rating/ranking
- Graduation rate
- College Acceptance Profile

The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.

### 2. Measures of the health of Williamstown's business community

- New commercial and residential permit applications and permits granted
- Commercial unit occupancy rates

- Residential real estate sales data, including time-on-market by price range

The EDC has approved this recommendation 10-0-0.

### 3. Employment and unemployment rates

- wages
- household income

The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0.

### 4. Population

- growth in number of residents, including demographic data
- growth in number of visitors

The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.

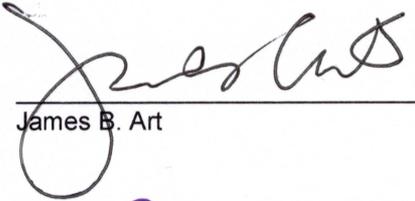
### 5. Town Hall Processes

- Length of time between building permit application and issuance
- Length of time for ZBA approval or denial
- Length of time for conservation commission approval or denial
- Length of time between special permit application and issuance

The EDC approved this recommendation 8-0-0.

**VI. Signature Page**

Respectfully submitted,  
The 2015 Economic Development Committee, Williamstown, MA.



James B. Art



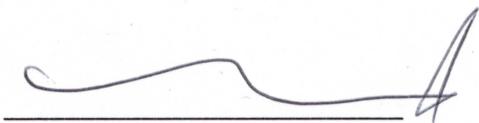
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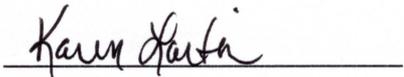
Hugh M. Daley



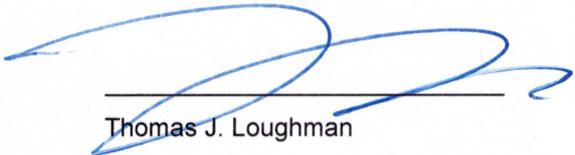
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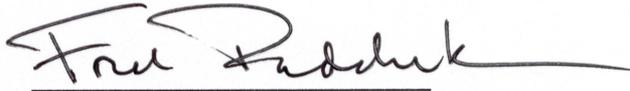
Andrew S. Hogeland



Karen Lartin



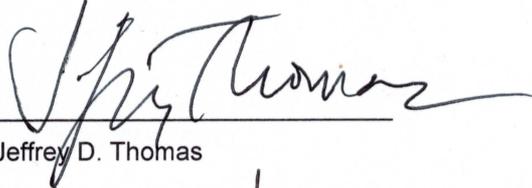
Thomas J. Loughman



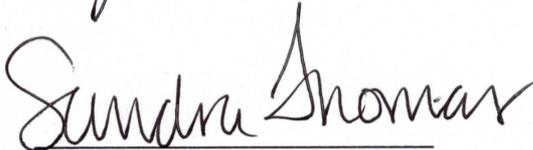
Frederick W. Puddester



Stephen C. Sheppard



Jeffrey D. Thomas



Sandra Thomas

## **VIII. Appendices**

- A. Summary of town survey results
- B. Forum summaries
- C. Report on analysis of similar communities
- D. Prioritization of Recommendations by the EDC

## **Appendix A. Summary of Town survey results**

**Question 1: Please rank, on a scale of 1-5 with 1 meaning not at all important and 5 meaning the most important, the following measures of economic growth we should strive to improve upon in Williamstown. Answered: 489 Skipped: 10**

**Results Responses were averaged among all respondents and ranked according the average**

	Rank	Score	
<b>Measures of Economic Growth</b>	1	4.39	A larger number of successful businesses
	2	4.38	Less vacant businesses/commercial space
	3	4.24	More employed persons in Williamstown
	4	3.58	More visitors
	4	3.58	More residents
	6	3.33	Higher income per capita
	7	3.06	More building and property development

### Key Findings

Among the options presented, the community feels that key measures of economic growth should include measures of the strength of the business community and job growth.

### Secondary Findings

Tourism, population growth, and to a lesser extent per capita income growth were also felt to be important measures. Building and property development was not felt to a priority measure.

### Themes from “Other” Comments

93 respondents also checked “other” and added a comment. About 25% of comments were specific suggestions about the type of business growth that should be focused on, for example “light industry”. Others commented on the importance of “filling empty business spaces before building new ones”. 11 respondents suggested that availability of affordable housing be a key measure. 4 people commented on the importance of public school facilities.

**Question 2: On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all important and 5 meaning the most important, please rate the importance of the following for economic development in Williamstown.**

**Answered: 489 Skipped: 10**

	Rank	Score	
<b>Importance for Economic Development</b>	1	4.06	Marketing the town to prospective businesses
	2	4.01	Improving local public education
	3	3.89	Improving Internet access and speed
	4	3.88	Having public transportation to major cities
	5	3.56	Having public transportation locally
	6	3.43	Creating more affordable housing
	7	3.42	Giving tax incentives for new or expanded businesses
	8	3.39	Promoting agriculture in Williamstown
	9	3.38	Expanding recreational opportunities
	10	3.36	Increasing public parking in the Spring/Latham/Water Street area
	11	3.32	Providing government loans for new or expanded businesses
	12	3.19	Expanding business districts
	13	3.17	Issuing grants for new or expanded businesses
	14	2.78	Spending money on town staff and marketing

## **Key Findings**

Among the options presented, the community feels that the top priorities of economic growth should be marketing the town to prospective businesses and improving public education. Other key priorities should include improved access to high speed internet, and improved transportation from Williamstown to major cities. Local transportation is also a priority.

## **Secondary Findings**

Creating more affordable housing, providing tax incentives, and expanding recreational opportunities were also identified as important for economic development.

## **Themes from “Other” Comments**

68 respondents provided additional suggestions. 12 offered suggestions to better market existing town business, farms, and locally produced goods. 7 commented further on the need for better transportation between Williamstown and major metro destinations. 9 commented on the importance of reducing the barriers to business development, especially in Town Hall.

### **Question 3: What are the top reasons that new businesses might be attracted to Williamstown?**

**Answered: 351 Skipped: 148**

#### **Summary of Comments**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Vibrancy/quality of life	161	29%
Local Institutions	84	15%
Human capital / workforce	70	13%
High quality local Schools	62	11%

#### **Key Findings**

“Quality of life” emerged as the most commonly identified characteristic to draw businesses to Williamstown. The central component characteristics to the quality of life included: beautiful surroundings, world-class cultural institutions, and excellent local schools.

#### **Secondary Findings**

The survey results identified the influence and connections to Williams College and the Clark, as well as access to highly educated workforce / human capital the following as the secondary draw.

#### **Themes from “Other” Comments**

While high quality schools, beautiful environment, and cultural institutions emerged as the core assets, the following characteristics were also identified as draws: low crime rates, affordable housing compared to NYC/Boston, tourism, Berkshire County’s attractions, and proximity to NY / Boston / Albany.

**Question 4: What are the top reasons that businesses might not be attracted to Williamstown? Answered: 401 Skipped: 98**

**Key Findings**

The most prominent theme throughout the responses regarding the reasons businesses might not be attracted to Williamstown was the small, insufficient population. Respondents claim there are not enough patrons or foot traffic to support most retail or service industries. Also, the lack of diversity in the population is an issue, as younger residents and young families are hard to attract and maintain in Williamstown.

**Secondary Findings**

A second recurrent subject in the responses, mentioned in more than 1 in 4 answers, was distance. Many considered Williamstown to be an isolated area / remote location with an inadequate transportation infrastructure - lack of major roads connecting us to other population hubs and lack of public transportation to major cities such as Boston, New York, and even Albany.

**Novel or Remarkable Suggestions**

Not surprisingly, nearly every response to this question about attracting businesses included some mention of costs; high costs of rent, especially on Spring Street, high costs of the lackluster utilities and services many businesses need to operate, costs of hiring and staffing compared to the customer base, costs of taxes, costs of the extreme seasonality of the town, high cost of living, and costs of unfriendly attitudes. There were also honorable mentions to difficult boards/zoning/regulations, the poor quality of the public schools, lack of entertainment and night life options for younger people, lack of healthcare providers and facilities, and a need for affordable housing.

**Question 5: Are there events not currently offered in the region (cultural, arts athletic or educational) that you think would be successful in attracting visitors to the region? Answered: 248 Skipped: 251**

**Key Findings**

More than a third of the respondents indicated that there were enough events being offered, or they didn't know. The primary areas of interest of those who specified what they'd like to see added to the event landscape are:

- festivals (music, art, farming, food, green)
- outdoor recreation (bike path, bike race, bike tours, utilizing the river, hiking, etc.)
- shoulder season events—especially winter (both outdoors and indoors)
- sports tournaments and facilities that are independent of Williams
- events that build on what is here (education, recreation, culture)

Improved marketing of events and the Town was emphasized throughout.

**Secondary Findings**

Of the events being offered, some respondents indicated the need for diversity in these areas: income (more free), family-friendly, LGBT, ethnicity, and youth. Youth ideas included youth sports tournaments, museum for kids, math/robotics/tech challenge.

In addition to music festivals, the idea of a year-round concert venue was noted. The need for a conference facility and more conferences in the area was also suggested.

**Novel or Remarkable Suggestions**

- Combined adult learning and sports/outdoor recreation packages (adult camps)
- Destination weddings
- Countywide Bike Tour
- Pavilion for outdoor events
- Iditarod in Williamstown

- Rather than create new events, cultivate a climate of support within the Town to support creative ideas that others want to implement.

**Question 6: What are your suggestions for programs to keep or attract people to live and work in Williamstown?  
Answered: 292 Skipped: 207**

**Key Findings**

To attract people to live and work in Williamstown, survey respondents felt most strongly on developing a job base, aimed at graduates and young families; utilizing local talent pool to attract and mentor new businesses; concentrating on white collar jobs. A second resounding theme was the functionality of Spring Street, to be more of a town center, with shops relevant to local shoppers and services open later into the evening. The third thread was the need to provide a new facility and academic excellence at Mt GreylockRHS

**Secondary Findings**

Improving regional transportation options was called for — to both NYC and Boston, as well as readily available public transportation within the county. A call for private car/van service was noted. Also considered here are opportunities for more adult activities, particularly educational experiences from all regional sources (OLLI, BCC, MCLA, Williams) , but with a desire to have these opportunities here in town, not in central or south county.

