



## **THE ROLE OF REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCIES IN FACILITATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Report No. 02-06  
December 18, 2002

## **Executive Summary**

After reviewing the work of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in facilitating economic development in the Pioneer Valley, the Research Bureau encourages the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission to do the following:

- Broaden its role to more closely resemble that of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC). The PVPC has worked with a broad array of public and private agencies to prepare the *Plan for Progress*, a regional economic development plan, and has established an organization of that region's public, private and civic sectors to oversee the plan, and implement its strategies. Governor-elect Romney's interest in identifying economic development strategies for each region of the Commonwealth provides the opportunity for CMRPC to focus more in this direction.
- Seek out new funding sources related to economic development opportunities in keeping with this broader role.
- Request that the state legislative delegation from this area ask for a special act of the state legislature to change the governance of CMRPC in accordance with its shift in focus from strictly a planning agency to one that promotes economic development as well. Rather than having one delegate selected from each town's planning board, both delegates should be chosen by the town's CEO, since economic development is a general government function.

## **I. Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to discuss the role of regional planning agencies in facilitating economic development. In its recently issued report (#02-04), the Research Bureau proposed the formation of a regional economic development alliance to promote a more favorable business climate so as to facilitate economic development in the greater Worcester area. The report suggested that membership in this alliance should include both public and private agencies addressing issues of planning, transportation, business development, workforce development, brownfields redevelopment, marketing and tourism. CMRPC which is this area's regional planning agency, would constitute a core member of the proposed alliance. Therefore, it would be useful to know how it might best contribute to the alliance's goal of facilitating economic development. To help determine this, the Research Bureau reviewed the activities of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, a planning commission very much like CMRPC in its origins and purpose. The PVPC has developed a close working relationship with the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council, discussed in our previous report as a successful model of a regional alliance. Our goal was to determine whether the work of the PVPC provided lessons applicable to the greater Worcester area. Before turning to a discussion of the current work of Regional Planning Agencies, we begin by reviewing the history and traditional functions of these agencies.

## **II. A Brief History of Regional Planning in Massachusetts**

The growth of regionalism in Massachusetts began in 1955 with the Massachusetts Regional Planning Law (Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40B). That law was among the first of its kind in the nation, and was created to permit a city or town to plan jointly with cities and towns to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated and orderly development of the areas within their jurisdictions and the general welfare and prosperity of their citizens.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1955 and 1970, 13 Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) and Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) were established as state-designated districts in which municipalities could voluntarily join to address their mutual economic development, environmental, land use, and transportation interests.<sup>2</sup> Since that time, nearly all of the 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts have joined RPAs. The establishment of these state-authorized regionalization efforts also coincided with an increase in Federal funds available to promote regionalism. Hence, for example, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, which serves 101 municipalities in the Boston region, was founded in 1963 by the state, but also serves as a Federal economic development district mandated by the Public Works Development Act (PWDA) of 1965. RPAs in Massachusetts, however, are not direct arms of either the state or Federal governments; they are independent agencies generally receiving funding from small local assessments, augmented by state and Federal government grants and Federal pass-through funds. The RPAs receive administrative overhead costs for serving as conduits of Federal funds.

The responsibilities of Regional Planning Commissions as mandated by MGL 40B include: conducting studies on development and transportation; using data and technical knowledge to assist local government planning; and preparing Geographic Information System (GIS) map information for their regions.<sup>3</sup> Also, the Regional Planning Commissions are either coordinators of or participants in the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) committees. Developing a CEDS plan makes a region eligible to receive Federal funds for the implementation of economic development projects administered by the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Today there are 13 RPA's in Massachusetts. This report focuses on the work of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission because of certain similarities between the Pioneer Valley and the Worcester region, as noted in the table below, and because of PVPC's close collaboration with the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council, a regional economic development alliance whose work we have suggested may be instructive for the greater Worcester area.

---

<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies, 'Background Information' in its promotional literature, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> The distinction between an RPA and an RPC is apparently negligible, and the terms most often are used interchangeably with RPA as a trade term that encompasses RPCs.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter 40B does not mandate GIS mapping. Three years ago, nine regions, including CMRPC, were designated GIS regional service centers by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs.

