

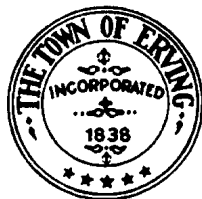
TOWN OF ERVING

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHAPTER



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**Franklin Regional
Council of Governments**

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Executive Summary

The purpose of local economic development planning is to achieve a sustainable economy that supports business development, job growth and prosperity, and that meets the goals and vision of the community. Often this encompasses job creation, public and private sector investment, and an overall enhancement of quality of life. Economic development activities impact many facets of life, from the jobs where people work, to the commercial and industrial tax revenues that help pay for schools, public safety, and roads.

The Town of Erving requested assistance from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) to update their Economic Development Chapter of the *2002 Erving Master Plan*. The following chapter is based on the *2002 Erving Master Plan*, the *2010 Erving Open Space and Recreation Plan*, and the results of public meetings held by the Economic Development Chapter Committee in the fall of 2012.

The purpose of this Chapter is to guide the Town of Erving in promoting economic development in a manner that is consistent with its vision. Erving is a rural town located in the North Quabbin region of Franklin County, Massachusetts. Route 2, also known as the Mohawk Trail, travels the length of the municipality, and is the major east-west transportation route in northern Massachusetts. The Town has three distinct village areas, Erving Center, Farley, and Erving side. The Town has stated its economic development goals are to support existing and new industrial, commercial and recreational development in a manner that enhances job opportunities, promotes tourism and improves residents' quality of life. In addition, the Town is seeking to diversify its tax base to maintain a stable municipal budget.

This Chapter includes important data that describes the current population and economy of the community, and also includes a discussion of the community's characteristics and factors that have an impact on economic development in the community. The Town of Erving has recently experienced a greater rate of population growth than what was experienced in the past decades. As reported by the federal 2010 Census, Erving had a total population of 1,800, which was an increase of 333 people or a 23% change from 2000. This growth trend is contrary to the general stagnant population change experienced in the region, and slowing population growth in the state.

Similar to regional and state trends, the Erving population is getting older, with the proportion of age cohorts 44 years old and younger decreasing and age cohorts from 45 years to 74 years old increasing. However, Erving differs slightly from the broader geographic areas in that it experienced only a slight decrease in the percent of the population 17 years old and under. This is a result of Erving having a higher percentage of families with children than compared to the county. The data demonstrates that the population of Erving is evolving. It is thought that younger families are attracted to the community due to its geographic proximity to regional population and employment centers (such as Amherst), excellent educational system, and low residential tax rate. This age cohort of residents may place specific needs and strains on the community over time. It is important for the Town to recognize and address these issues for future planning purposes.

Based on recent federal statistics, Erving residents generally earn incomes lower than most residents in Franklin County, and lower than most residents in Massachusetts overall. Erving's unemployment rate has experienced greater fluctuation than the surrounding region and state over the last decade. In particular, Erving and the surrounding towns were greatly impacted by the recent economic recession. The size of the labor force was increasing with more people seeking employment, and the level of those employed decreasing. The unemployment rate for Erving residents is high relative to other areas of the region, and most of its residents commute by car outside of the community for work. Creating more jobs in Erving would help create a more sustainable local economy.

According to Massachusetts labor market information, in 2011 there were a total of 29 business establishments located in Erving, with a total average monthly employment of 253. Much of the community's employment base is in manufacturing and in the energy sector. According to recent regional and statewide studies, despite plant closures experienced in the 1990s and early 2000s, the manufacturing sector is showing signs of strength. More manufacturing jobs will become available as older workers retire over the next decade. The skills needed for these jobs often differ from past manufacturing jobs, and may require specific skills training and education.

The energy sector in the region is expanding with an increase in the number of renewable energy generation projects and greater attention on energy efficiency initiatives. The 2010 regional Green Communities Action Plan, titled *A Strategy for Regional Collaboration in the North Quabbin Region*, found that wind energy generation in Erving is not feasible, but that solar generation is a possibility.

Erving is also rich in scenic beauty and natural recreational resources, which adds to the quality of life for residents and has attracted tourism. Projects are proposed to build upon these assets and further develop a tourism industry in Erving, such as to build a bike path, improve access to and protection of the Millers River, develop visitor amenities, and participate in regional promotional campaigns.

In Erving, there are vacant and underutilized mill properties that offer the opportunity to create new space for single use purposes or for a mix of uses and users. The Pioneer Valley region has seen successful redevelopment of mills for artist studios, business offices, and light manufacturing. Support by the community and the leveraging of public resources is important to assist property developers in accomplishing the challenging task of mill redevelopment.

The Town is championing the redevelopment of the former Usher Plant in Erving Center by taking ownership of the property and leading its clean-up. A group of interested residents, businesses and public officials have formed the Usher Mill Re-Use Committee to advocate for the site's redevelopment and to forward a public planning process to spur its revitalization. The Committee proposes the creation of a redevelopment plan that envisions multiple uses for the site, including recreational, natural resource conservation, community events, historic resources, and commercial/retail.

The former Millers Falls International Paper facility in Ervingside is also vacant and available for redevelopment. Further work needs to be conducted regarding its sewer system, since its design to support paper manufacturing is oversized for most other uses. The Renovator's Supply, Inc. building in Ervingside is also underutilized and capable of being leased for more intensive commercial and/or industrial use, such as office, artist studios and rehearsal space, distribution and manufacturing.

At the end of this Chapter are recommendations and action items that were developed to guide the Town in accomplishing its economic development goals and objectives over the next ten years and beyond. These recommendations focus on creating more small and medium sized businesses, utilizing regional resources, facilitating the redevelopment of the Usher Plant, encouraging physical improvements in the village centers, fostering greater municipal and business community communication, focusing efforts on developing Erving as a tourist destination, and more. The Town has an excellent opportunity to build on its existing assets to support and create businesses that benefit residents and visitors alike, while enhancing the community character and sense of place.

Introduction

The purpose of local economic development planning is to achieve a sustainable economy that supports business development, job growth and prosperity, and that meets the goals and vision of the community. Economic development planning should produce goals and objectives that encourage economic opportunity for all. Often this encompasses job creation, public and private sector investment in a community, and an overall enhancement of quality of life. Economic development activities impact many facets of life, from the jobs where people work, to the commercial and industrial tax revenues that help pay for schools, public safety, and roads.

At the core of economic development is employment that provides a favorable standard of living for residents. Local jobs provide wages to residents, bring employees and visitors from outside the community to spend money, and help balance the tax base in the town. Supporting local businesses, which provide jobs, is critical.

Economic development planning should encourage a community to evaluate local conditions and set goals for achieving desired economic growth. There are several approaches to advancing a community's wealth and well-being. Strategies may include recruitment of firms from outside the area, efforts to retain and grow existing businesses, and nurturing new small business creation and entrepreneurship. Each of these strategies addresses the cultivation of employment opportunities through existing job preservation or new job creation. However, to make any of these strategies successful, a coordination of efforts must be in place regarding workforce development, business location, adequate infrastructure, and access to financing. All of these elements must be in careful balance to encourage new business development while maintaining community character. Towns can address some of these through their own efforts, such as providing locations for business development through zoning and developing infrastructure, or can engage with others to foster a dynamic business climate, such as partnering with the local business community and business development organizations.

A town's economic health impacts the services that are provided by that community on several levels. Employment opportunities that offer benefits, stability and a living wage for residents contribute to the economic well-being of individuals and families. A sizeable, consistent commercial and industrial tax base contributes funding for schools, libraries, infrastructure, recreational facilities and other municipal services. Increased commercial activity in the village allows resident shopping dollars to continue to circulate within the town as opposed to exporting the dollars out of the area. In addition, increased commercial activity in a community's downtown contributes to the overall quality of life by providing goods and services locally.