**Novel or Remarkable Suggestions**

Have Williams offer Adult classes

Have new hotel where B&G is, and put B&G at the old town lot

Market Williamstown Winters as a positive - either offering decreased cost ski packages, or promoting 'something' other than skiing during this season

Develop Williamstown as a strictly residential community, with job concentration in N. Adams

Businesses like Overland, that employ young people year round

Resources for trailing spouses in families *not affiliated* with Williams

**Question 7: What are your suggestions for improving our retail and business districts? Answered: 318 Skipped: 181**

**Key Findings**

Many of the comments focused on ideas for improving the business vibrancy of Spring Street and, to some extent, Water Street and connecting the two streets. Frequently recurring suggestions included having stores stay open later and be more attractive to locals, and less to high end visitors.

**Secondary Findings**

Rents on Spring Street, particularly the west side, were noted by many to be too high and made it hard to attract businesses. Other frequent comments related to the need to have better parking and pedestrian access on Spring Street. Commenters also suggested that Water Street needed to have better parking and pedestrian access, and different suggestions were made for the former town garage site.

**Novel or Remarkable Suggestions**

Commenters often suggested that Spring Street would be improved by a bakery, bookstore, grocery store and other shops catering to locals. Phillips general store that used to be on Water Street was referred to as a model for what was missing.

**Question 8: What specific suggestions do you have for facilitating economic development here? Answered: 249 Skipped: 250**

**Key Findings**

This question was very open ended by design. An attempt has been made to summarize common suggestions into themes that the committee can consider. There is a general belief that Williamstown's location, while bucolic, is a deterrent to people or businesses moving here. The survey (47/16.4%) respondents suggested improvements in either internet service (Fiber) or transportation access to increase the ability of people or businesses to live and work here. Survey respondents (43/15.0%) felt that targeted marketing, focused on specific industries (high tech, financial, research, light manufacturing) or specific demographics (Williams alums, professionals, retirees, tourists, younger families) that may have an interest in the Williamstown lifestyle (nature, green, agricultural, artistic/cultural, college town) is a path to growing our population and economy.

**Secondary Findings**

There was a general concern about affordability (26/9.1%) in commercial rents and housing. There was a surprising amount of support (21/7.3%) for incentives for businesses. There is a general sense that we must work with our region and that the goal is to get companies to locate to North County, as Williamstown does not have enough built space. There was a general theme of improving the economic development culture of Williamstown, with a belief that improvements could be made in Town Hall processes and community support of new businesses and development.

**Novel or Remarkable Suggestions**

- Improve/develop transportation methods that connect people more directly with larger cities to increase regular forms of tourism.
- I believe connecting every resident in Williamstown to MBI/FIBER would provide for the blooming of digital cottage industries. This investment would attract more knowledge workers.

- Hire a marketing expert; target population that you want to visit and hopefully live here. We have large organized groups-- alums, parents of college students, museum tourists etc - use their visit to be sure they know what is happening in Williamstown while they are here. Encourage conferences of all kinds in off-season. Have someone have a list of conferences spaces in town during college sessions -- ie., at Inns, lodges, museums room - maybe central booking?
- Let's see if we could use social media and targeted trade advertising to attract small businesses in the fields of alternative energy development, technology-based education, consultancy and services for renewable energy market.
- Market Williamstown to Williams alumni and other retirees who are looking for a small college town environment. According to publications, college towns are increasingly attractive to retirees.

## Appendix B. Forum Summaries

## **Summary of Williamstown Economic Development Committee Forums**

This document attempts to summarize the results of the two community forums hosted by the Williamstown Economic Development Committee (EDC) on April 29, 2015. The attendees were asked what does Williamstown need, and what would success look like? Since the comments received frequently mentioned topics in response to either or both questions, this summary organizes the comments by the different topics raised by the attendees. Under each topic heading are the comments on that topic as recorded by the EDC members at the meeting, followed by a proposed summary of the comments.

### **Employment and Types of Businesses**

High paying jobs.

More jobs, especially one's requiring advanced education and skills

More jobs

Employment opportunities for younger persons

Greater variety of job opportunities

Bring in light manufacturing

Bring in at least one "big" employer (50 + jobs)

Thriving agribusinesses

Improve "Trailing Spouse" opportunities.

Better opportunities for trailing spouses and partners

Identify possible volunteer -to- employment possibilities for spouses and others.

Job Training programs: a) for existing jobs, b) for future minded jobs and c) provide physical spaces for jobs training

Acquisition of 'knowledge' based industry, which don't require too much space or resources, those with remote manufacturing sites.

More start-up space, flexible business spaces, and affordable space for small businesses.

Young business developers and entrepreneurs attracted to live here and start businesses. Employment for young people. More reasons for young people to stay.

More light industry

Focus on intellectual capital – businesses and growth tied to educational institutions. "Think Tank" type of incubator.

New employers, one with >50 employees.

More businesses that trace their roots to colleges' research and educational efforts.

More decent paying jobs, especially if not dependent on Williams College or The Clark.

- More general businesses in town
  - o No place to purchase a pencil or a loaf of bread on Spring Street, etc.
- Available employment opportunities
  - o More jobs, not just entry level/minimum pay jobs
- A "local factory": some big industry to bring more jobs, people, money etc.
  - o More than just another shop opening
  - o Needs to be an employment engine
  - o What is a viable industry here? (ex: Plastics in Pittsfield)

- Possibly build on Education, Art
  - Support Farms & Agriculture
    - Take a look at current land use
  - Accessibility for businesses / home offices
- Jobs
- Those that might attract younger people
  - White collar
  - Eco-friendly

1. Hospitality sector
2. Attract startup enterprises
  - a. Space for new companies
  - b. Incubator
3. Build new lease-able space

Increase in the number of jobs in town

1. Better, visible use of developable spaces in town with new space and new occupants
  - a. Town Garage site
  - b. Photech site
  - c. Steiner Film site

Net increase in new businesses opening in town

Increase in indices of awareness of Williamstown as a location for new businesses

Increase jobs for young professionals in the region.

Increase in employed persons in town

Increase in per capita income of residents

### **Summary**

- The Town needs more and better paying jobs, and to provide jobs particularly for younger people and trailing spouses/partners.
- There is a preference for jobs requiring advanced education and skills, including those in knowledge-based industries, intellectual capital, education, art and research.
- The Town should explore encourage the availability of start-up space, small office, incubator and flexible business spaces.
- There were suggestions for other more specific profiles such as: at least one new employer providing over 50 jobs; light industry; and farms and agriculture
- There were suggestions to make better, visible use of developable spaces in town with new space and new occupants (Town Garage site, Photech site and Steiner Film site)

### **Regional Approach**

A more regional economy, with towns supporting each other

A more regional approach

North to south county collaboration

Development would overlap within the region, especially North Adams.

“Branding” of our region (ie “The Greylock Region”) as opposed to labeling as North County, which implies disconnect from South County & Pittsfield. [for example, Peterboro, NH as an example of the “Monadnock Region”]

Viable growth requires engagement with neighboring towns. We need coordinated efforts and collaborative spirit among Northern Berkshire County and Southern Vermont.

- Diversity / A Community link between North Adams & Williamstown
  - o Strong town prejudices still exist in both towns
- Regional cooperation
  
- Build on growth industries in region
  - o Education
  - o Tourism
- Build on other strengths in the region

Find other connections to the region

### **Summary**

- The Town should take into account a regional approach to economic development, (including branding), cooperating with other towns in the region of Northern Berkshire County and Southern Vermont
- The Town should overcome historic barriers to cooperating with other local towns.
- Regional cooperative efforts should include on growth industries such as education and tourism

### **Town Hall Processes**

More favorable atmosphere for business.

Local government, zoning and regulations in need of review.

Thorough review and assessment of regulatory hurdles

Zoning relief

Williamstown should hire employee to spearhead economic development and help bring businesses to town.

Ease of setting up a business in town

- o Who to talk to? Does such a group to help businesses in town get started exist?

Make it easier for people to set up and run home offices

- o Open up bylaws and loosen town processes (ex: sign commission)

Updated Town Website!

- o Good examples of useful, attractive town websites include:
  - <http://www.simsbury-ct.gov/>
  - [http://www.townofmiddlebury.org/index.asp?Type=B\\_BASIC&SEC={2BA334F8-051E-4D0E-805A-FA5346266EB7}](http://www.townofmiddlebury.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={2BA334F8-051E-4D0E-805A-FA5346266EB7})

Managed growth

- Considered
- Thoughtful
- Planned

Increase in inquiries from businesses about location in the town  
 Change zoning laws to facilitate more assisted living housing  
 Strengthen the CBD along Spring and Water streets  
 Not create a new business district  
 Develop a more complete plan for business district

**Summary**

- The Town should undertake a review of its regulations and processes to assess regulatory hurdles, including a review of zoning
- The Town should make it easier for new businesses to get set up, particularly including home offices
- Zoning laws should be reviewed to look at making projects easier for assisted living and to strengthen the Water/Spring Street district and not to create a new business district
- The Town should consider hiring an employee to promote economic development
- The Town should have a plan for managing planned growth, which might include a more complete plan for the business district.

**Schools**

New high school and quality schools in town.  
 Better education (K-12)  
 A great high school.  
 Excellent schools  
 High quality education available in modern Jr-Sr High School  
 New Mt. Greylock school  
 School system – need for critical mass  
 Maintain and improve high school, build new building  
 Right size new building for the high school

**Summary**

- The town should continue to promote a high quality education at all public school levels.
- There should be a new building for Mt. Greylock Regional High School

**Housing**

More diverse housing stock.  
 Larger housing developments (some for and some against).  
 Affordable housing.  
 More affordability housing.  
 Re-habilitated existing housing.  
 Affordable intermediate and starter homes

Housing of all types – co-housing, affordable housing

More housing people can afford – apartments and multi-family.