**Table A**

<b>DATA ON CMRPC AND PVPC REGIONS</b>					
	Population	Square miles	Member Communities	Budget	Staff
PVPC	608,000	1,178	43	\$4.9 million	50 (48 full time 2 part time)
CMRPC	518,480	960	40	\$1.2 million	23 (15 full time 8 part time)

### **III. The Work of Regional Planning Commissions**

#### **A. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission**

26 Central Street

West Springfield, MA 01089

Web address: [www.pvpc.org](http://www.pvpc.org)

Phone: (413) 781-6045

Fax: (413) 732-2593

Contact: Tim Brennan, Executive Director

Budget: \$4.9 million—State and Federal grants, local assessments, and \$1.9 million in pass through funds and revolving loan funds

Staff: 48 full and 2 part time

#### **Mission/Description**

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission is a public regional planning commission established under MGL Chapter 40B of the Acts of 1962. Its purpose is to promote regional collaboration among its member communities. It provides research and analysis services to member communities and businesses in a wide variety of areas including housing, community and rural development, economic development, historic preservation, environment and land use, municipal services, transportation and transit issues, as well as providing technical assistance to member communities. This work is implemented through cooperation with state and Federal legislators, regional transit authorities, zoning boards, historical commissions, and municipal officials.

The PVPC membership includes 43 communities from rural areas, such as Ware and Plainfield in the north and Tolland and Holland in the south, and such urban communities as Holyoke, Springfield, Chicopee, and Westfield. The dominant geographic features of the Pioneer Valley region are the Connecticut River, Interstate-91, and the Greater Hartford region. The region seems to be more strongly linked with Vermont, Connecticut, and New York rather than the rest of Massachusetts. The PVPC's region, which includes more than 608,000 people, covers nearly 1,200 square miles, and is the fourth largest metropolitan area in New England.

Each of the PVPC's member communities is represented on the commission by two people: a commissioner, who is also a member of his city's or town's planning board and an alternate commissioner, who is appointed by the city's or town's chief elected official. A nine-person Executive Committee, composed of the Planning Commission's five officers and four PVPC Commissioners

elected at-large, all from member communities, governs the PVPC. The Board of the Commission oversees the work of the Commission's staff. PVPC's current budget of \$4.9 million is funded by state and Federal grants (75%), Federal government pass-through funds (20%), and a \$0.15 per capita per year local assessment formula (5%). (Seventy-five percent of local assessments are returned to member communities for projects specific to particular communities.) To secure grants, almost all PVPC staff members write grant applications. Grants come from Federal agencies such as the Economic Development Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency, and state agencies such as the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Housing and Community Development, Massachusetts Highway Department and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. These grants are designed to address specific regional priorities.

## **The Commission's Work**

For several decades, the PVPC focused much of its attention on transportation and transit-related issues (expending about \$1.25 million in FY02), and provided technical assistance such as zoning and planning studies to member communities. In the early 1990's, however, the PVPC began to approach regional projects in a broader manner. During the last decade, the PVPC has developed regionwide plans that cover three major topics: economic development, transportation, and land use and environmental protection. All three are concerned with the goal of promoting livable, prosperous communities throughout the region. One of those plans, the *Plan for Progress* (completed in 1994), established short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategies for revitalizing the Pioneer Valley region's economy and creating job opportunities for its residents. Following the publication of *Choosing to Compete*, an economic strategy for Massachusetts developed by the Weld Administration, which outlined categories for action and examined each region of the Commonwealth, the PVPC developed a plan based on this blueprint, filling in the details from the section on the Pioneer Valley. The *Plan for Progress* follows the premise found in *Choosing to Compete*: economic development is a partnership of government with business, labor, and the research and academic community to establish a business climate that is favorable to business growth and new job creation. In order to develop the *Plan for Progress*, the PVPC conducted research to determine the current composition, strengths and weaknesses of the Pioneer Valley's regional economy and its available physical, human and capital resources. The published results also included a regional report card comparing the Pioneer Valley to other parts of the nation in the major categories of economic competition. The research phase was followed by a public participation phase, which consisted of three economic summits, the first two of which were designed to solicit suggestions related to elements of the economy. The third was intended to develop strategies for implementing these proposals. After all the public testimony was completed, the PVPC developed its strategic plan for economic development in the region, and committees were established comprising organizations that could implement these strategies.

The plan's recommendations included:

- Developing a regional identity that connects Pioneer Valley communities.
- Tapping the region's extensive higher education system.
- Increasing the export of goods and services.