The Town of Erving requested assistance from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) to update their Economic Development Chapter of the *2002 Erving Master Plan*. The Town of Erving completed the comprehensive *2002 Erving Master Plan* with support from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments and the Center for Economic Development at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Development of *2002 Erving Master Plan's* Economic Development Chapter used a participatory public planning process as well as the results from a

1997 economic development survey conducted by the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, which had been done at the request of the Board of Selectmen. This updated Chapter is based on the *2002 Erving Master Plan*, the *2010 Erving Open Space and Recreation Plan*, and the results of public meetings held by the Economic Development Chapter Committee in the fall of 2012.

This updated Chapter reflects the Town of Erving's work to proactively plan for economic development that fits with the community character. The Town is developing strategies to address challenges for fostering economic development that fit with the community's goals and vision. The recommendations and action items that outline the implementation of these strategies are included at the conclusion of the chapter.

Goals and Objectives

These Goals and Objectives are based on those from the Economic Development Chapter of the *2002 Erving Master Plan*, with input and updates from the Economic Development Chapter Committee in 2012.

Goal: To support existing and new industrial, retail, and recreational development in a manner that will increase employment opportunities, promote tourism, and improve residents' quality of life.

Objectives:

- Improve Erving Center with emphasis on supporting the redevelopment of the Usher Plant property for potential economic and recreational purposes.
- Address infrastructure issues that may jeopardize the retention or expansion of existing businesses.
- Collaborate on a regional tourism strategy that capitalizes on the Town's scenic beauty and recreational opportunities.
- Encourage existing and new efforts to promote economic activity that restores and enhances the ecological health of the Town, region, and nation, including pollution prevention, water quality improvement, alternative energy, and resource and energy efficiency.
- Retain the scenic quality and natural resources of Erving that contribute to the community character.
- Support local small businesses that provide goods and services to residents and visitors.
- Encourage efforts to upgrade the quality of telecommunications services throughout the Town.

Goal: Diversify the tax base to maintain a stable municipal budget.

Objectives:

- Determine whether the low residential tax rate can be maintained into the future without attracting inordinate residential growth.
- Become involved with regional efforts to develop new industries that create jobs and add value to local timber forest and non-timber forest products.
- Investigate the Town's potential for renewable energy generation; micro-hydro (does not require a dam), wind, solar, biomass, and landfill gas are all potential resources in the community that are currently not utilized.

Community Description

The Town of Erving is in the eastern part of Franklin County, and bounded by the Towns of Gill, Northfield, Montague, Orange, Wendell and Warwick. Erving has a rich industrial heritage because of its location along the Millers River and the historic Mohawk Trail. The Mohawk Trail traverses the town on Route 2, which is the primary transportation corridor in the northern tier of Massachusetts. There are three villages within the Town. They are Erving Center, Farley and Ervingside. The community is also home to significant natural areas, including the Erving State Forest and Northfield Mountain reservoir. More information about the landscape characteristics and the history of the Town is available in the *2010 Erving Open Space and Recreation Plan*.

Demographic & Labor Force Characteristics

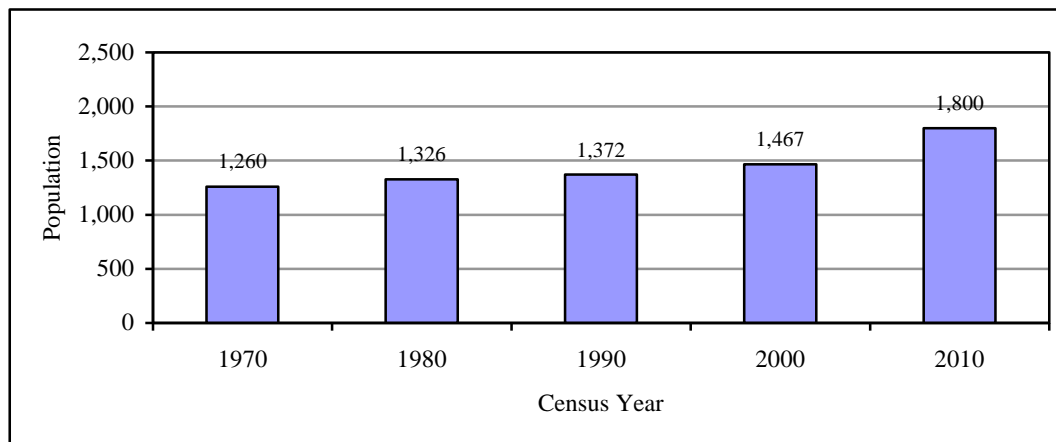
It is important to understand the demographic and labor force characteristics of a community as a foundation for economic development planning. Comprehending overall demographic trends will help determine the need for employment opportunities and the size of the labor pool available to businesses in the community. Factors such as the age distribution and educational level of residents offer a glimpse into the type of workforce presently available. The incomes of Erving residents provide information about the present wages offered in the region and provide guidance about the types of jobs and wages needed to support residents. More information about the data discussed in this section is included in tables in the Appendix.

Population

The Town of Erving has a total population of 1,800, as reported by the federal 2010 Census. Erving is located in eastern Franklin County and bordered by the towns of Gill, Montague, Northfield, Orange, Warwick, and Wendell. Together these towns have a total population of 24,236, including Erving. In terms of households, there are 745 households in Erving with an average household size of 2.42 people. For Erving and the bordering towns, there are 10,125 households.

The population for Erving for 2010 reflects an increase of 333 people from 2000, or a 23% change. This rate of population growth is much greater than what was experienced in the past decades. Between 1990 and 2000, the population increased by 7%, and between 1970 and 2000 the total population increased by 16%. Erving's rate of population growth in the last decade was the second highest in the county. This growth trend is contrary to the general stagnant population change experienced in the region, and slowing population growth in the state. Franklin County's population remained stable over the last decade, with just a slight decline of -0.2%. Many of the towns bordering Erving, however, experienced slight to moderate increases in population, with the exception of Montague, where the population remained relatively stable, and Wendell, which experienced a -14% decrease in population.

Figure 1: Erving Population, 1970-2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census Program

Income and Wealth

There are three measures of wealth used to characterize the economic health of residents. They are per capita income, median household income and poverty rate. The most recent town-level information available about income and wealth is from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey¹ (ACS). An ACS five-year estimate for the period of 2006-2010 is available for each of these measures. It should be noted that there is a margin of error associated with each data estimate, because it is determined from a sample of the population surveyed, and that this margin of error may be considerable.²

Per capita income is determined by dividing the total amount of income earned in a geographic area by the total number of the residents (including residents who may not be generating income, such as children and the elderly) in that area. According to 2006-2010 ACS, the five-year estimated per capita income for Erving was \$22,491, which was lower than the Franklin County income of \$27,544. Compared to bordering towns, Erving had the second lowest per capita income out of the seven towns, which ranged from \$21,825 in Orange, to \$31,479 in Northfield.

Median household income describes the middle income among all households, thus eliminating any extreme numbers (either the very wealthy or very poor) from influencing the overall figure. Median household income includes data for families, for households of unrelated people, and for individuals living alone. According to the 2006-2010 ACS, the five-year estimated median household income for Erving was \$51,458, which was slightly lower than the Franklin County

¹ Traditionally, the U.S. Census Bureau's decennial census program published data collected from a short-form survey sent to all households and a long-form survey sent to a sampling of households. Beginning with the 2010 Census, the long-form survey ceased. In its place is the American Community Survey (ACS), which was designed to be comparable to past decennial censuses. The ACS conducts a sample survey across the country on an annual basis, and releases data in one-year, three-year or five-year estimates, depending on the size of the geography. For areas with less than 65,000 people, the ACS only publishes five-year estimate data.

² The American Community Survey (ACS) margin of error for any data item may be researched using the American FactFinder online tool at <http://factfinder.census.gov/>.

median household income of \$52,002. Erving ranked as having the third lowest median household income among the surrounding towns.