- Housing diversity
  - o Need more than just single family homes
    - People may be looking for a place to downsize to
      - Cable Mills
      - Co-housing, micro housing

Housing that is suitable

Fill the existing stock of housing

This would provide accommodations for up to 200 new households

More or better assisted living housing

Skilled nursing facility

Build more condominium residential property

Correct the demographic mismatch between the existing stock of housing and population

- a. Make it easier to divide or downsize properties

Create jobs to facilitate assisted living and “ageing in place”

Change zoning laws to facilitate more assisted living housing

### **Summary**

- There should be more diverse and affordable housing of all types – co-housing, apartments, condominiums and multi-family
- There should be rehabilitation of existing housing
- There was disagreement on whether there should be larger housing developments
- Housing options should include consideration of assisted living facilities, retirement and skilled nursing facilities – zoning laws should be reviewed on these options
- We should address the need for some residents to downsize or ‘age in place.’

### **Tourism**

Promote existing attractions and extend “the season”.

More agri-tourism.

More tourism.

Extending the seasons.

Develop “culture tours” with bus companies to bring visitors easily from major east coast cities

Develop “culture tours” of the region with tour companies for, seniors and international visitors

Local retail businesses would be vibrant enough to attract ‘day trippers’ who come here for shopping

Success would be apparent with more activity in the “off season”

Extend the tourist season

More Tourism. Extend length of tourist visits, from day trips to overnights; Extend tourist season. Make sure town’s online presence is attractive.

Enhance outdoor recreation. Open up scenic vistas on existing trails. Work with WOC, WRLF, Trustees of Reservations, Hopkins Forest, and BNRC to make outdoor information more conspicuous and accessible.

Promote and foster a cultural corridor heading north from NYC.

Williamstown needs to embrace tourism, not resent tourists

Build on the cultural impact that the town already has – and develop this over the long term

Extend the cultural season to run longer in the year

### **Summary**

- The Town should take steps to promote more tourism, entice visitors to stay longer, and to extend the tourist season beyond just the summer season.
- The Town's on-line web presence needs to be attractive
- The Town should encourage 'culture tours' of the region for people from different regions or with different interests. This would include the cultural corridor heading north from NYC.
- There should be more agri-tourism.
- The areas outdoor recreation offerings need to be enhanced, vistas opened up, and we should work with the WOC, WRLF, Trustees of Reservations, Hopkins Forest and BNRC to make information more conspicuous and accessible.

### **Population**

More young families.

More activity/people in town.

A more diverse population.

Diversity of population, especially as it relates to age

More population.

More Young families.

Growing younger population

Presence of a stabilized population; all age groups, but primarily younger families.

Note that Williamstown is currently marketed as a desirable *retirement* community.

Increase population – including more students in schools and places for retirees

More young families

- Stop drain on young population
  - o Attract Young Entrepreneurs with families (25-40 years old, with some ties to Williamstown)
  - o Difficult place to be young and single – sweet spot may be attracting families
- Attractions for younger residents
  - o More community activities aimed at families
- Note the seasonality of the population
- Sustain the loss of people
  - o Population growth
  - o More young people

New families and younger families to live in town  
Decreasing median age of local population  
Accommodating older population

Stronger middle class in town  
More opportunities for middle-class families  
Build image of Williamstown as a perfect retirement location  
Attract more young families  
Growth in population  
Growth in elementary and high school enrollments  
    a. Or at least NO loss  
Decrease in the share of students educated outside of Williamstown Public Schools

### **Summary**

- The Town should strive to increase population at all ages, particularly younger families and students in the public schools.
- The populations should be diverse, especially as to age.
- The Town should consider its appeal as a retirement community.

### **Vibrancy /quality of life.**

A more diverse mix of stores that meet the needs of a more diverse population  
Less “for sale” signs.  
Quality of life – a walk-able town.  
More attractive parks.  
Re-habilitated existing commercial buildings.  
More attractive to retirees.  
More parking.  
More attractive retail.  
Parking, especially event parking, Water Street Parking, perhaps central parking area with shuttle to The Clark.  
Enhance connection between Water & Spring Streets.  
More people on the street, more foot traffic, more vitality.  
Williamstown should look the same, which the same character, physical attributes, & sense of place.  
New bookstore on Spring Street as community center / hub of activity.  
Gateways to town are active & attractive. Revitalized Colonial Shopping Center, without a sea of unused parking at gateway to town.  
Locals buying from locals.  
More restaurants.  
Housing and storefronts/commercial properties filled  
More vibrant, fully built-out downtown (Spring & Water Streets  
Growth with environment “preserved”  
More town owned recreational facilities  
New businesses

'Green' as a reality and for marketing and energy independence; sustainability and resilience

Need fun places, like a brewery

Spring Street alive again, provide for pop-up stores, places for chefs and crafts to attract more visitors

Being a green community

More vitality.

Fix the town appearance

- Run down homes
- Empty buildings
- Deserted Spruces
- Need a sense of Vibrancy – currently depressing to drive through

Town needs to be less conservative, more open to change

- More welcoming of failure
- Encourage entrepreneurs to try things

Convert Spruces into a community Public Space

- Example: Simsbury, Connecticut
  - Large playground, soccer fields, Performing Arts Center

Vibrancy

- Bustling streets
- Lower price of a cup of coffee on Spring Street (diversity of offerings/competition)
- Engaging the community more
  - Getting away from silo/pocket events and encouraging interaction across age brackets
- Change that includes young people but doesn't scare the older generations
- More community activities and offerings
- Vacant spaces and buildings filled

Improve Quality of Life to attract families

Observed reduction in barriers to mobility in town

Enhance the local literary scene

See empty store fronts fill up

See intelligent use of currently underdeveloped space

Identify a way to maintain and measure Quality of Life

### **Summary**

- The Town needs to strive towards greater vibrancy and vitality, which particularly includes more and new businesses especially in the Spring and Water Street areas. There should be more attractive restaurants and retail stores, such as a bookstore on Spring Street.
- Streets and sidewalks should be vital, walkable, and handicap accessible.
- There should be an enhanced connection between Water and Spring Streets.

- There should be more parking in the Water/Spring Street area, and maybe a shuttle to the Clark.
- There should be more town-owned recreation facilities and parks.
- The Spruces can be transformed into an active center of community activities.
- The gateways to the town need to be attractive.
- The Town should be, and should market itself as, a 'green' community with energy independence, sustainability and resilience.

### **Health Care**

Better healthcare.

Hospital access

More primary care physicians

A full service hospital.

Healthcare: Access to good providers, insurance

Bring back Birthing Center and other critical healthcare services

Hospital and improved health care

### **Summary**

- The Town should encourage good access to healthcare, including full service hospitals, a birthing center and more primary care physicians
- [See separate entry on assisted living and skilled nursing facilities]

### **Transportation**

Better transportation (local shuttle).

Transportation linking north to south county

Improved transportation and more transportation options

Smart transportation would be available - smartphone app easily accessed ride share / improved transportation options

Better transportation to other cities and locally; also better car-based services like Uber, carpooling, car sharing and arrangements for those without cars

Transportation

Improved transport

- a. Rail if possible
- b. To Albany
- c. To Pittsfield
- d. To NYC

### **Summary**

- The Town should promote better public transportation both locally and to other cities. Rail transportation should be part of this effort.
- Smart transportation system such as smartphone apps, ride-sharing, car-pooling and car services should be encouraged, especially to help those without cars.

### **Local Institutions**

Strengthened existing institutions.

Strong town/college collaboration

Significant PILOT program from Williams College and The Clark

If we're going to rely on Williams College as the engine of economic activity and development, we should not be suspicious of and second guess the college's efforts.

To NOT always rely on the college to be the resource

### **Summary**

- There should be strong collaboration between the Town and major institutions like Williams College and The Clark.
- The Town should consider a PILOT program from Williams College and The Clark
- The Town should not always rely on the college to be the resource.

### **Tax related**

Expanded tax base.

Lower property taxes/ expanded tax base

Make capital available for small businesses (loans, grants, tax breaks)

Broaden the tax base

Investigate/promote possible tax incentives for new or growing businesses (ie Berkshire Works Programs)

Reduce impact of higher property values on working people.

MONEY – need a bigger tax base to support town infrastructure

Growth in tax base

### **Summary**

- The Town should explore ways to expand the tax base so as to reduce property taxes.
- The Town should explore tax incentives, loan and grant programs for new or growing businesses (see Berkshire Works programs).

### **Infrastructure, including internet**

Best high speed internet access

Infrastructure – smart grid with solar power storage

Fiber Optics

Better internet and bandwidth access – lead to lower utility bills

High speed internet / fiber to the home.

- Web-based community network
  - o How to welcome people into town?

### **Summary**

- The Town should encourage high speed internet access and fiber optic cable to the home.
- The Town should encourage smart grid technologies, including solar power storage
- The Town should consider a web-based community network which could, among other things, help welcome new people to town.

### **Marketing**

Marketing initiative to promote the assets of the region (unclear if this meant promoting to tourists, potential residents, or future employers, but all apply)

Do affirmative outreach to attract businesses

Promote area's strengths

"Retain the Brains": keep students (Williams, MCLA, Bennington) here to start businesses locally

- Market to alumni, market proximity to NYC, Boston (though location may not be an asset, as transportation to cities is not that convenient)

Access to resources

- Signage, maps
- Destination Williamstown – draw people in and get visitors to stay!

Cooperative engagement with nearby attractions

Attract Williams alumni

Attract businesses that would be logical to be here

Those that could benefit from being near Williams College

Those that could benefit from being near the Clark Art Institute

### **Summary**

- The Town should undertake a marketing program to promote its and the region's assets to tourists, potential residents and businesses.
- A marketing program should consider attracting Williams alumni, as well as alumni from Bennington College and MCLA.
- The marketing program should focus on businesses that could benefit from being near Williams or The Clark.