- Stimulating economic growth in urban core communities such as Springfield, Holyoke and Chicopee.
- Attracting and keeping businesses in the Pioneer Valley region by helping them receive capital funding, secure permits, and find and retain dedicated, skilled workers.
- Cleaning up and promoting the Connecticut River for recreational use and economic growth.

A 60-member board of trustees from the region's public, private and civic sectors oversees the implementation of this plan. Teams of academic volunteers, business leaders, professionals and stakeholders carry out the individual strategies. (See Appendix A for an organizational chart of agencies responsible for implementing the strategies.) Currently the PVPC is adding Census 2000 data in order to revise the *Plan for Progress* so the PVPC can update its goals for the next decade. Among the successes of the *Plan for Progress* have been the establishment of Mass Ventures which helps start-up businesses find venture capital and provides business coaching, and a telecom corporation, which has focused on building the region's telecom infrastructure. (See Appendix B for a list of other successes.)

The PVPC's *Plan for Progress* was followed by the Commission's development of two other regional plans, one on transportation and the other on land use and environmental protection. In addition to providing updates of the regionwide reports mentioned above, the PVPC also publishes a yearly report on the State of the Region which measures that region's performance in terms of its economy, its workforce, the health of its people, transportation and environment. (See Appendix C for a summary of the latest findings.) The PVPC also publishes numerous newsletters, community profiles, digests of data, Census 2000 statistics, and research papers. For example, the PVPC worked with other public and private sector entities and the Economics Department at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst to publish promotional literature for New England's Knowledge Corridor. The Knowledge Corridor is a collaboration among the City of Springfield, the City of Hartford, Bradley International Airport, institutions of higher education in the region, and public and private institutions promoting economic development for the area. The PVPC has worked closely with the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts (EDC) and officials from Hartford to market and advance the Connecticut River Valley as a place to receive an education, locate a business, work, and live. Part of this effort has included attending trade shows of real estate developers and courting site selectors to tour the region. Recently, the Planning Commission resolved to make smart growth and the Connecticut River Interstate Clean-Up key initiatives. These goals reflect the PVPC's desire to balance economic development opportunities with thoughtful environmental land use policies. In 2001, the PVPC helped UMass-Amherst secure a \$600,000 National Science Foundation grant to implement a Regional Technology Alliance to identify and link similar technology-based companies with each other and institutions of higher education to develop clusters of area technology firms.

It seems clear from the *Plan for Progress* and the above-mentioned projects to implement the plan (as well as those listed in Appendix B) that the PVPC has assumed a leadership role in the region. Among officials statewide, the PVPC enjoys a reputation as the most effective regional planning commission in Massachusetts, and it has a growing reputation among RPAs nationwide. It has developed the capacity to bring together other public and private entities such as the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts, the regional alliance that promotes economic development in a way the

Research Bureau proposed for an economic development alliance in the greater Worcester area. (See Report #02-04.)

## **B. Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission**

35 Harvard Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

Worcester, MA 01609

Web address: [www.cmrpc.org](http://www.cmrpc.org)

Phone: (508) 756-7717

Fax: (508) 792-6818

Contact: William Newton, Executive Director

Budget: \$1.2 million—State and Federal grants, pass through funds, and local assessments

Staff: 15 full time, 8 part time

### **Mission/Description**

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission was established in 1963 under the same state enabling legislation as PVPC. Its primary purpose is similar to what the PVPC had been focusing its attention on until recently. The Commission's work emphasizes transportation planning, traffic growth, and corridor planning studies; regional and community land use planning studies, and free technical service. It recently added GIS mapping and demographic research. This commitment is particularly evident with its recent completion of GIS buildouts for every member community including Worcester. CMRPC is currently administering the state's 418 Community Development Plan program on behalf of 36 of its 40 communities.<sup>4</sup> CMRPC serves southcentral Worcester County, including the City of Worcester and 39 surrounding towns, with a combined population of 518,480. The agency works with local commissions, state and Federal agencies, and the members of the Massachusetts Legislature. CMRPC also meets regularly with local planning board officials.