Families for the purpose of the Census are defined as “a group of two or more people who reside together and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption.” Therefore all single person households, and households of unrelated people, are not counted when determining median family income levels of Erving residents. According to the 2006-2010 ACS, median family income in Erving was estimated to be \$54,375, which was significantly lower than the county (\$65,760) and the state (\$81,165). Erving has a higher percentage of households falling within the definition of “family” than the county and state, as well as a higher percentage of families with children.

Poverty level is another measure used to understand a community’s income and prosperity. Using income thresholds that vary by family size, the Census Bureau determines whether an individual (for whom poverty level is determined) lives below an established poverty threshold level. According to the 2006-2010 ACS, an estimated 8.5% of Erving residents, for whom poverty status was determined, were living below the poverty level. This poverty rate was lower than the County’s and statewide rate of poverty.

Based on these statistics from 2006-2010 ACS, Erving residents generally earn incomes lower than most residents in Franklin County, and lower than most residents in Massachusetts overall.

Table 1: Income and Poverty

Geography	2006-2010 ACS Five-year Estimate			
	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Poverty Rate
Erving	\$22,491	\$51,458	\$54,375	8.5%
Franklin County	\$27,544	\$52,002	\$65,760	11.3%
Massachusetts	\$33,966	\$64,509	\$81,165	10.5%

Note: Dollar amounts are 2010 inflation adjusted.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau’s 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-year Estimate

Age Distribution

The most comprehensive data available on age distribution is from the federal decennial censuses. It is important to know the amount of people within population age groups and how they are changing over time. The rise and fall in the number of people in an age group can impact the demand for municipal and community services, such as schools and housing, and impact the size of the available labor pool and consumer base. The following table shows the relative percentage of the population in age groups in 2000 and 2010.

As these groupings, or age cohorts, depict the resident workforce in the community, this information is helpful for economic development planning. A trend occurring across the state and nation is the significant increase in the older workforce cohort of individuals age 45 to 64. This is a reflection of the “Baby Boom” generation (born from 1946 to 1966) getting older. The circumstance of having an increasingly older work force presents opportunities and challenges.

The large older work force has the work experience employers are seeking. However, as technological advances impact many industries, older workers will need to be flexible and have access to opportunities to diversify their skills. In addition, workers in the 65 to 74 year age group are having a greater role in the workforce than in previous decades due to postponement of retirement for financial, career or other personal reasons. Some may opt to postpone retirement by reducing their hours or starting in a new career direction, such as consulting, or shift into a new occupation entirely.

Overall the population in Erving has aged over the last ten years, as the percentage of the population in age cohorts from 44 years old and younger have decreased, while the percentage of the population in age cohorts from 45 years old to 74 years old have increased. This overall trend is consistent with surrounding towns, Franklin County, and the state. The largest growth occurred in the 45 to 64 years old category, while the largest decreases occurred in the 25 to 44 years old cohort. Erving differs slightly from the broader geographic areas in that it experienced only a slight decrease in the percent of the population 17 years old and under, while the percentage of this age group generally declined 4% in the region. Erving also has a larger percentage of residents within the 17 years old and under, and 25 to 44 years old cohorts than surrounding towns, the county, and the state, and a smaller percentage of 18 to 24 year olds than all other geographies. As already mentioned, Erving has a higher percentage of families with children than the county, which would help explain the higher percentage of children and those within the 25 to 44 age group (the parents).

Table 2: Comparison of Age Distribution

	Total Population	17 Years & Under	18 to 24 Years	25 to 44 Years	45 to 64 Years	65 to 74 Years	75 Years & Over
Erving							
2000	1,467	22.9%	6.5%	30.5%	26.3%	6.7%	7.1%
2010	1,800	22.5%	5.7%	26.7%	31.2%	7.8%	6.1%
Difference	333	-0.4%	-0.8%	-3.9%	4.9%	1.2%	-1.0%
Surrounding Towns (including Erving)							
2000	23,524	24.8%	7.2%	28.8%	24.9%	7.2%	7.2%
2010	24,236	20.7%	7.8%	23.7%	32.8%	7.7%	7.2%
Difference	712	-4.0%	0.6%	-5.1%	8.0%	0.5%	0.0%
Franklin County							
2000	71,535	23.4%	7.9%	28.4%	25.9%	6.7%	7.6%
2010	71,372	19.7%	8.2%	23.1%	33.7%	7.9%	7.3%
Difference	-163	-3.7%	0.3%	-5.3%	7.8%	1.2%	-0.3%
Massachusetts							
2000	6,349,097	23.6%	9.1%	31.4%	22.3%	6.8%	6.8%
2010	6,547,629	21.7%	10.4%	26.5%	27.7%	7.0%	6.8%
Difference	198,532	-1.9%	1.2%	-4.9%	5.4%	0.2%	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2000 Census SF3, 2010 Census SF1

These data demonstrate that the population of Erving is evolving. It is thought that younger families are attracted to the community due to its geographic proximity to regional population

and employment centers (such as Amherst), excellent educational system, and low residential tax rate. This age group of residents may place specific needs and strains on the community over time. It is important for the Town to recognize and address these issues for future planning purposes.

Education and Skills

The educational attainment level of the population is important from an employer or business perspective, as it demonstrates the ability of a community to provide local labor and expertise which may be an important factor in a company's decision to launch, relocate or remain in the community. It may also influence efforts for residents to gain greater access to educational opportunities and skills training.

According to 2006-2010 ACS five-year estimates, Erving had a higher proportion of residents whose highest level of educational attainment is a high school diploma or some college than surrounding towns, Franklin County and Massachusetts. Erving had a slightly higher percentage of residents with Associate Degrees, and lower percentages of residents with a Bachelor, Graduate, or Professional Degree than surrounding towns, the county, and the state. This information is relevant when analyzing the skill base in the community for different types of employment opportunities.

Table 3: Highest Educational Attainment Level

Geography	2006-2010 ACS Five-year Estimate						
	Total Population 25 years and over	Less than 12th Grade	High School Diploma	Some College	Associate Degree	Bachelor Degree	Graduate, Professional Degree
Erving	1,234	138	511	267	128	161	29
<i>% of Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>11%</i>	<i>41%</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>2%</i>
Surrounding Towns*	17,148	1966	5,969	3,303	1600	2,503	1,807
<i>% of Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>11%</i>	<i>35%</i>	<i>19%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>11%</i>
Franklin County	51,066	4,547	15,686	9,364	4,863	9,283	7,323
<i>% of Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>8.9%</i>	<i>30.7%</i>	<i>18.3%</i>	<i>9.5%</i>	<i>18.2%</i>	<i>14.3%</i>
Massachusetts	4,382,378	495,822	1,171,725	701,624	334,998	961,563	716,646
<i>% of Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>11.3%</i>	<i>26.7%</i>	<i>16.0%</i>	<i>7.6%</i>	<i>21.9%</i>	<i>16.4%</i>

* Includes Erving and all bordering towns.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-year Estimate

In 2007, the Massachusetts Department of Education started to release graduation rate data. Using the Student Management Information System, the Commonwealth is able to track an individual class from 9th grade through graduation. Through a formal agreement high school students in Erving may attend the Turners Falls High School in Montague, which is part of the Gill-Montague Regional School District. However, it is common for Erving students to elect to attend a high school in a neighboring community, such as the Franklin County Technical School, the Four Rivers Charter School, and the Pioneer Valley Regional High School. Table 4 shows

the four-year graduation rates in recent years for the school districts attended by Erving high school students and other nearby districts.