### **OTHER – Tips for the EDC Process**

1. Visit other places to see what works
2. Develop 1,5, 10 year plans and priorities for economic development

## Summaries of Comments by Topic

Set out below are summaries of the comments received by the Williamstown Economic Development Committee (EDC) at a business forum held at The Clark on June 26, 2015. Following the summaries is a compilation of the original notes of the conversations held at different tables.

### Employment and Types of Businesses

Local businesses are challenged by the small number of businesses, and the size and seasonality of the market

There is a lack of qualified help in the labor pool, particularly technology workers.

Commercial space is limited and costly. We need more commercial space, and that is less costly – and collaborative workspace like Lever in North Adams

We need a broader trained workforce, possibly including subsidized interns

We need a more diverse business and economic base

### Regional Approach

We need to bridge the divides between Williamstown and North Adams and between north and South County; take a regional focus

### Town Hall Processes

Town regulatory processes are difficult to navigate and regulations are not clear and predictable  
Zoning and permitting are cumbersome and bureaucratic – they deter development

Some inspectors appear anti-business or over-zealous

The town does not support or initiate big events

All town employees should engage in developing new, strategies, mentality and vision towards reduction in frustration, time, complexity and cost for new residents. We need a new attitude that is welcoming to business.

Permitting processes should be standardized and streamlined.

There should be an EDC officer in the town government, and/or an EDC committee.

There should be better, more flexible zoning, regulations, and regulatory processes, including more flexible sign bylaws, consolidated hearings before boards, and more flexible interpretations.

There should be an online portal w/ flowcharts of steps for prospective businesses, welcome kit, step-by-step outline of permitting path.

### Education

We should support education and the investment in a building at the high school

### Housing

There should be more affordable housing, in particular more multi-family housing.

## **Tourism**

There is not sufficient lodging both at reasonable costs and for short term stays at peak times (many lodging facilities require minimum 3 night stays.

Seasonality (combined with recession and off-season) is a problem – we need to think year-around

There is a lack of event parking in town

Need for a trolley or park and ride to handle special events or other peak use.

Need an upper end hotel, otherwise we must refer to South County for lodging

We should support Convention business.

A website should consolidate information on recreational assets, trail maps, guides, etc.

## **Population**

We are dealing with small population – smaller market and smaller labor force.

We need to convince young people and families to stick around.

## **Vibrancy/Quality of Life**

There is a lack of vibrancy in the town – it closes at 6.

Parking on Spring and Water Streets is not adequate, and there is a lack of event parking.

We should connect Spring Street and Water Street better, perhaps through signage, shuttle, and creative development.

## **Health Care**

We should have better health care options, especially more primary care.

## **Transportation**

There is a lack of transportation, especially for workers, customers and getting goods and services to the area, and in the evenings.

There should be improved transportation to urban northeast and extended hours of operation of local public transportation.

There should be a trolley or people-mover to facilitate access to measure event sites and Spring Street/Water Street.

## **Local Institutions**

We need better communication with college, Chamber of Commerce and Clark on special events and planning. All players should be more supportive of businesses.

The College and the Clark should source locally whenever possible.

Engage the college in building a town parking garage and incubator space on town garage site.

Chamber of Commerce needs reinvigoration.

Collaborate with College to make better use of remote and under-utilized parking.

Engage alumni and students more effectively in community.

Provide more summer internships for students to work with town and businesses in town.

There should be pedestrian access to and from the Clark - once they get in their car, they go home.

### **Tax related**

There are no local financial or tax incentives for business development.

### **Infrastructure, including internet**

Bring Fiber Optic Cable to all residents and businesses. Universal access throughout town perhaps more important than speed and current internet service maybe not a major choke point for all business operators and owners.

### **Marketing**

There needs to be better marketing of local businesses to the local population.

There should be improved communication of things happening in town and impacting living here [weekly newsletter, example: Greylock Independent, Chamber, Destination Williamstown]

The town should improve its image, to include better marketing, being friendlier to new businesses and new people.

Focus on wellness, the environment and the outdoors as a marketing tool.

Shop Local and improve local service: make the conscious effort to stay local and remember that the community is part of the local feedback loop.

### **TIPS for EDC**

Look for model towns and see what they do that we can follow.

## Complied Original Notes by Topic

### Employment and Types of Business

#### Challenges for Business

Small number of businesses

Customer base is seasonal

Not enough qualified help in the workforce

Lack of suitable and affordable space for business uses

Lack of technology workers

Lack of strong applicant pool and lack of entry to mid level job training programs and space for training sessions. (Goodwill could provide some of this if they could schedule sessions for potential candidates somewhere).

Limited labor pool

Finding qualified help to work in business

Lack of other employment opportunities

Difficulties in marketing goods or services

- Size of market
- Seasonality of market

Difficulty in obtaining/providing commercial space

Cost of commercial space

support for the workforce in terms of affordable housing, training and transportation.

difficulty finding quality staff (especially the quality of the service staff)

Difficulty Hiring

- a) Lack of depth locally in skilled technology workers

#### Changes

Make town more "competitive" in terms of attracting new enterprises and residents by looking at availability of space, internet access, affordability

Create town collaborative work space similar to Lever in North Adams

Institute *subsidized* internship/job training/job shadowing program for entry and mid-level jobs

Need more diversity of businesses and need to get people to purchase locally

Would like to see a resurgence of tech businesses

Additional space for business -- there's not enough commercial space

Retain educated young people and get them into our workforce

Along with creating tourism, support existing businesses

Promote diverse economic base

### Regional Approach

#### Challenges for Business

Need to draw more tourists north from south and central Berkshires

Projects get deflected to North Adams

The north/south divide in the county

#### Changes

Collaboration between communities  
Bridging the North Adams/Williamstown divide  
Focus on redevelopment regionally

## **Town Hall Processes**

### **Challenges for Business**

Town regulatory processes are difficult to navigate  
Poor regulatory clarity and predictability  
Easier to give in to town demands than to fight  
Cumbersome, burdensome local regulatory environment – zoning, permitting, land use  
Town (and State) permitting is cumbersome  
Desire for expanded business zoning in town  
Difficult zoning regulations may frustrate / prevent creative development.  
Building inspectors appear anti-business (cost, not development friendly, residential and commercial)  
General “feeling” that Williamstown is difficult to work with  
No support by town for big events, no initiative by town for events  
Williamstown is perceived as a difficult place to do business  
Great difficulties in permitting  
Red tape  
Parking regulations

### **Changes**

Need to define permitting processes better – standardize them  
Some inspectors are over-zealous  
Is there enough town staff to keep up with the work?  
Should there be regulation of VRBO houses?  
Town Hall should be more welcoming – need a more nurturing environment  
Shift town focus, attention, model to growth vs. preservation  
Engage all town employees in developing new, strategies, mentality and vision towards reduction in frustration, time, complexity and cost for new residents/businesses  
Radically streamline permitting process, reduce bureaucratic hurdles  
Create permanent EDC with funding and authority to implement  
Create town business development position  
Improve opportunities through business zoning  
Need a better attitude about growth. Need to be more welcoming to development.  
Better, more flexible zoning, regulations, and regulatory processes. Including more flexible sign bylaws, consolidated hearings before boards, more flexible interpretations.  
Need a new attitude: Williamstown needs to be more welcoming to businesses. The new tone (including in town hall) should be: Williamstown is open for business.  
Online portal w/ flowcharts of steps for prospective businesses, welcome kit, step-by-step outline of permitting path.  
Change of attitude to be supportive of initiatives for conferences and big events  
An Economic Development Officer for the town  
Have a position in town government dedicated to advocating for and assisting businesses  
Less restrictive zoning and less red tape

## **Schools**

### **Challenges for Business**

Education

### **Changes**

Enhance public education - specifically build a new high school as the current one is *repelling* recruits

Investing in education (a code word, I think, for the new high school)

## **Housing**

### **Challenges for Business**

Affordable housing

### **Changes**

More affordable housing, in particular more multi-family housing.

## **Tourism**

### **Challenges for Business**

Insufficiency of lodging both at reasonable costs and for short term stays at peak times (many lodging facilities require minimum 3 night stays.

Seasonality (combined with recession and off-season)

Lack of event parking in town

Need for a trolley or park and ride to handle special events or other peak use

Need an upper end hotel

- At the upper end, we must refer to south county for lodging

Support Convention business

- Middle market, higher volume events
  - Bay State Games
  - Bus Tours
  - Mass Teachers Association
  - Affinity Groups (car clubs and the like)

### **Changes**

Extended stay options [example: Northampton, multiple stop attractions]

Website consolidating recreational assets, trail maps, guides, etc.

Think year round

## **Population**

### **Challenges**

Lack of population

Dealing with small population – smaller market and smaller labor force

Convincing young people to stick around

Small population,

lack of younger people and young families

Getting younger people to move in and stay in the community

- Population drives retail sales

## **Vibrancy/Quality of Life**

### **Challenges for Business**

Town closes up at 6

Insufficient parking in town center

Parking on Spring Street. Not enough, or not visible enough. Better signage, and less ticketing.

Perception of “in-town” vs. “out of town” and convenience factor besides zoning restrictions

Lack vibrancy in town and condition of the high school. (SMVC lost high end applicants)

How to connect Spring Street/Water Street better? Signage, shuttle, creative development?

Parking space (no parking meters, no parking space, and quick to ticket)

Limited social life

Limited parking make it difficult for both employees and customers

Lack of RV or oversize parking in town

Lack of event parking in town

Facilitating the connection between Water Street and Spring Street

### **Changes**

Spring Street events should not all be at the bottom of the street

Expand parking on Water Street

Improve offerings on Spring Street

- Appeal to locals and tourists
- Lost some big draws on Spring Street

## **Health Care**

### **Challenges for Business**

### **Changes**

Attract more primary health care providers for residents ( via hospital associations.)

Better health care option, especially more primary care.