The CMRPC is governed by an Executive Committee, selected by the Commission's 67 delegates who are members of their town planning boards, and 40 alternate delegates appointed by the CEO of each community. The Planning Commission's 12-member Executive Committee meets monthly, while the full Commission meets quarterly. During the past year, CMRPC expanded the number of sub regions from five to six by subdividing the large northwest area for better land use and transportation planning. This decision resulted in the addition of an executive committee member. The Executive Committee oversees the Executive Director and the staff. CMRPC's budget in FY02 was \$1.2 million, \$950,000 (80%) of which is related to transportation projects. The remainder comes from local assessments (8%), consulting services, and administration of grants.

---

<sup>4</sup> On January 21, 2000, former Governor Cellucci issued Executive Order 418, Assisting Communities in Addressing the Housing Shortage. The order directed the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Department of Economic Development to cooperate in the development of a three-year program to assist each community in the State to prepare a Community Development Plan. Each Plan must contain four components addressing: (a) how the community will create new housing opportunities over a broad range of incomes; (b) where the community will target commercial and industrial development; (c) how it will improve its transportation infrastructure; and (d) how it will protect its natural resources and preserve open space.

## **The Commission's Work**

As these budget figures indicate, the main work of CMRPC is focused on transportation and highway planning programs. This work is necessary to ensure that the region is eligible for state and Federal improvement funds. In this capacity, CMRPC receives planning funds from the state Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA). The Commission hosts an annual Transportation Information Forum, which includes a review of the region's major transportation planning assumptions as well as presentations by state legislators and the administrator of the WRTA.

In efforts to advance its joint highway and transit planning initiatives, CMRPC works with the WRTA Advisory Board, the Massachusetts Highway Department, and local officials to prepare the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In addition, the Planning Commission must complete updates on the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that identifies major regional transportation issues for the region. These RTP documents are made available by CMRPC at local libraries and town halls. CMRPC's highway planning work also involves preparation of a Congestion Management System (CMS) Progress Report that addresses the area's CMS work on roadway focus segments, critical intersections, and Massachusetts Highway's park-and-ride facilities. CMRPC also oversees traffic counts.

CMRPC's Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP) offers planning, GIS mapping, and grant oversight to communities in the area. Examples of this assistance during the last year included the following:

- Worked with the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce officials to insure that the Route 146 Corridor Overlay District meets high development standards that do not damage the environmental resources in the Valley.
- Started work on an Open Space and Recreation Plan to make Paxton eligible for state matching funds for open space acquisitions and park improvement.
- Completed a Trail Planning Study for CMRPC's North Subregion, including Barre, Holden, West Boylston, Princeton, Paxton, Rutland, and Oakham.
- Initiated a Master Plan study in West Boylston as part of the Town-Wide Planning Program with funding provided by the Town, MDC, and the Executive Order 418 planning program.
- Continued administration of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program for Barre (barrier removal in the Henry Woods Municipal Building) and construction of a new Senior Center on South Barre Road.
- Began a buildout study for the City of Worcester that includes both a greenfields analysis and special redevelopment component to account for new growth in areas that are targeted for reuse of previously developed land.



- Provided mapping assistance to Charlton's planning consultant to identify areas appropriate for new economic development along the Route 20 Corridor.
- Provided mapping services for CMRPC's Blackstone Valley Corridor Planning Study. GIS staff prepared a Development Suitability Model to identify areas most suitable for growth throughout the Blackstone Valley.