Table 4: Four-Year Graduation Rates

School District (Location)	2011 Rate	2010 Rate	2009 Rate	2008 Rate	2007 Rate
Four Rivers Charter (Greenfield)	88.9	80	90.3	89.7	NA
Franklin County Vocational (Turners Falls)	92.9	90.2	87.6	93	87.4
Frontier Regional (Deerfield)	89.5	87.8	92.3	88.6	85.2
Gill-Montague Regional (Turners Falls)	67.1	68.4	66	64.7	69.1
Greenfield Public (Greenfield)	76.6	76.2	71.9	74.8	68.4
Mohawk Trail Regional (Buckland)	76.1	75.5	80.2	78.8	80.7
Pioneer Valley Regional (Northfield)	81.1	84.3	90.3	88.1	86.8
Ralph C. Mahar Regional (Orange)	62.1	61.3	71.2	73.2	73.2
Massachusetts Statewide Average	83.4	82.1	81.5	81.2	80.9

NA: Graduation rate data not available.

Note: Graduation rates are for all students and not adjusted for cohort.

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education – School District Profiles

According to data from the Massachusetts Department of Education, the Gill-Montague Regional School District has had a four-year graduation rate lower than the state average for the past five years. Whereas, the Franklin County Vocational School District, Four Rivers Charter School and the Pioneer Valley Regional School District had graduation rates either close to or above the state average for the same period. Based on this information, community support for individuals to access adult education or additional skills training may be needed to support employers' needs.

The Massachusetts Department of Education also conducts an annual survey of high school seniors to ask about their intended plans upon graduation. For seniors at Turners Falls High School during the 2010-2011 school year, the survey indicated that 39% planned to attend a four-year college, 46% planned to attend a two-year college, 9% planned to enter the workforce, 4% had other plans, and for 4% of the students, plans were unknown. In comparison, students statewide indicated that 59% planned to attend a four-year college, 23% planned to attend a two-year college, 7% planned to enter the workforce, 5% had other plans, and for 6%, plans were unknown. The combined total for graduating seniors from Turners Falls High School planning to attend either a two-year or a four-year college is 84%. Graduation plans for seniors at Turners Falls High School and the other schools also attended by Erving students are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Plans Upon Graduation

School District	Total Count	4 Year College	2 Year College	Work	Other (including military)	Unknown
Four Rivers Charter	24	70.9%	8.3%	12.5%	8.4%	0.0%
Franklin County Vocational	108	12.0%	31.5%	31.5%	7.4%	17.6%
Gill-Montague Regional	57	38.6%	45.7%	8.8%	3.5%	3.5%
Pioneer Valley Regional	63	31.7%	42.9%	15.9%	4.8%	4.8%
Massachusetts Statewide Average	-	59.0%	23.0%	7.0%	5.0%	6.0%

Note: This data reflects responses by seniors when asked their intended plans upon graduation.

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education – School District Profiles

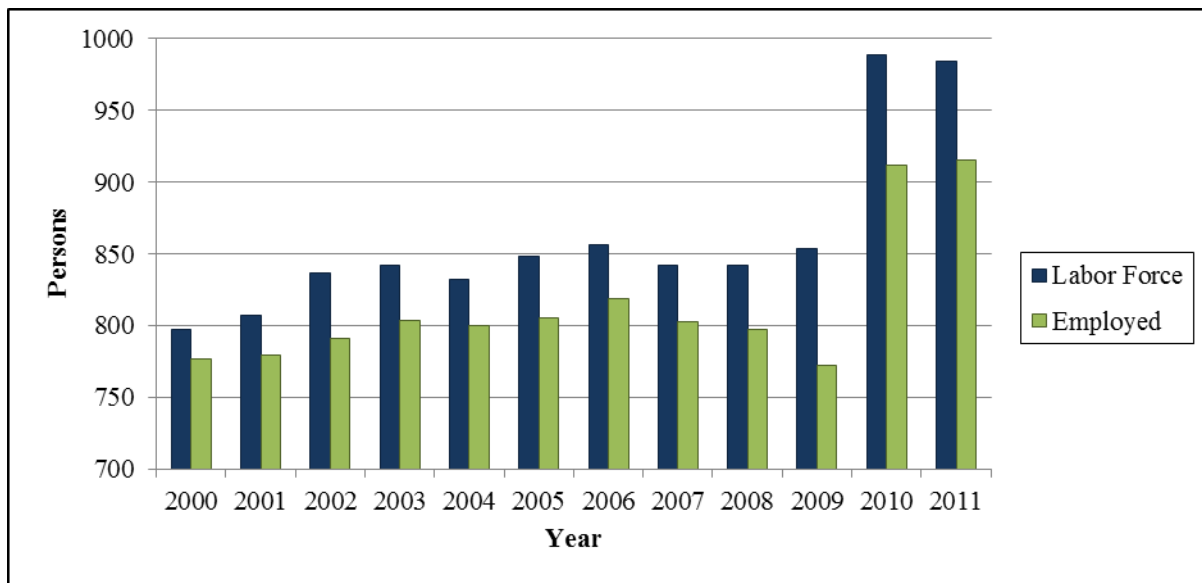
It is important that the community continues to support the local and regional school system as quality educational opportunities will continue to attract new residents that can contribute to the local and regional labor force. A quality educational system may also be a key consideration for employers seeking to locate or expand their business. The Town of Erving is a member of School Union 28, a public school district consisting of four elementary schools including Erving Elementary. There are increasing discussions statewide about school regionalization. Within the region, the municipalities of Leverett and Shutesbury, whose elementary schools are members of School Union 28, are in discussions to join the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District. As this situation progresses, the Town of Erving may need to make some decisions regarding the structure of its school system for residents.

Labor Force and Employment

The labor force is defined as the pool of individuals 16 years of age and older who are employed or who are actively seeking employment. Enrolled students, retirees, stay-at-home parents and other persons not actively seeking employment are excluded from being counted as part of the labor force. In Figure 2, annual data for Erving shows significant fluctuation in the size of the labor force between 2000 and 2011. According to this data, it appears that the labor force increased dramatically from 849 in 2009 to 989 in 2010. This reported increase in the size of the labor force over a one year period of time is misleading. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics when estimating the size of the labor force uses federal decennial census population data as a factor in their methodology. Since the Town of Erving had a population increase from the 2000 Census to the 2010 Census, this information has been incorporated in their estimation for labor force. As a result, when reviewing this labor force and employment data, it is advantageous to consider the broader trends than the specific change between 2009 and 2010.

In general, the Town of Erving and the surrounding towns were greatly impacted by the recent economic recession. The size of the labor force was increasing with more people seeking employment, and the level of those employed decreasing. From 2010 to 2011, the size of the labor force decreased slightly and the level of employment increased slightly.

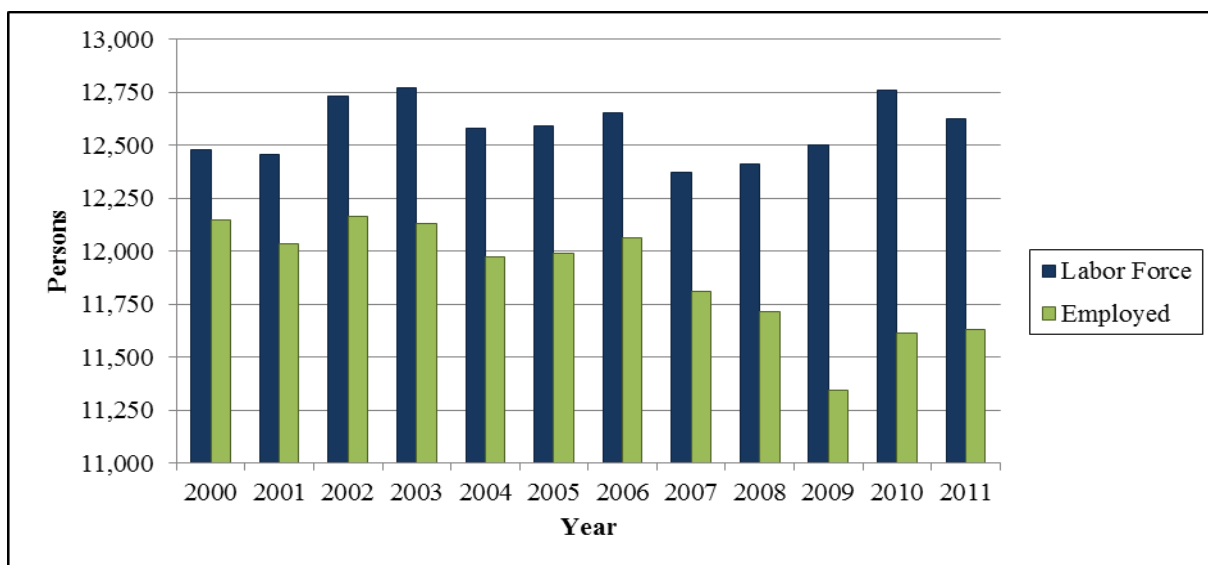
Figure 2: Erving Labor Force and Employment*



Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (MA EOLWD)

*The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which provides this data to MA EOLWD, uses decennial census information in its methodology for determining labor force size and employment level. From the 2000 Census to the 2010 Census the Town of Erving had an increase in population. As a result, the methodology to determine labor force and employment size in Erving includes this higher 2010 population count.

Figure 3: Surrounding Towns' Labor Force and Employment (includes Erving)

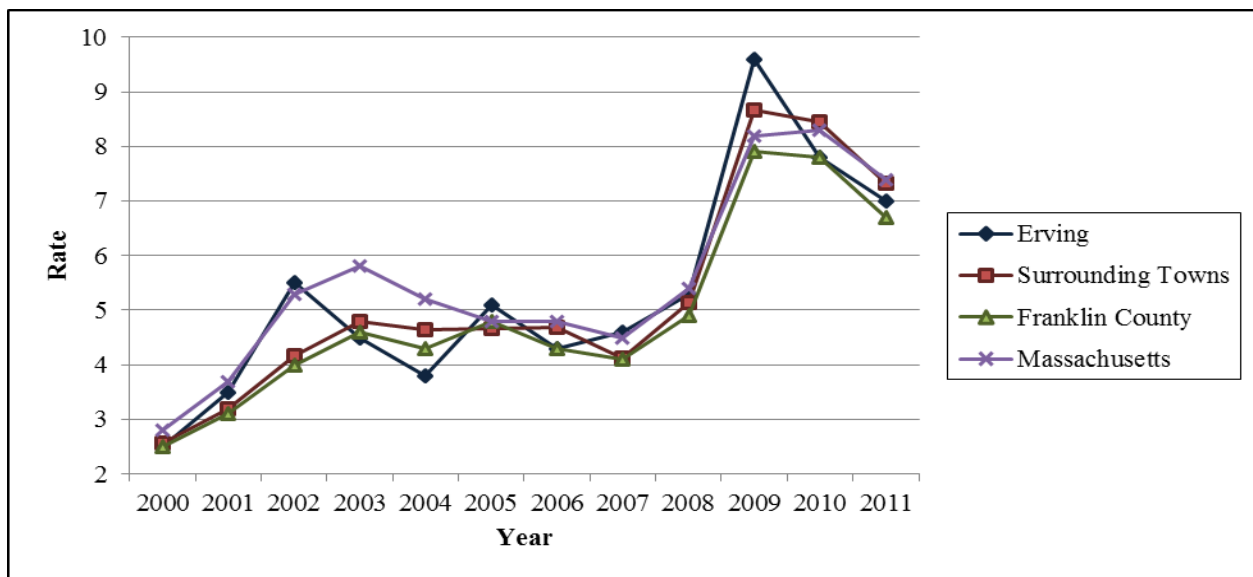


Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

The unemployment rate describes the percentage of people in the labor force who are presently not employed, but who are actively seeking employment. In 2011, Erving's unemployment rate was 7.0, compared to 6.7 for Franklin County, 7.4 for the state, and 8.3 for the nation. The unemployment rate is influenced by the number of employment opportunities in an area, as well

as by significant changes in the size of the labor force (e.g. out-migration of individuals seeking work in other areas with more job opportunities). This statistic is often used as a gauge of economic prosperity or distress. The following figure shows that Erving's unemployment rate has experienced greater fluctuation than the surrounding region and state over the last decade. Erving's unemployment rate was higher than surrounding towns, the county, and the state in 2002, 2005, and 2009, when it reached its highest level at 9.6. However, Erving's unemployment rate fell below the region and state rates in 2004, and since 2009 has fallen below both the state and surrounding town averages. Regardless, in recent years the unemployment rates for all areas have risen significantly due to the national and global economic recession.

Figure 4: Unemployment Rates, 2000 to 2011



Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

When the labor force is significantly greater than those employed, this indicates that there are not enough employment opportunities within that given area to meet the needs of local workers. Residents looking for work must travel out of town or out of the region to seek employment. In addition, underemployment is an important issue in many towns in Franklin County, including Erving. Efforts to support businesses that provide good jobs and benefits in town will provide multiple advantages to the community and residents.

Worker Commuting Patterns

Often residents of small towns must commute to nearby employment centers for work. These centers are typically more populated, have more concentrated development, and offer greater employment opportunities to residents in surrounding towns. Regional employment centers for Erving workers include Orange, Athol, Deerfield and Montague. Commuting data from 2005-2010 ACS, provides a general description of worker commuting patterns for Erving residents. The majority of Erving residents worked outside of Erving, but in Franklin County.

Table 6: Place of Work

Geography	Total Workers (16 years & over)	% Worked out of state	% Worked out of county	% Worked in county, not in town	% Worked in town
Erving	878	3%	21%	61%	14%
Surrounding Towns *	11,712	7%	33%	37%	23%
Franklin County	36,503	5%	33%	35%	28%
Massachusetts	3,188,619	4%	31%	34%	32%

* Includes Erving and all bordering towns.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-year Estimate

The 2006-2010 ACS published estimates on the mean travel time for those who commute to their jobs and the number of employed residents who work at home. The mean travel time for commuters to get to work was 23.5 minutes for Erving residents, which was slightly less than the mean travel time for Franklin County (24.6 minutes) and statewide (27.3 minutes). This makes sense given the employment opportunities within Erving and in nearby communities such as Orange, Athol, and Montague.

Also according to the 2006-2010 ACS, an estimated 4.2% of Erving residents worked from home, which is lower than the estimate for surrounding towns and Franklin County, and comparable to statewide estimates. As gas prices continue to rise and as access to advanced broadband services increases to more areas of the region, it may be anticipated that the number of Erving residents working from home may also increase in future years. This increase may be due to current residents pursuing job opportunities that allow them to work from home (either through their own business development or through jobs that allow telecommuting) or by attracting new residents who work from home and would like to live in the community.

Table 7: Primary Means of Travel to Work

Geography	Total Workers (16 years & over)	% Drove to work	% Walked	% Other means**	% Worked at home
Erving	878	93%	2%	1%	4%
Surrounding Towns*	11,712	90%	3%	2%	5%
Franklin County	36,503	88%	4%	3%	6%
Massachusetts	3,188,619	81%	5%	11%	4%

* Includes Erving and all bordering towns.

** Other means includes public transportation, taxi, bicycle, motorcycle or other means not identified.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-year Estimate

The unemployment rate for Erving residents is high relative to other areas of the region, and most residents commute by car outside of the community for work. Creating more jobs in Erving and developing improved transit options for commuters and visitors, would help Erving residents access more employment opportunities and create a more sustainable transportation system and economy.

Worker Occupations and Industries

Understanding the type of work that Erving's labor force is employed in is an important element to the employment profile of residents in Erving. This section reviews employment trends by specific classes of workers and by industry sectors for residents.