## **Transportation**

### **Challenges for Business**

Public Transportation- especially in the evenings.

Transportation / access to highways

Lack of transportation, especially for workers, customers and getting goods and services to the area

### **Changes**

Improved transportation to urban northeast

Extend hours of operation of local public transportation - may require public/private subsidies

A trolley or people-mover to facilitate access to measure event sites and Spring Street/Water Street

Better public transportation and more publicity about it.

## **Local Institutions**

### **Challenges for Business**

Williams Support - They listen well, but need more follow through

### **Changes**

Need better communication with college, Chamber of Commerce and Clark on special events and planning

College and Clark should source locally whenever possible

All players should be more supportive of businesses

Engage the college in building a town parking garage and incubator space on town garage site

Create a "better business committee" made up of business folks to help new businesses navigated through start up process.

Chamber of Commerce needs reinvigoration.

Collaborate with College to make better use of remote and under-utilized parking

Engage alumni and students more effectively in community

Provide more summer internships for students to work with town and businesses in town

Pedestrian Access to and from the Clark - Once they get in their car, they go home

## **Tax related**

### **Challenges for Business**

No opportunity for business development (no or hidden financial and tax incentives)

## **Infrastructure, including internet**

### **Challenges for Business**

No existing Broadband / Fiber optics

Poor quality internet access

infrastructure (housing, transportation and a mention on broadband)

1) High Speed Internet

a) lower speeds make it harder for remote workers to connect

### **Changes**

Fiber Optics would be a benefit

Bring Fiber Optic Cable to all residents and businesses

Internet? Universal access throughout town perhaps more important than speed

Current internet service not a major choke point for business operators and owners at Table 2

## **Marketing**

### **Challenges for Business**

Marketing local businesses to local population - (No one knows what your offering, can't be successful . . .)

Lack of outlets to market businesses (I think this is conflated with a lack of marketing)

### **Changes**

Advertise existing businesses

Improved communication of things happening in town and impacting living here [weekly newsletter, example: Greylock independent, Chamber, Destination Williamstown]

Improved image of the town (that included better marketing, being more friendly to new businesses and new people).

Focus on wellness, the environment and the outdoors as a marketing tool.

- 1) Shop Local
- a) Make the conscious effort to stay local
- b) The community is part of the local feedback loop

Improve local service

- c) Be Friendly!

## **TIPS for EDC**

Look for model towns and see what they do that we can follow

## Appendix C. Report on Analysis of Similar Communities

# BEST PRACTICES IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

## Lessons from communities like Williamstown

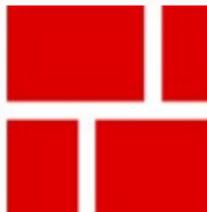
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Williamstown Economic Development Committee

September 8, 2015

Best practices working group:

Hugh Daley, Karen Lartin, Fred Puddester and Steve Sheppard



CENTER FOR CREATIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

68 Mission Park Drive  
Williamstown, MA 01267  
413-597-4461  
[www.c-3-d.org](http://www.c-3-d.org)

## INTRODUCTION

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# UNDERSTANDING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS *DIFFICULT*

One of our first challenges was to define what outcomes would count as economic development

- Population growth
- Employment growth
- Income level or growth

Identifying 'best practices' is also difficult

- Depends on context
- Economic development is determined by many factors
- Search for a new or broader economic foundation

# OUR APPROACH

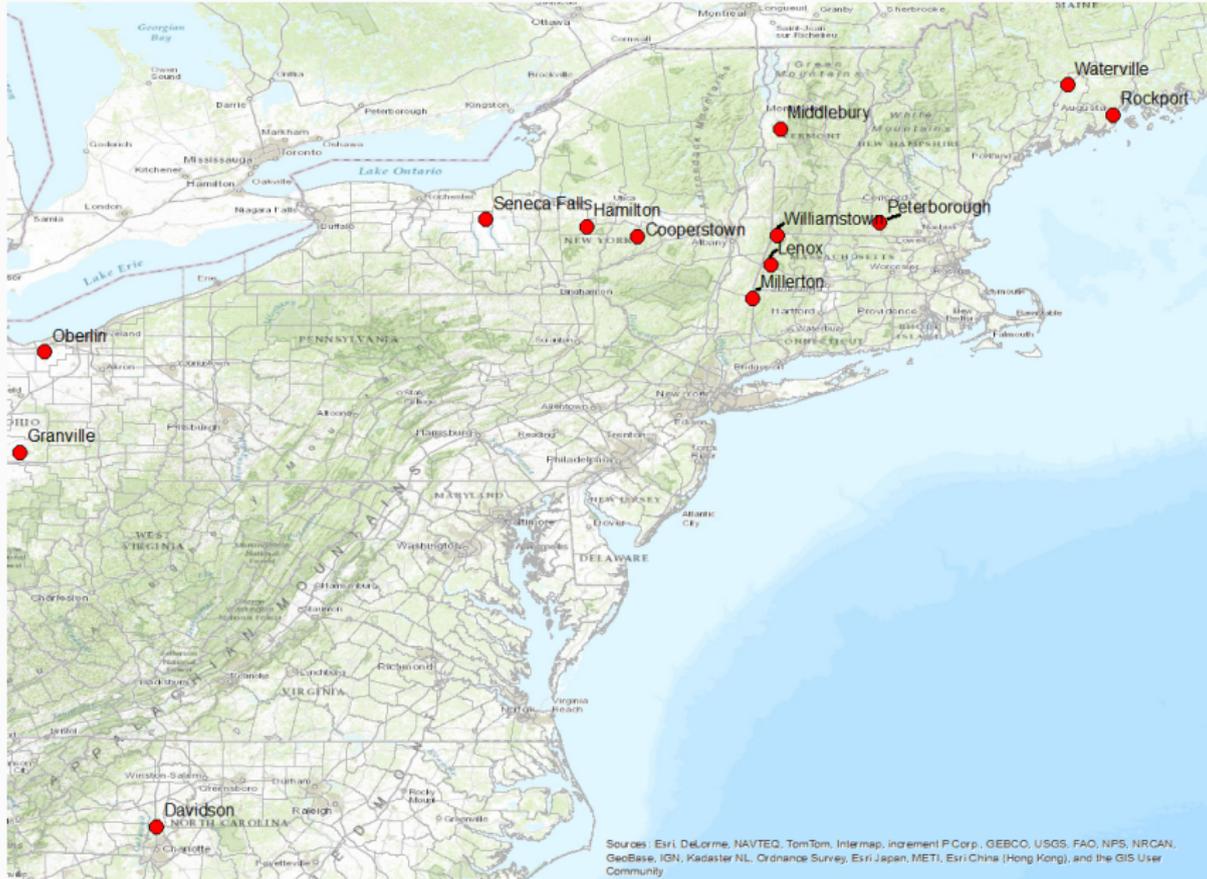
We want first to understand how Williamstown compares to similar communities

- Small size
- Some college towns
- Some post-industrial towns
- Somewhat to very remote

For a sample of comparison communities, we collect

- Data on economic outcomes
- Data on economic, geographic and demographic drivers
- Identify concerns and policies in each community
- Identify differences in the business and political environment

# SAMPLE OF COMPARABLE COMMUNITIES



Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, TomTom, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), and the GIS User Community

## COMPARISON

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# POPULATION GROWTH

Town	Total Population 2000	Total Population 2013	Annual Growth Rates
Granville, OH	3,167.00	5,659.00	4.47%
Davidson, NC	7,139.00	11,159.00	3.44%
Hamilton, NY	5,733.00	6,639.00	1.13%
Peterborough, NH	5,883.00	6,342.00	0.58%
Middlebury, VT	8,183.00	8,497.00	0.29%
Cooperstown, NY	2,032.00	2,080.00	0.18%
Oberlin, OH	8,195.00	8,380.00	0.17%
Waterville, ME	15,605.00	15,798.00	0.09%
Rockport, ME	3,326.00	3,326.00	0.00%
Lenox, MA	5,077.00	5,014.00	-0.10%
Seneca Falls, NY	9,347.00	9,104.00	-0.20%
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>8,424.00</b>	<b>7,699.00</b>	<b>-0.69%</b>
Millerton, NY	925	790	-1.21%

Williamstown ranks relatively low in population growth

# EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

Town	Total Employment 2000	Total Employment 2013	Annual Growth Rates
Granville, OH	1,352.00	2,751.00	5.46%
Davidson, NC	2,963.00	5,302.00	4.48%
Peterborough, NH	2,802.00	3,439.00	1.58%
Cooperstown, NY	941.00	1,114.00	1.30%
Hamilton, NY	2,507.00	2,457.00	-0.15%
Oberlin, OH	4,115.00	3,934.00	-0.35%
Middlebury, VT	3,882.00	3,698.00	-0.37%
Rockport, ME	1,677.00	1,577.00	-0.47%
Waterville, ME	6,863.00	6,438.00	-0.49%
Seneca Falls, NY	4,247.00	3,960.00	-0.54%
Millerton, NY	441.00	400.00	-0.75%
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>3,738.00</b>	<b>3,125.00</b>	<b>-1.38%</b>
Lenox, MA	2,368.00	1,757.00	-2.30%

Williamstown ranks relatively low in job growth

# REAL INCOME GROWTH

Town	Median Income 2000	Median Income 2013	Annual Growth Rates
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>55,862.69</b>	<b>72,751.88</b>	<b>2.03%</b>
Granville, OH	94,008.15	104,977.80	0.85%
Millerton, NY	50,242.12	54,951.99	0.69%
Cooperstown, NY	51,375.40	55,129.78	0.54%
Peterborough, NH	65,803.90	67,076.97	0.15%
Middlebury, VT	52,390.63	51,744.74	-0.10%
Davidson, NC	91,554.09	90,162.67	-0.12%
Rockport, ME	65,490.02	61,519.90	-0.48%
Waterville, ME	37,242.72	33,828.02	-0.74%
Oberlin, OH	57,072.36	51,825.00	-0.74%
Hamilton, NY	54,048.89	47,793.84	-0.95%
Seneca Falls, NY	51,726.77	42,900.16	-1.44%
Lenox, MA	63,304.01	51,902.21	-1.53%