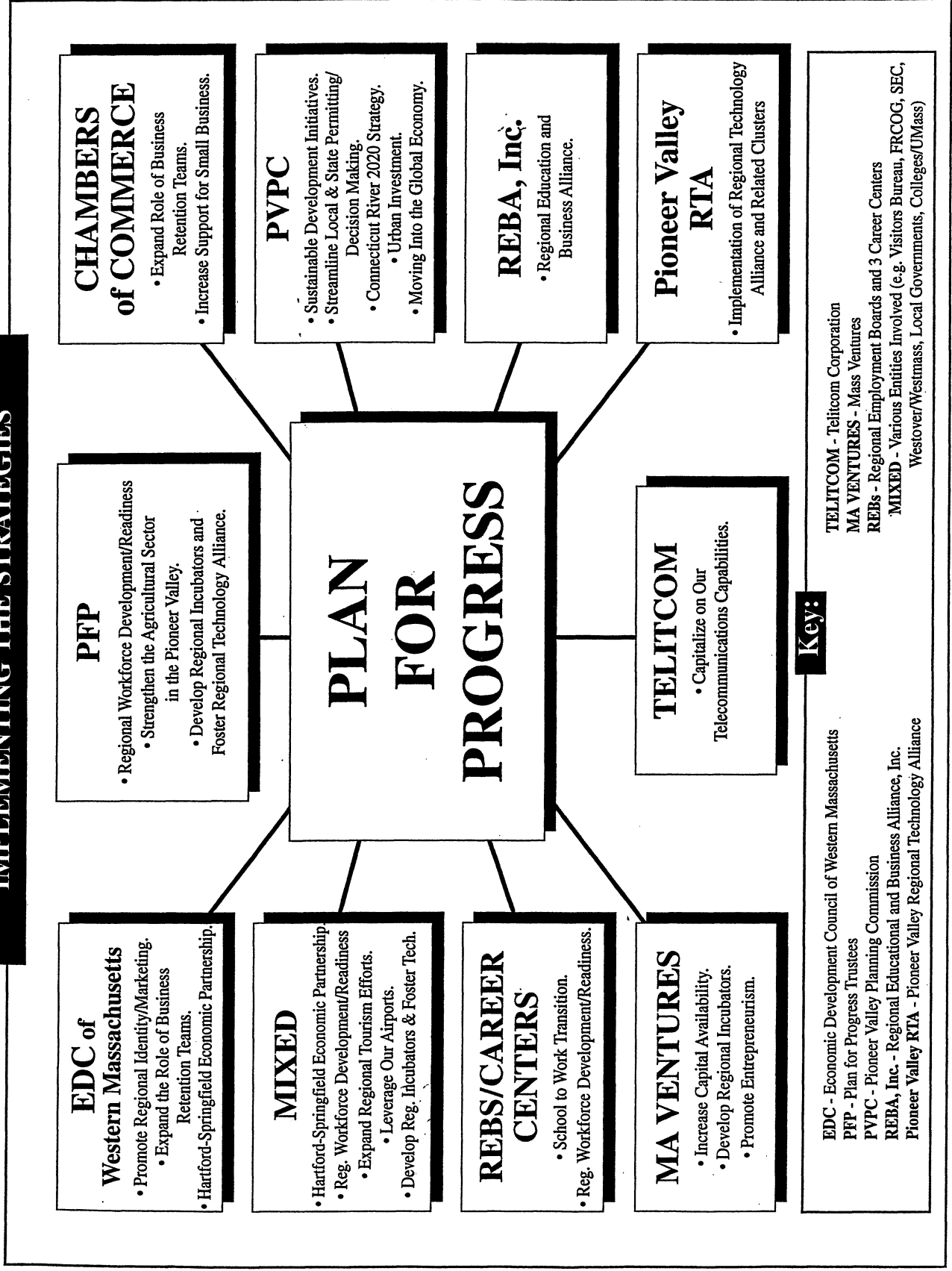
In 1996, CMRPC published its *Economic Conditions and Prospects Study*, a monograph similar to the PVPC's *Plan for Progress*. Its purpose was to analyze the economy of the region and the prospects for promoting economic development, and to design a set of strategies for promoting economic development in the CMRPC region. Unfortunately, there was no organization established like the one in the Pioneer Valley to promote implementation of those strategies.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

While CMRPC develops a transportation improvement plan for the region each year as required by Federal law, most of the remainder of its work, as evident by the examples provided above, addresses planning issues for individual communities or sub-groups of the region as requested by those communities. Could CMRPC play a similar role in this region to the one played by the PVPC? It started to do that with the publication of its *Economic Conditions and Prospects Study* in 1996. In order to broaden the role of CMRPC, the Research Bureau makes the following recommendations:

- CMRPC should review the work of the PVPC and other planning commissions to determine how it could play a broader regionwide role in facilitating economic development and promoting a better business climate in the greater Worcester region. Governor-elect Romney's interest in identifying economic development strategies for each region of the Commonwealth provides the opportunity for CMRPC to focus more in this direction.
- If it broadens its role, CMRPC should seek out new funding sources related to economic development opportunities.
- The Worcester City Council and town boards of selectmen should ask the state legislative delegation in the Worcester area to request a special act of the state legislature to change the governance of CMRPC in accordance with its shift in focus from strictly a planning agency to one that promotes economic development as well. Rather than having one delegate selected from each town's planning board, both delegates should be chosen by the town's CEO, since economic development is a general government function.