The Census Bureau established classes of workers that refer to the type of employer. The following table displays class of worker percentages for the employed civilian population 16 years of age and older in Erving, surrounding towns, Franklin County, and the state, according to the 2006-2010 ACS. According to the data, approximately 78% of Erving workers were private wage and salary workers, which was a higher percentage than surrounding towns and Franklin County and lower than the state. Erving's percentage of government workers was lower than surrounding towns and the county, and higher than the state. The percentage of self-employed workers in Erving was lower than surrounding towns and Franklin County and consistent with Massachusetts. Reviewing 2000 Census figures, it is estimated that the percentage of self-employed workers in Erving has remained the same since that time, contrary to regional and statewide trends which saw an increase in self-employed workers over this time period.

Table 8: Class of Worker

Geography	Total Workers (age 16 years & over)	Private workers	Government workers	Self-employed workers**
Erving	878	78%	16%	7%
Surrounding Towns*	11,712	70%	21%	9%
Franklin County	36,503	72%	18%	10%
Massachusetts	3,188,619	80%	13%	7%

* Includes Erving and all bordering towns.

** Self-employed workers in own, non-incorporated business.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-year Estimate

According to 2006-2010 ACS five-year estimates, the largest percentage of Erving workers is employed in the educational services, health care and social assistance industries. This large percentage is consistent with the surrounding towns, Franklin County, and the state. However, Erving had higher percentages in: manufacturing; retail trade; and transportation, warehousing, and utilities. The higher percentage of residents working within the transportation, warehousing, and utilities category is likely influenced by the presence of the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Facility in Erving, owned and operated by FirstLight Power Resources/GDF Suez.

Table 9: Resident Workers by Industry

Industry Sector	Erving		Surrounding Towns*		Franklin County	Massachusetts
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Percent	Percent
Total Workers (16 years & over)	898	100%	11,988	100%	100%	100%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining	3	3%	183	2%	2%	<1%
Construction	55	6%	718	6%	7%	6%
Manufacturing	161	18%	1707	14%	13%	10%
Wholesale trade	25	3%	405	3%	2%	3%
Retail trade	136	15%	1302	11%	11%	11%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	77	9%	620	5%	5%	4%
Information services	25	3%	472	4%	3%	3%
Finance, insurance, and real estate	24	3%	518	4%	4%	8%
Professional, scientific, and management, administrative services	33	4%	690	6%	7%	13%
Educational services, health care and social assistance	227	25%	3,514	29%	31%	27%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	62	7%	685	6%	8%	8%
Other services, except public admin.	33	4%	658	5%	4%	5%
Public administration	37	4%	516	4%	4%	4%

* Includes Erving and all bordering towns.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-year Estimate.

Infrastructure & Land Use

This section summarizes and assesses Erving's current infrastructure to support economic development, including transportation, sewer, water and telecommunications. Adequate infrastructure is necessary to encourage the expansion and diversification of the Town's economic base.

Transportation³

An assessment of current infrastructure for transportation is an important component of economic development planning. There are two important perspectives when assessing a community's transportation infrastructure: the ability to safely move to and from the community and within the community.

Roads and Bridges

There are two principle highways in the Town of Erving, State Route 2 and State Route 63. State Route 2, also known as the Mohawk Trail, a designated scenic byway, is the primary east-west highway in the northern tier of Massachusetts. It travels along the southern section of the

³ Much of the information in this section is compiled from the 2012 *Regional Transportation Plan for Franklin County*, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, available at <http://www.frcog.org/pubs/index.php#trans>.

town, connecting the three village centers and passing directly through Erving Center. To the west, Route 2 connects Erving to Greenfield and Interstate 91. To the east, Route 2 connects Erving to Orange, Athol, and the metropolitan Boston area. Traffic counts at various points along Route 2 in Erving show average daily traffic counts ranging from 7,000 to 9,000 vehicles per day.⁴ According to this data, traffic volumes along Route 2 in Erving have generally remained stable over the last decade. This is consistent with the rest of the region, where traffic counts have remained stable or have declined slightly over the last decade.

Route 2 is part of the National Highway System (NHS). Safety along the Route 2 corridor has been a primary concern for the region. In 1994, the Route 2 Task Force was formed to address safety issues with the roadway. The Route 2 Task Force is comprised of Select Board representatives from each town along the corridor, as well as concerned non-profit groups and environmental advocates, and is supported by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), the FRCOG, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission. In 1996, the Task Force developed a safety improvement plan for the Phillipston to Greenfield corridor that was endorsed by all of the towns along the corridor. The study included recommendations for improvements that could be implemented in the near term.

Much progress has been made towards implementing the safety improvements outlined in the study. Erving is the focus of a number of improvements, and the following is a summary of work completed to date and projects still underway in Erving:

Relocation of Route 2 at Erving Paper Mill

The construction of this bypass around the Erving Paper Mill was the first safety improvement to be completed, and it now allows trucks going to the plant to have unobstructed access to their loading docks. Previously, trucks needed to routinely stop traffic on Route 2 in order to access the docks. This situation created both a safety hazard and a congestion problem. In addition, workers had to cross busy Route 2 near an “S” curve in order to enter the factory since the employee parking lot was located on the other side of Route 2. Finally, the business was landlocked and unable to expand, with the Millers River to its south side and Route 2 on its north. Conducting a land swap between the Paper Mill and MassDOT allowed the relocation of Route 2 north of its existing location, providing better loading capability for trucks, safer parking for employees, room for facility expansion, and reduction of traffic and congestion. The new stretch of roadway opened to traffic in 2006 and has been very positively received.

Erving'side Improvements

Improvements in the Erving'side section of Erving were developed in two stages. The first phase was the replacement of two bridges near the French King Bowling Alley and the lowering of the vertical curve between the two bridges. This phase was completed in April 2009. The second phase included the dedication of turn lanes on Route 2 to side streets, and improvements to the side streets feeding Route 2, including Route 63. These improvements entailed protected turn lanes, changes to traffic flow, and new

⁴ 2009 count data. *Average Annual Traffic County Data*, 2000-2011. Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 2012.

acceleration/deceleration lanes. The cost of the second phase of the project was \$3.4 million. The project was completed in 2009.

Erving Center Improvements

Safety improvements in Erving Center will focus on traffic calming and safer turning movements. The design contract was awarded in January 2009. The scope of work was compiled by suggestions from the public, the Route 2 Task Force, and MassDOT in 2007. The project includes intersection/roadway alignment improvements, sidewalks, pavement markings and signage. The project will improve site access, sight distance and pedestrian safety to the side streets feeding Route 2, as well as a sidewalk connecting Mountain Road with the downtown. The estimated cost of the project is \$16 million, and it is approaching the 25% design stage. Additional discussions about the project will occur at the Route 2 Safety Improvement Task Force meetings as well as at public meetings specifically held to review the design. The project is listed as “Project #604818: Erving- Reconstruction of Route 2 (Erving Center)” on the MassDOT website.⁵

Farley Improvements

Safety improvements in the Farley area focus on providing safer turning movements with protected turn lanes and improving sight distance in some locations. The design for the project will be reviewed at several public hearings. The estimated cost of this project is \$6.7 million, and it too is approaching the 25% design stage. The project is listed as “Project #604959: Erving- Reconstruction & Improvements on Route 2 (Farley Area)” on the MassDOT website.⁶

Route 63 travels through the Ervingside neighborhood, and links Erving to the Millers Falls section of Montague to the south, and Northfield to the north. On average roughly 2,000 to 4,000 vehicles travel along the route each day, according to traffic counts conducted in the last five years. Route 63 is part of the nationally designated Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway, the only nationally designated scenic byway in the state. Through this designation, a one mile section of Route 63 in Ervingside has been awarded funding to complete the design and construction of sidewalk and streetscape improvements. The project is intended to improve pedestrian access and safety. Comprehensive plans for sidewalk and streetscape elements will be developed as part of the project. The improvements will link the previously completed Millers Falls Streetscape improvements with residential neighborhoods, the Erving Library, Veterans Memorial Park, the Erving Elementary School, Erving Senior/Community Center and the businesses that are located along Route 63 in Erving. The improvements to be considered for inclusion in the project are pedestrian level lighting, landscaping elements, signs, benches, trash cans, other street furniture and fencing.

Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plans have been developed for both Route 2 (Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway) and Route 63 (Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway), that inventory scenic, historic, recreational, and other resources along the byways, and identifies the future goals and vision for the byway. The plans identify strategies to protect the scenic values of the byways while promoting the byways tourism potential. A regional marketing project is currently

⁵ Website: <http://www.mhd.state.ma.us/ProjectInfo/> and then search by City to find the project information.

⁶ Ibid.

underway to develop a coordinated marketing strategy and promotional materials for the scenic byways in western Massachusetts. The Western Massachusetts Scenic Byway Promotional Campaign is a collaborative effort of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC), Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), FRCOG, and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) and includes developing: marketing tools, logos, way-finding signs, and websites for all seven of the byways in western Massachusetts.

Erving also has a network of local roads that are used mostly for residents to get to and from their homes, local businesses, and major roads for commuting and other travel needs. There are approximately 39.5 miles of roadway in Erving, of which 17.5 miles are Town-owned. Roughly 7 miles are unpaved. Town roadways in Erving for which traffic count data is available generally carry less than 1,000 vehicles per day, with the exception of Semb Drive, Route 2A, River Road, Prospect Street, and North Street which have counts higher than 1,000 vehicles per day in recent years. In terms of the transport of people and goods within Erving, as with many rural communities, the local road network is limited. The layout and road widths within the current road network limit the use of these local roads for commercial transport.

MassDOT maintains a listing of all bridges that meet the National Bridge Inventory (NBI) criteria set by the Federal Highway Administration. These criteria identify bridges as publicly owned highway bridges longer than twenty feet located on public roads. In Erving, 9 bridges meet these criteria. Railroad and pedestrian bridges are not included in the NBI, nor are bridges that have been closed for more than 10 years.

Bridges are considered structurally deficient if they fall below specific thresholds. These bridges may span a range of conditions; from requiring a minor, but vital, repair to a more complete rehabilitation. Bridges may also become functionally obsolete. Functionally obsolete refers to the bridges inability to fully support the roads they serve due to variables such as limited width or height. Such a determination is based on the current operating capacity of the bridge. This bridge classification helps identify areas where mobility may be decreased as a result of a bridge. According to the 2009 MassDOT Bridge Inventory, Erving has two bridges that are functionally obsolete, and two bridges that are structurally deficient.⁷

Rail

Erving has additional transportation infrastructure in two rail lines, which traverse the Town. The first, operated by Pan Am Southern (a joint venture between Pan Am Railways and Norfolk Southern), runs east/west parallel to Route 2 and the Millers River along the length of Erving. The second line operated by New England Central Railroad (NECR) runs north/south parallel with Route 63 on the western edge of the Town. Both lines are primarily used for freight purposes. According to MassDOT's *Massachusetts State Rail Plan* (September 2010), the Pan Am Southern east/west freight main line through Erving is the most important freight line in the state, serving up to 5 million tons annually of freight between eastern Massachusetts and eastern New York (near Albany). It provides an important link for the paper and lumber industries in northern New England and Canada. The 4.75 mile long Hoosac Tunnel, running through the Berkshire Mountains, makes this route a less severe grade than the other east/west route in the

⁷ 2012 *Regional Transportation Plan for Franklin County, MA*. Franklin Regional Council of Governments, June 2011.

state that runs parallel to Interstate 90. However, the Hoosac Tunnel does limit the freight capacity that can be hauled due to tunnel height restrictions. In March 2012, the Federal government awarded \$2 million to initiate the work necessary to allow double-stack trains along this route, which is also known as the Patriot Corridor, leveraging \$87.5 million in private investment from Pan Am Southern⁸.

In Massachusetts, the amount of freight transported by rail is small compared to the amount transported by truck. However, there is interest in diverting some of the freight traffic from the highways to rail because of road congestion and air pollution issues. Rail can also be a more economical means of transport. One concern with rail, however, is the potential for hazardous materials spills, a very real hazard for Erving due to the proximity of rail to village centers and the Millers River.

The Vermonter, an Amtrak passenger service which runs twice a day between St. Albans Vermont, New York City, and Washington D.C., utilizes the north/south rail line operated by NECR. This train does not currently stop in Franklin County. However in 2014, the service is scheduled to move to the Connecticut River Main Line that runs roughly parallel to the Connecticut River and Interstate 91, and will begin serving the region from a platform at the John W. Olver Transit Center in Downtown Greenfield.

Currently the closest east/west passenger rail service for Erving residents is located in Fitchburg, where regular commuter train service is operated by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) to Porter Square in Cambridge. Studies have been conducted to look at the feasibility of extending commuter service west to Gardner, however many constraints would need to be addressed before this could be realized. There continues to be interest in the region in further expanding passenger rail access west into Franklin County. In a public survey conducted by the FRCOG as part of the 2012 Regional Transportation Plan, the restoration of an east-west passenger rail service was one of the top three recommendations for improvements to the county's transportation infrastructure. In the short term, a new station is being built closer to Route 2 on the western border of Fitchburg that will allow easier access for commuters making a connection between bus or car and the commuter train.

Air

In terms of aviation, there are three international airports located approximately within a two hour drive from Erving: Logan International Airport in Boston, Massachusetts; Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, Connecticut; and Manchester International Airport in Manchester, New Hampshire. Locally, the transportation network includes two municipal airports, Orange Municipal Airport and Turners Falls Municipal Airport, located in neighboring communities. Both of these general aviation airports can accommodate personal and corporate aircraft for charter services, flight instruction, recreational activities (such as parachuting), and similar activities.

⁸ "Massachusetts Purchase of CSX railroad line may lead to improved Springfield-Boston passenger service." The Republican, September 17, 2012. Accessed on MassLive.com on December 28, 2012.

Transit

There is one fixed bus route that serves Erving, operated by the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA). Route 32 (Athol/Greenfield Route) serves to connect several communities along Route 2 east, including Erving, from Greenfield to Athol. Route 32 also connects major destinations for users, such as the Baystate Franklin Medical Center and Stop & Shop in Greenfield, the Orange Health Center and Wal-Mart in Orange, and the YMCA and the Athol Memorial Hospital in Athol. There are two scheduled stops in Erving, at the French King Bowling Alley in Ervingside and in Erving Center. The schedule for this route currently consists of seven round-trip runs per day with the earliest run leaving the John W. Olver Transit Center in Greenfield at 5:00 a.m. and the latest leaving at 5:15 p.m. This route was the most popular FRTA route in FY 2010 with 32,857 riders.

Route 32 (Athol/Greenfield) is the same route as the former G-Link Route with some subtle changes to departure and arrival times. The G-Link Route started in October 1999 and was the result of a joint collaboration between the FRTA, FRCOG, and the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) to improve access to jobs. The G-Link Route operates between Greenfield and Gardner, with connections to Fitchburg and to the commuter rail line running between Fitchburg and Boston. The FRTA runs the western portion of the service, now called Route 32, and MART runs the eastern portion of the service and the connecting bus service to Fitchburg.

Ervingside residents may also access two fixed bus route services in neighboring Millers Falls in Montague, by crossing the Millers River on Route 63. The FRTA operates Route 22, which serves the villages of Montague with connections to Greenfield; and Route 23 which connects Greenfield and Montague with the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Bike

Bicycling opportunities are limited in Erving. Route 2 is the only direct east/west route through Town. The traffic volumes and speeds combined with the twisting and narrow road layout makes Route 2 a dangerous and undesirable location to be riding a bicycle. Many of the north/south roadways involve long and steep inclines limiting these routes to experienced cyclists. “The Northfield Connector” of the Franklin County Bikeway follows River Road along the western border of the Town. This portion of the bikeway utilizes shared roadway and provides a link to the Northfield Mountain Recreation Center. The Connector crosses the Millers River over the East Mineral Road Bridge, which has been redesigned and reconstructed for use as a pedestrian- and bicycle-only bridge. This section of the Franklin County Bikeway includes roadway signage that clearly indicates the bikeway route and alerts motorists to the presence of bicyclists.