Williamstown ranks very high in growth of real (inflation adjusted) income

## REAL INCOME LEVEL

Town	Income Levels 2000 – 2013
Granville, OH	99,492.97
Davidson, NC	90,858.38
Peterborough, NH	66,440.43
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>64,307.29</b>
Rockport, ME	63,504.96
Lenox, MA	57,603.11
Oberlin, OH	54,448.68
Cooperstown, NY	53,252.59
Millerton, NY	52,597.05
Middlebury, VT	52,067.68
Hamilton, NY	50,921.36
Seneca Falls, NY	47,313.47
Waterville, ME	35,535.37

Williamstown ranks relatively high in terms of real income level

# PROSPERITY RANKING

Town	Population Growth Points	Employment Growth Points	Income Growth Points	Income Level Points	Total Points
Granville, OH	4	4	4	4	16
Davidson, NC	4	4	3	4	15
Peterborough, NH	3	4	3	4	14
Cooperstown, NY	3	3	4	2	12
Oberlin, OH	2	3	2	3	10
Middlebury, VT	3	2	3	2	10
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>9.5</b>
Hamilton, NY	4	3	1	1	9
Rockport, ME	2	2	2	3	9
Millerton, NY	1	1	4	2	8
Waterville, ME	2	2	2	1	7
Lenox, MA	1	1	1	3	6
Seneca Falls, NY	1	1	1	1	4

- For each variable, determine the outcome quartile for each community
- Assign points to each community equal to its quartile
- Sum these to get an overall prosperity ranking

## ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC DRIVERS

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# STRUCTURE OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Town	Multipliers
Peterborough, NH	1.81
Davidson, NC	1.75
Lenox, MA	1.66
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>1.66</b>
Millerton, NY	1.65
Waterville, ME	1.64
Granville, OH	1.55
Oberlin, OH	1.53
Hamilton, NY	1.5
Rockport, ME	1.5
Cooperstown, NY	1.49
Middlebury, VT	1.33
Seneca Falls, NY	1.22

Large multipliers  $\Rightarrow$  expansion of local industry has a greater impact

# HOUSE PRICE: LEVELS AND GROWTH

Town	Median House Value 2000	Median House Value 2013	Annual Growth Rates
Cooperstown, NY	205,546.04	337,386.19	3.81%
Middlebury, VT	170,131.01	257,230.30	3.18%
Millerton, NY	159,714.83	230,816.45	2.83%
Lenox, MA	246,794.13	347,951.73	2.64%
Peterborough, NH	179,713.90	234,473.75	2.05%
Granville, OH	271,376.32	341,145.08	1.76%
Davidson, NC	374,982.63	425,161.46	0.97%
Waterville, ME	109,022.73	119,979.85	0.74%
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>313,457.71</b>	<b>323,874.49</b>	<b>0.25%</b>
Seneca Falls, NY	100,828.66	103,420.40	0.20%
Hamilton, NY	140,826.81	138,266.37	-0.14%
Rockport, ME	238,738.94	233,965.79	-0.16%
Oberlin, OH	164,575.71	141,517.30	-1.16%

# HOUSE PRICE TO INCOME RATIO

Town	Average Ratio 2000 - 2013	Town	Average Ratio 2009 - 2013
Seneca Falls, NY	2.18	Seneca Falls, NY	2.12
Hamilton, NY	2.75	Hamilton, NY	2.58
Oberlin, OH	2.81	Oberlin, OH	2.68
Granville, OH	3.07	Granville, OH	2.82
Peterborough, NH	3.11	Waterville, ME	3.27
Waterville, ME	3.24	Peterborough, NH	3.65
Millerton, NY	3.69	Millerton, NY	4.3
Rockport, ME	3.72	Rockport, ME	4.31
Middlebury, VT	4.11	Middlebury, VT	4.73
Davidson, NC	4.41	<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>4.74</b>
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>5.03</b>	Davidson, NC	5.26
Cooperstown, NY	5.06	Lenox, MA	6.13
Lenox, MA	5.3	Cooperstown, NY	7.21

- When house prices are high relative to incomes, people may find it difficult to live in (or move to) a community
- High house prices relative to incomes are generally caused by rapid population growth or restrictive regulations on house building

# DISTANCE: URBAN AREAS AND AIRPORTS

Town	Distance to Major Urban Area (Miles)	Town	Distance to Major Airport (Miles)
Davidson, NC	22	Oberlin, OH	23.7
Oberlin, OH	35	Waterville, ME	23.9
Peterborough, NH	76	Davidson, NC	26.5
Millerton, NY	107	Granville, OH	29.3
Lenox, MA	130	Middlebury, VT	35.6
Granville, OH	140	<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>43.5</b>
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>168</b>	Hamilton, NY	46.1
Waterville, ME	185	Lenox, MA	47.6
Rockport, ME	185	Millerton, NY	53.1
Middlebury, VT	188	Seneca Falls, NY	59
Cooperstown, NY	196	Peterborough, NH	77.4
Hamilton, NY	208	Rockport, ME	82.4
Seneca Falls, NY	268	Cooperstown, NY	94.2

The sample communities were chosen to be similar to Williamstown in remoteness

# DISTANCE: HIGHWAYS AND HOSPITALS

Town	Distance to Interstate Highway (Miles)	Town	Distance to Large Hospital (Miles)
Davidson, NC	1.3	Cooperstown, NY	0.4
Waterville, ME	1.4	Waterville, ME	1.3
Lenox, MA	5.3	Rockport, ME	2.9
Oberlin, OH	6.1	Granville, OH	5.2
Seneca Falls, NY	6.3	Lenox, MA	7.4
Granville, OH	9	Oberlin, OH	9.5
Cooperstown, NY	18.3	Seneca Falls, NY	10.4
Hamilton, NY	21.3	Peterborough, NH	10.9
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>32.9</b>	Hamilton, NY	19.3
Middlebury, VT	34.9	<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>19.9</b>
Millerton, NY	36.4	Davidson, NC	21.5
Peterborough, NH	40.6	Millerton, NY	29.6
Rockport, ME	42.1	Middlebury, VT	34

Focus on large hospitals because closures are more unusual in this group

# DEMOGRAPHICS: YOUTH

Town	Youth	Total Population	Percent Youth
Granville, OH	854	3,167	27%
Rockport, ME	877	3,326	26%
Peterborough, NH	1,478	5,883	25%
Millerton, NY	226	925	24%
Seneca Falls, NY	2,204	9,347	24%
Davidson, NC	1,506	7,139	21%
Lenox, MA	1,058	5,077	21%
Cooperstown, NY	411	2,032	20%
Waterville, ME	3,075	15,605	20%
Middlebury, VT	1,431	8,183	17%
Hamilton, NY	898	5,733	16%
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>1,293</b>	<b>8,424</b>	<b>15%</b>
Oberlin, OH	1,201	8,195	15%

Note that the lowest percent youth are all college towns! This is not a measure of 'young adults' but of children.

# DEMOGRAPHICS: SENIORS

Town	Seniors 65+	Total Population	Percent Seniors
Cooperstown, NY	547	2,032	27%
Peterborough, NH	1,220	5,883	21%
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>1,647</b>	<b>8,424</b>	<b>20%</b>
Waterville, ME	2,832	15,605	18%
Rockport, ME	558	3,326	17%
Seneca Falls, NY	1,474	9,347	16%
Granville, OH	465	3,167	15%
Oberlin, OH	1,233	8,195	15%
Millerton, NY	143	925	15%
Lenox, MA	1,237	5,077	14%
Middlebury, VT	1,088	8,183	13%
Davidson, NC	766	7,139	11%
Hamilton, NY	631	5,733	11%

Williamstown has a relatively high proportion of its population over 65.

# EDUCATION: GRADUATION RATE AND READINESS

Town	Graduation Rate	Town	College Readiness Index
Davidson, NC	99.10%	Hamilton, NY	60.1
Granville, OH	96.50%	Cooperstown, NY	43.2
Lenox, MA	94.9%	Oberlin, OH	43
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>93.8%</b>	Lenox, MA	40.4
Peterborough, NH	93.10%	Rockport, ME	39.8
Rockport, ME	92.22%	Granville, OH	37.1
Hamilton, NY	92.20%	<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>33.8</b>
Cooperstown, NY	91.10%	Waterville, ME	29.1
Oberlin, OH	89.90%	Millerton, NY	29.1
Middlebury, VT	87.00%	Peterborough, NH	27
Seneca Falls, NY	85.00%	Seneca Falls, NY	25.2
Waterville, ME	75.0%	Middlebury, VT	21.8
Millerton, NY	71.80%	Davidson, NC	--

Williamstown ranks relatively high in graduation rate - a widely-used measure of school quality.