# **PIONEER VALLEY PLAN FOR PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIES**





Sought and secured a third annual planning grant from the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) to provide ongoing logistical and technical support to regionwide economic planning activities, the Plan for Progress Trustees, and the EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD). Convened the second meeting of the Pioneer Valley EDD Planning Cabinet.

Completed the required 2001 annual update report to the Pioneer Valley's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), including a listing of eligible CEDS projects seeking EDA federal assistance based on proposals submitted by PVPC communities. Submitted supplemental background information requested by EDA officials, including a vision statement and a plan performance evaluation process. Included a proposed Holyoke Medical Mall project, designated a high priority for the region along with the Springfield-based Pioneer Valley Life Sciences Initiative.

Completed additional refinements to the regionwide brownfield sites inventory compiled by PVPC. Worked in concert with Springfield, Holyoke, West Springfield, and Easthampton officials to identify eligible candidate sites for an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-funded brownfield site assessment program; retained consultant firm to conduct site assessment work and executed consultant contract for EPA-approved site in Easthampton. Co-authored, with West Springfield, a successful EPA grant application for brownfield assessment work in the Merrick Section and pressed for this area to be selected as a model brownfield industrial park. Continued to nominate sites eligible for state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) technical assistance grants and encouraged communities to seek this funding. Identified and solicited applicants eligible for low-interest clean-up loans available under an EPA-funded regional brownfield revolving loan fund operated and managed by PVPC.

Continued to participate in regionwide welfare-to-work planning and implementation efforts, taking a leadership role in transportation planning issues focusing on modification of fixed route bus service. Assisted the Human Services Forum in organizing and initiating an economic impact assessment of the social services agencies serving the Pioneer Valley.

Accomplished a number of objectives and successfully implemented action milestones for several strategies connected to the Plan for Progress, the strategic regional economic plan for the Pioneer Valley:

- Helped the University of Massachusetts and MassVentures Inc. secure a \$600,000 two-year grant award from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to implement the new Regional Technology Alliance (RTA)

strategy, which aims to identify and link similar technology-based companies with each other and in-region higher education institutions by way of "cluster networks"; two are now fully operational. Engaged directors of Cluster Development and Communication for the RTA.

- Continued efforts to strengthen the region's Workforce Development Strategy, responding to changes initiated by the federal Workforce Investment Act and a nationwide economic slowdown. Continued as a 21st Century Skills Network Performance Partner. Collaborated with the Hampden, Franklin/Hampshire, and Hartford, Connecticut regional employment boards to successfully secure a U.S. Department of Labor Community Audit grant award to define a more natural cross-border labor market encompassing the greater Springfield and Hartford regions, to identify high job vacancy rates in a series of emerging growth industries throughout this interstate region, and to develop an action-oriented response to meet their workforce needs.

- Continued to pursue goals and action steps tied to the Agriculture Strategy. Collaborated with Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA) to facilitate a Hampden county "buy local" campaign. Worked with the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture to compile a comprehensive listing of economic development resources available to Pioneer Valley agricultural businesses. Initiated an effort to increase institutional purchasing of locally grown products. Supported strategic planning efforts by the commonwealth's Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to preserve farmland through thoughtful economic development. Reviewed and endorsed a proposed new omnibus agricultural bill sponsored in the state Legislature by Representative Stephen Kulik of Worthington.

- Adopted the recommendations of a newly formed Sustainable Development Work Group to integrate sustainable development policies and practices into the Plan for Progress to help keep the Pioneer Valley both livable and economically competitive. Secured a seed grant from Western Massachusetts Electric Company, and a commitment of in-kind student and faculty resources from Hampshire College, to compile a regionwide inventory of at least 100 sustainable development policies, practices, and projects already in place in the region, slated for completion in early 2002.

- PVPC's Executive Director participated in the Pioneer Valley's Regional Forum in October 2001, presenting a list of the region's top ten suggestions, concerns, and recommendations for its economy and future prospects. Provided the Massachusetts Department of Economic Development and the Donohue Institute at the University of Massachusetts with a detailed package of reports, statistics, maps, plans, and other materials to help develop a new statewide economic plan for the commonwealth, targeted for completion in Spring 2002.