# EDUCATION: STUDENT TEACHER RATIO

Town	Local High School	Student- Teacher Ratios
Lenox, MA	Lenox Memorial	9.15
Rockport, ME	Camden Hills Regional	10.69
Hamilton, NY	Hamilton Junior-Senior	10.8
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>Mount Greylock</b>	<b>11.24</b>
Middlebury, VT	Middlebury Senior High	11.7
Cooperstown, NY	Cooperstown Central	12.18
Peterborough, NH	Conval Regional	12.34
Seneca Falls, NY	Mynderse Academy	12.81
Davidson, NC	Community School of Davidson	13.44
Waterville, ME	Waterville Senior High	14.02
Millerton, NY	Stissing Mountain High	14.86
Oberlin, OH	Oberlin High	15.04
Granville, OH	Granville High	19.09

## COMMUNITY GOALS AND ENVIRONMENT

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# PLANS

Town	Comprehensive Plan Year
Cooperstown, NY	1994
Millerton, NY	1994
Lenox, MA	1999
Hamilton, NY	1999
Rockport, ME	2004
Seneca Falls, NY	2007
Oberlin, OH	2011
Davidson, NC	2012
Granville, OH	2012
Peterborough, NH	2012
Middlebury, VT	2012
Waterville, ME	2014
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	--

Phone interviews were conducted for each community to identify goals, policies and local attitudes

# COMPARISON COMMUNITY GOALS AND POLICIES

Town	Most Important Goals	Policies Implemented	Policy Years
<b>Waterville, ME</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using a regional approach to economic development</li> <li>Workforce development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnering with Central Maine Growth Council</li> <li>Establish foreign trade zone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2001</li> <li>2014</li> </ul>
<b>Lenox, MA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be welcoming to all businesses</li> <li>Fill up vacant spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attempt to be friendlier</li> <li>Update Zoning Codes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2005-2011</li> </ul>
<b>Davidson, NC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Want the right mix of businesses/ tenants</li> <li>Expand the town accordingly (especially as the population grows)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning Ordinance (no drive- throughs, minimum 2 story height requirement)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2001</li> </ul>
<b>Granville, OH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain small town identity while attracting appropriate businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not actively pursuing any policies; just preserving/ maintain existing conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NA</li> </ul>

# COMPARISON COMMUNITY GOALS AND POLICIES

Town	Most Important Goals	Policies Implemented	Policy Years
<b>Oberlin, OH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce Issues</li> <li>• No vacant buildings</li> <li>• Stimulating residential development</li> <li>• Upgrading internet capabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job training/employment programs</li> <li>• Redevelopment of older properties</li> <li>• Working to get better internet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2013</li> </ul>
<b>Hamilton, NY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilizing resources</li> <li>• Maintaining the unique community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership for Community Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2000</li> </ul>
<b>Seneca Falls, NY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiring a developer</li> <li>• Helping businesses move in (a casino)</li> <li>• Getting the National Women's Organization to move into the old mill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Still looking for a developer (unsuccessful)</li> <li>• Increase access and parking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2015</li> </ul>
<b>Cooperstown, NY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage people to live in the community (especially after 1990's)</li> <li>• Extend working/business hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Development Committee</li> <li>• Outdoor Dining Law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2001</li> <li>• 2014</li> </ul>

# COMPARISON COMMUNITY GOALS AND POLICIES

Town	Most Important Goals	Policies Implemented	Policy Years
Millerton, NY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns about traffic and schools</li> <li>Want to attract new population and boost property values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harlem Valley Rail Trail, Phase 4 going to be constructed</li> <li>Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In progress</li> <li>2009</li> </ul>
Peterborough NH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attract new businesses with jobs</li> <li>Not enough affordable housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic Development Authority</li> <li>Citizens active in helping new businesses</li> </ul>	
Rockport, ME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create jobs</li> <li>Encourage private investment in real estate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not many policies</li> <li>High speed fiber network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2012-2013</li> </ul>
Middlebury, VT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating more jobs and investment opportunities</li> <li>Expanding economic diversity of town and maintaining good quality of jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of Middlebury Development Fund</li> <li>Increasing internet access</li> <li>Developing infrastructure (airport runway, creating a research corporation with college)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2013</li> </ul>

# COMPARISON COMMUNITY BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Town	Steps to Open a Business	Public Pressure	Relationships with College
<b>Waterville ME</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must have public comment period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive, wants development</li> </ul>	NA
<b>Lenox MA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a public hearing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Split between development and not wanting change</li> </ul>	NA
<b>Davidson NC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If by right, no public comment; otherwise it is possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Split pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No formal relationship</li> </ul>
<b>Granville OH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goes through Planning Commission, around a 30 day process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Split and very controversial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recently been more involved with each other</li> </ul>
<b>Oberlin OH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs committee and council approval; takes around 6 weeks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No pressure to limit economic development, big push for more jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate on lots of projects (joint grant writing, rebuild downtown)</li> </ul>
<b>Hamilton NY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Just the planning board (if complies with regulations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Want to increase tax base, but keep the integrity of the town</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports PCD and Hamilton Initiative (Real Estate)</li> </ul>

# COMPARISON COMMUNITY BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Town	Steps to Open a Business	Public Pressure	Relationships with College
<b>Seneca Falls NY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go through zoning codes (generally smooth)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has all types of opinions</li> </ul>	NA
<b>Cooperstown NY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any variance requires a public hearing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Split pressures</li> </ul>	NA
<b>Millerton NY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities for public input</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative pressures, don't want change</li> </ul>	NA
<b>Peterborough NH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Just Zoning Board if it wants to change something</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Split pressures</li> </ul>	NA
<b>Rockport, ME</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very possible to have public hearings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equal amounts of both pressures</li> </ul>	NA
<b>Middlebury VT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goes through Middlebury Planning Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive, lots of pressure for more development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very connected through MDF</li> </ul>

## ANALYSIS

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# COMPARISON OF COMMUNITIES

## Higher prosperity communities in interview data (Granville, Davidson, Peterborough)

- Economic Development Authority
- Some restrictive policies, and absence of policies
- New businesses require no public comment (if no zoning change) or a relatively quick 30 day process

## Lower 'prosperity' communities in interview data (Waterville, Seneca Falls, Lenox)

- Foreign trade zone?
- Looking for a developer
- Need to update zoning laws
- Many require public comment period or public hearing

Communities of both types have *some* opposition to development

Middlebury, Oberlin, Waterville mention pressure for *more* development

# RELATION BETWEEN OUTCOMES AND DRIVERS

<b>Variables</b>	Population Growth	Employment Growth	Income Growth	Income Level	Rankings	Average of Coefficients
Urban Distance	<b>-0.3052</b>	<b>-0.3623</b>	-0.1568	<b>-0.4772</b>	<b>-0.4618</b>	<b>-0.3254</b>
Seniors	<b>-0.4075</b>	-0.3011	0.1091	-0.2429	-0.0158	-0.2106
Airport Distance	<b>-0.3626</b>	-0.1508	0.0722	-0.1594	0.0846	-0.1502
Interstate Dist	<b>-0.4047</b>	-0.2422	<b>0.4478</b>	-0.0735	0.1267	-0.0682
Hospital Dist	-0.1137	-0.1054	0.2435	0.0104	-0.1259	0.0087
HPrice:Income	-0.1392	-0.1424	<b>0.3662</b>	0.1288	0.1318	0.0534
H Price Growth	-0.0285	0.1128	0.2453	0.0351	0.2199	0.0912
Multipliers	0.1559	0.2157	<b>0.3305</b>	<b>0.3481</b>	<b>0.5168</b>	0.2626
Plan Year	<b>0.4544</b>	<b>0.3915</b>	-0.0527	0.2806	0.2574	0.2685
Youth	0.2623	<b>0.4036</b>	0.019	<b>0.3984</b>	<b>0.3159</b>	0.2708
Graduation Rate	<b>0.4496</b>	0.2865	0.1307	<b>0.622</b>	<b>0.3738</b>	<b>0.3722</b>
Student:Teacher	<b>0.5421</b>	<b>0.6564</b>	<b>0.3057</b>	<b>0.4415</b>	<b>0.4652</b>	<b>0.4864</b>

Education is strongly associated with economic outcomes.

# MULTI-VARIATE ANALYSIS OF PROSPERITY INDEX

Policy Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Economic Multiplier	7.80	6.86	10.42
Education (Grad Rate)	18.18	18.82	21.86
House Price to Income	-0.58	-0.42	-0.90
Broadband	1.49	1.63	0.49
Percent Youth	-	16.77	3.46
Property Tax	-	-	0.11
Constant	-17.00	-20.30	-26.36

- Note that these estimates are **not precise** due to very small sample
- They should be interpreted as **measures of association**
- Nevertheless, they seem **intuitively plausible**
- They do have implications for policy

## CONCLUSION

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# SUMMARY

- We learn a great deal from comparison with 'peer' communities
- Williamstown is certainly not hopeless! About in the middle of this group of communities (somewhat by design)
- Local opposition to economic development is widespread, must be navigated
- Controversy about local economic development need not be an insurmountable barrier to prosperity

# PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Encourage business networks** between Williamstown employers and others in the town and region to increase multiplier
- **Educational quality** Continue strong and unwavering commitment and work to improve graduation rates and other outcome measures
- **Improve housing affordability** by increasing overall housing supply and house building
- **Broadband?** Since we are near the bottom of the group we will probably have to consider policies to improve
- **Expedite new business entry decisions** - by right or within 30 days

QUESTIONS?

# PROPERTY TAXES

	Property Tax Rate / \$1000
Lenox, MA	12.07
Rockport, ME	12.99
Hamilton, NY	13.59
Oberlin, OH	14.48
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>15.28</b>
Waterville, ME	17.00
Granville, OH	25.00
Middlebury, VT	27.18
Peterborough, NH	29.80
Davidson, NC	35.00
Millerton, NY	36.50
Seneca Falls, NY	42.80
Cooperstown, NY	47.20

# BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS

	Download		Upload	
	> 10 Mbps	> 25 Mbps	> 10 Mbps	> 25 Mbps
Hamilton, NY	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Millerton, NY	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Davidson, NC	99.70%	99.70%	97.70%	18.30%
Peterborough, NH	95.50%	95.50%	95.50%	95.50%
Middlebury, VT	98.80%	73.00%	73.00%	73.00%
Seneca Falls, NY	100.00%	100.00%	22.80%	22.80%
Oberlin, OH	100.00%	10.50%	3.40%	3.40%
<b>Williamstown, MA</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>2.90%</b>	<b>2.90%</b>	<b>2.90%</b>
Cooperstown, NY	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Granville, OH	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Lenox, MA	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Waterville, ME	99.60%	96.70%	0.00%	0.00%
Rockport, ME	-	-	-	-

## Appendix D. Prioritization of Recommendations by the EDC

Category	Recommendation	Score	Rank
Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning	a Each town board or department should review its regulatory programs that affect business development, including town regulations and the processes by which both state and town regulations are administered. The goal of the review is to ensure that the rules and the regulatory processes are easy to understand and do not pose an undue burden on economic development. Applicable boards and departments include the Office of Community Development, the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Sign Commission and the Conservation Commission.	1.1	1
Education	a The Town should promote and support the MGRSD building project as a way to provide a better educational environment for the long term.	1.2	2
Marketing the Town	a Develop over the course of 2016 a recommended marketing plan. The plan should be based on input from representatives from local stakeholders and cultural institutions including: Destination Williamstown, The Williamstown Chamber of Commerce, The Clark, Williams College, MASS MoCA, the Williams College Museum of Art, the Williamstown Film Festival, and the Williamstown Theatre Festival. The town should consider marketing in conjunction with the Berkshire Visitors Bureau.	1.2	3
Regional Approach	a The Town of Williamstown should participate more actively in regional economic development programs. This may include, but should not be limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership in regional economic development organizations</li> <li>• Participation in regional economic development funding proposals</li> <li>• Receipt of regional economic development funding dollars</li> <li>• Direct liaison activities with economic development interests in regional, and especially neighboring communities.</li> </ul>	1.2	4
Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning	b The Office of Community Development should review its permitting processes to: identify those which can benefit from better explanation and guidance on how applicants can comply with the requirements. Suggested measures include web-based applications, deadlines for department action, consolidated proceedings, having forms and checklists on-line and having flow charts to illustrate the processes. The Selectboard should endeavor to create constructive anonymized feedback mechanisms to assess public opinion of department operations.	1.2	5
Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning	i The Town should develop and implement plans to make business districts vibrant, attractive, and convenient to use. 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 business districts.	1.2	6
Education	b The Town should continue to support and maintain the high quality of education delivered in its public school districts.	1.3	7
Employment & Workforce	d Support Williamstown companies that wish to grow and add staff. Efforts may include flexible interpretation of zoning by-laws, and more permissive granting of variances.	1.3	8
Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning	m The Town should organize and develop financial and staff resources to support the Town's economic development 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.	1.3	9
Population	a The Town should develop strategies to increase the overall number of residents, and incorporate a mindfulness of this goal in all of its planning efforts.	1.4	10
Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning	c Zoning by-laws should be reviewed to determine whether there are unnecessary obstacles to allowing a full range of housing, including moderately priced housing (not just subsidized Affordable Housing), multi-family housing, retirement and assisted living facilities.	1.4	11
Housing	a Encourage the town, perhaps led by its Affordable Housing Committee and Affordable Housing Trust, to update the housing needs assessment with recommendations for how to address the identified needs. Clearly research, update, and document the need for housing in the community, including (1) more moderately priced housing for middle income homeowners of all ages, (2) subsidized housing for those with incomes below 80% of the area median income and (3) the housing options needed by the Town's population over the age of 65.	1.5	12
Population	b The Town should develop strategies that encourage age diversity, and which particularly stimulate the growth of the under 45-year-old segment of the population (currently receding).	1.5	13

## Appendix D. Prioritization of Recommendations by the EDC

Category	Recommendation	Score	Rank
<b>Tourism</b>	a The region needs to begin to market itself to foster a sense of pride and excitement among local people, visitors as well as among potential new residents. The town should highlight and uncover the strong sense of community and rich opportunities and resources residents have at their fingertips each and every day. As part of the marketing plan recommended above, recognize and promote our natural environment and cultural attractions as among Williamstown's most important assets. Coordinate with the marketing by our cultural institutions. Identify and protect the scenic and rural landscape and open spaces especially along the entrances to Williamstown.	1.5	14
<b>Marketing the Town</b>	b Consider whether to develop a line item or other appropriation for marketing expenses to be included in the municipal budget for FY 2017.	1.6	15
<b>Employment &amp; Workforce</b>	b Support efforts to recruit businesses to relocate to Williamstown. Town efforts may include facilitated development of commercial space, and modified zoning, as described more fully in the Town Hall Processes section of this report below.	1.7	16
<b>Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning</b>	d The Town should develop regulations and programs to encourage appropriate home-based businesses as of right without having to go through a permitting process.	1.7	17
<b>Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning</b>	l The Selectmen should consider assigning a committee with appropriate resources and authority to oversee development and implementation of this economic development strategic plan, in conjunction with the Town's staff. Membership of this committee should represent Williamstown's diverse economic development interests and organization.	1.7	18
<b>Housing</b>	b Encourage the Planning Board in its regulatory review of the current zoning bylaws and subdivision rules and regulations and to explore whether the regulations unnecessarily inhibit the development of diverse housing types that the community seems to desire, in consideration of the assessment recommended above.	1.8	19
<b>Internet Access</b>	a The town should continue to investigate the potential of broadband access to be a community asset for both residents and businesses, and to understand the project scope, costs, benefits and organizational options for such a project so that an informed decision can be made whether to pursue broadband access.	1.8	20
<b>Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning</b>	k The Town should 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. Topics for attention include: linking investors with entrepreneurs; identifying small business educational and financing programs; developing a small business start-up guide or identifying resources that can provide that guidance; promoting business support services such as the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center and Berkshire Enterprises.	1.8	21
<b>Health Care</b>	a The town should be an advocate with regional political and health based institutions to ensure adequate access to a broad range of health care services.	1.9	22
<b>Health Care</b>	b The Planning Board should review the zoning bylaws to determine if there are any unnecessary barriers to health related uses, including businesses in home health care, skilled nursing and assisted living.	1.9	23
<b>Tourism</b>	c 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 special events, outdoor adventure tours, river recreation, and equipment rentals.	1.9	24
<b>Transportation</b>	b Participate in BRPC's regional transportation process and support the increase of state and federal funding for improvements to Berkshire County's transportation system.	1.9	25
<b>Education</b>	c The Town should market Williamstown as a destination with high quality public education	2.0	26
<b>Employment &amp; Workforce</b>	c The town should consider strategies for recruiting new businesses to town, including active funding of marketing and recruitment experts.	2.0	27
<b>Marketing the Town</b>	c Identify strategies to promote Williamstown to potential new residents.	2.0	28
<b>Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning</b>	h The town should identify dilapidated or underutilized parcels that are privately owned but have the potential to be assets for economic development. The town should consider the need to supplement enforcement options to address privately owned dilapidated buildings.	2.0	29
<b>Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning</b>	j The Town should develop a current parking study and pursue the provision of additional parking in the Village Business District – Spring and Water Streets area.	2.0	30

## Appendix D. Prioritization of Recommendations by the EDC

Category	Recommendation	Score	Rank
Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning	p 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.	2.0	31
Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning	e Zoning should encourage sustainable high-density mixed-use and residential development within commercial districts and promote infill and reuse of existing buildings.	2.1	32
Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning	n The Town should continue to support local agriculture, including the Farmers Market as an outlet for local agricultural products, and as an attraction for visitors and residents.	2.1	33
Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning	o The Town should continue to collaborate with Williams and The Clark on mutually supportive projects. Major institutions should be encouraged to promote purchase of goods and services from local vendors to better support the local economy. Support Williams College investment in the Town and to enhance Williamstown's arts and cultural offerings.	2.1	34
Transportation	e Encourage the expansion of bike trails in the Northern Berkshire region to include Williamstown.	2.1	35
Population	d The Town should review the Berkshire Young Adult and Age Friendly Survey results for recommendations that can be implemented within Williamstown.	2.2	36
Transportation	c Collaborate with other groups to advocate for passenger rail service to the region. The EDC approved this recommendation	2.2	37
Housing	c Encourage the Planning Board to explore where in town various housing types may be most appropriate.	2.3	38
Employment & Workforce	a Partner with groups like the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board to expand job training and career development in Williamstown, especially for high school graduates.	2.4	39
Housing	d Continue to support the development of Subsidized Affordable Housing (SAH) at the former Photec site on Cole Avenue and other subsidized housing options if needed. Small scale projects that fit the character of the local neighborhood and the community should be pursued if possible.	2.4	40
Regional Approach	b When possible "regional" economic development planning should not be limited to Massachusetts and should include our neighbor communities in Vermont and New York, including Pownal and Bennington.	2.4	41
Transportation	a Encourage the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority to expand public bus service in Williamstown and surrounding communities.	2.4	42
Population	c The Town should examine more closely the needs of seniors to identify actions that may help the Town be an age-friendly community.	2.5	43
Tourism	d Work to take advantage of the cultural district as designated by the Massachusetts Cultural Council to promote the town as an attraction for visitors.	2.5	44
Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning	f Develop a municipal profile that provides important community information such as demographics, business mix, commercial space costs, available community incentives, and tax rates to help potential investors.	2.5	45
Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning	g Build upon and maintain a comprehensive site inventory of vacant or unoccupied commercial and industrial space, including size, zoning, condition, special considerations, and other relevant information to market available space. Once established, work to make such sites developer-ready by proactively addressing zoning, infrastructure, or brownfield concerns.	2.5	46
Transportation	d Encourage initiatives to develop car-based transportation options using new technology. Models may include ridesharing and carpooling web sites	2.5	47
Public Finance	a The EDC is not making any recommendations to develop any form of town-based tax relief or other financial support programs. Although state and federal programs that give income tax relief maybe effective sometimes, the amount of tax relief or financial support that Williamstown might be able to offer on its own would be modest – most likely based on real estate tax relief and possibly on a town-funded grant or loan program if town meeting voted for such a program. Example of programs include Tax Increment Financing, creation of a Business Improvement District to help fund projects, and establishment of a revolving loan fund. It does not appear that the amount of money available under such programs would by itself be large enough to motivate a business's decision to stay in, or move to, Williamstown.	2.6	48

## Appendix D. Prioritization of Recommendations by the EDC

<b>Category</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Rank</b>
<b>Tourism</b>	b Support efforts for 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.	<b>2.6</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Town Hall Processes, Including zoning and planning</b>	q The town should consider whether to have second regular town meeting so that changes to municipal regulations can be achieved on a timelier basis.	<b>2.6</b>	<b>50</b>