- The Urban Investment Strategy Team finalized and pursued action steps to initiate a regional discussion about the role of vital core cities in regional identity; examine the asset of youth in the urban core and engage them in the urban planning process; inventory underutilized office space in urban downtown areas to evaluate their potential to support new technology-intensive businesses; and support and strengthen neighborhood commercial areas, especially in the urban core cities of Springfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee.
- The Plan for Progress Trustees and Coordinating Council continued to support widespread public information and outreach efforts to ensure strong community support for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), a testing process initiated under statewide educational reform.
- Actively participated in and supported the new Hartford-Springfield Economic Partnership, a Massachusetts-Connecticut initiative to strengthen links and collaborations across state lines, by conducting a joint study effort with the Capitol Regional Council of Governments to evaluate improved ground transportation access to Bradley International Airport; securing EPA grant funds and advancing combined sewer overflow correction projects along the Connecticut River; acquiring an enhanced computerized economic forecasting model (REM); and completing an interstate economic analysis of the cross-border region, previewed at a "State of the Region" public forum in October 2001.

Source: "Major Accomplishments of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in 2001," pp. 19-21.

## THE STATE OF THE PIONEER VALLEY REGION—IN SUMMARY

The quality of life in the Pioneer Valley region is good and the future is promising. The bonds that form our communities are strong, enabling us to meet the challenges we will face. The number of cultural opportunities is on the rise. Efforts to improve the water quality of the Connecticut River have yielded results. The regional economy, having recovered from the hard economic times of the early 1990s, is poised to continue strong performance. It out-performs the national economy in two important measures, unemployment and productivity of the manufacturing sector.

This is not to say that we have no concerns for the future. Not all households are sharing in the economic prosperity emanating from a strong economy. For example, despite growth in income, poverty rates continue to grow. Our dependence on the automobile is increasing as the region's residents own more cars and drive more miles. This raises concerns about congestion, air quality, and a lack of funding to adequately maintain the roadway infrastructure. Further, urban sprawl continues to be a problem that only exacerbates these concerns.

The table below summarizes our findings. The first box lists indicators whose trends are moving in a direction to enhance the quality of life in the region. This list includes indicators with stable trends that preserve the quality of life in the region. The top right box lists indicators showing changes that diminish the quality of life. The remaining two boxes list indicators whose trends suggest both enhancement and diminishment are occurring, and indicators for which we do not have enough data to determine a trend. Listed with the indicators for which we lack new data are indicators that we excluded from this year's report because they cannot be updated until results from the 2000 census are published.

Quality-of-Life-Enhancing Trends	Quality-of-Life-Diminishing Trends
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Childcare Facilities Capacity</li> <li>Deaths from Major Cardiovascular Disease</li> <li>Culture and Recreation Spending</li> <li>Voter Turnout (stable)</li> <li>Attendance at Public Library Events</li> <li>Crime Rate</li> <li>Net Migration</li> <li>Housing Affordability</li> <li>Municipal Debt</li> <li>Unemployment</li> <li>Number of Jobs</li> <li>Average Wage (stable)</li> <li>Per Capita Income</li> <li>High School Dropout Rate</li> <li>Academic Achievement</li> <li>Motor Vehicle Fatalities and Injuries</li> <li>Per Capita Public Transportation Ridership</li> <li>Public Transportation Ridership per Service Mile (stable)</li> <li>Miles of Dedicated Bike Paths and Lanes</li> <li>Water Consumption per Resident</li> <li>Number of Combined Sewer Overflows</li> <li>Air Quality Index</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poverty Rate</li> <li>Low-Weight Births</li> <li>Substance Abuse Cases</li> <li>Size of Youth Population</li> <li>Service Jobs per Manufacturing Job</li> <li>Registered Motor Vehicles per Resident</li> <li>Daily Miles Driven per Resident</li> <li>Average Daily Traffic at Key Points</li> <li>Urban Sprawl</li> <li>Acres of Farmland</li> <li>Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption per Resident</li> </ul>
Mixed Trends	More Data Needed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household Income</li> <li>Productivity</li> <li>Waste Generation and Recycling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educational Attainment</li> <li>Brownfield Sites</li> <li>Indicators Not Used This Year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Home Ownership</li> <li>Vehicle Ownership</li> <li>Automobile Use for Commuting</li> <li>Commuting Time</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Be sure to visit the Worcester Regional Research Bureau's interactive website for the full text of all of our recent reports and notices of upcoming events.

**WWW.WRRB.ORG**