During the development of the *2002 Erving Master Plan* and also the public participation process for the Route 2 Safety Improvement Project, the lack of alternatives that accommodate bicycling on Route 2 in Erving was noted as a community concern. The FRCOG reviewed potential bicycle and pedestrian links in Erving other than the use of Route 2, to link Farley and Ervingside to Erving Center. Several possible alternatives were identified and a preliminary assessment was completed. Considered routes included potential connections from Mountain

Road to the east, and a potential route through the town-owned cemetery on Cemetery Road to Flagg Hill Road.

Another option that was identified as a potential off-road walking/bicycling route is an existing dirt road that is located to the south of the Millers River in Wendell, and referred to as Old Farley Road. The route is accessible from Arch Street off of Route 2 in Erving Center which is adjacent to the Usher Plant property. Old Farley Road travels west along a dirt road for approximately 2 miles and connects to Posk Place in the Farley section of Wendell. Much of this route travels on land within the Wendell State Forest, which is owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The intention is to consider the development of a soft surface trail instead of a paved surface due to the natural setting and proximity to the Millers River. In Farley, the trail terminus at Posk Place is located near the Metacomet Monadnock Mattabesett hiking trail and also a popular fishing location. There is also a possibility that this route could continue west to Farley Road and Mormon Hollow Road which links to Wendell Road in Montague and connects to Millers Falls. Another possibility is for this route to link to the east to Wendell Depot. Further exploration of this Wendell bikeway was completed by FRCOG transportation planning staff in 2011. DCR is interested in the project, however it was found that in order to connect to Farley on the western end of Old Farley Road, the trail would need to cross private property. Further work is needed to determine the level of support for the project among Erving and Wendell residents and businesses, and whether affected property owners would be receptive to the trail. The implementation of a bike path that connects the Erving Center and the Usher Plant property to the other village centers is strongly endorsed by the Usher Mill Re-use Committee.

Telecommunications

Telecommunications infrastructure includes systems that provide telephone, television and broadband internet services. The Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications & Cable (DTC) has the authority to regulate how the telephone and cable service providers operate in the State. This oversight includes issues related to service quality and consumer protection. Issues of telephone line and service quality in Erving should be reported to the service provider. If these problems persist and not are rectified by the service provider, DTC may be able to assist⁹. Due to federal law, internet or broadband services are not similarly regulated.

There are different types of technologies that may provide broadband service to a home or business, such as Digital Subscriber Lines (DSL), cable modem broadband transmitted over a cable television system, wireless broadband service transmitted by fixed or multi-point wireless facilities, and broadband services transmitted over a fiber-optic system. Some residents and businesses may use a satellite broadband connection, however, this technology has limitations.

The Town of Erving has a Comcast cable television system, which provides both cable television and cable modem broadband services throughout much of the community. According to data from the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications & Cable, there are 438 Comcast subscribers in Erving in 2011. A recent licenses renewal contract negotiation between the Town

⁹ Website: <http://www.mass.gov/dtc>

and Comcast resulted in Comcast agreeing to extend the cable broadband system to homes and businesses in the Farley area and on Old State Road.

Parts of Erving can access DSL broadband services transmitted over copper telephone lines. This service is available to homes and business within range from a telephone network's Central Office (CO) or Remote Terminal that is equipped with the appropriate technology. The transmittal of DSL service is distance limited (the subscriber must be within 18,000 cable feet of the CO) and may be limited by the quality of the copper wire. The CO that serves Erving is located at 12 Crescent Street in Millers Falls on the Montague side. As a result, some homes and businesses in the Erving side area may also access DSL services.

In parts of Erving and the greater region, the quality or access to services through the current telecommunications systems are inadequate for present day business needs. Issues of reliability, affordability and service access have been obstacles for individuals, businesses, and institutions in this region for many years. Fortunately, efforts are underway to create a more robust regional infrastructure and to improve access to services in western Massachusetts.

Presently, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) is investing over \$70 million of state and federal funds to construct a new "middle mile"¹⁰ network in western and north central Massachusetts. By the time it is completed in summer 2013, the AXIA MassBroadband 123 Network will have deployed over 1,300 miles of fiber-optic cable and connected community anchor institutions (such as town halls, police departments and schools) throughout the region, including in Erving. The AXIA MassBroadband 123 Network will allow last mile technologies (such as fiber optic, copper telephone wires, coaxial cable, and wireless technologies) to connect to this new, robust middle mile network. The network will change the current business model for companies seeking to provide broadband access into unserved areas and is expected to result in more service providers investing in and serving the region.

Sewer Infrastructure¹¹

The Town of Erving owns and operates three Publicly Owned Treatment of Waste (POTW) plants. Erving Center is served by POTW plant #2. The Farley area has a small public sewer system designed to handle waste from a set number of residences, and is served by Erving POTW plant #3. Erving POTW plant #1 is located in Erving side and serves Erving residents as well as residents in Millers Falls in the town of Montague. In 2010, significant upgrades were completed for POTW plant #1. Each facility serves a unique population and disposes of its waste differently.

All of the facilities are operating below their design capacity. Only when a wastewater treatment facility's percentage of remaining design capacity reaches 20 percent, would expansion be necessary. The Erving Center facility, with 37 percent of design capacity remaining, is the plant most likely to require expansion in the near future if the customer base for the other two plants

¹⁰ "Middle mile" refers to the backhaul or backbone portion of the telecommunications network, which connects the greater global network to a local access point from which "last mile" internet access is then distributed to the individual home or business.

¹¹ Wastewater treatment facility information was taken from the *2010 Erving Open Space and Recreation Plan*.

remains the same. Due to the excess capacity that exists in Ervingside, the potential for expansion of the collection system may seem real.

The 2002 *Erving Master Plan* identified the French King District as an area where extant septic systems are aging and sewer infrastructure could be beneficial. According to this plan, the Town has undertaken a study to determine the cost of extending sewer service to the area for a proposed industrial park, as well as to meet the area's sewage treatment needs. At the time of the study, the cost was estimated at over \$1.5 million to extend pipes along and across Route 2. An alternative would be to investigate the option of an onsite biological wastewater treatment system. There are a variety of subtypes of these systems, which can be designed and sized to clean any quantity and type of waste.

The former Millers Falls International Paper mill in Ervingside has sewer infrastructure necessary for paper manufacturing but is not a suitable size for most other uses. There is further discussion of this situation included in the Mill Redevelopment section of this text.

It is important to carefully consider where, and whether, expansion of the sewer system should occur. A potential result of expanding the sewer is an increase in the development value of all lands with access to the infrastructure. Development of frontage lots and small subdivisions along existing roads would likely accelerate. Coupled with the low property tax rate, sewer line expansion would allow developers to overcome the barriers that Title 5 currently produces. By strategically planning where new sewer infrastructure is located, coupled with appropriate zoning, the town could support new development within or adjacent to existing villages, thereby encouraging historical development patterns and discouraging creeping development of residential, commercial, and industrial uses.

Water Infrastructure

There is one community water supply serving residents and businesses in Ervingside. The Ervingside system serving the Millers Falls village has 12" pipe lines that are useful to industry. This system features high quality water and high capacity water flow. All other areas of Town, including Farley and Erving Center, are served with non-community public and private wells or springs.

Municipal Tax Base

Business development in a community directly affects its prosperity and tax base. Erving has a split tax rate for businesses and residents. In fiscal year (FY) 2013, the residential rate was \$8.09 per thousand, the second lowest rate in Franklin County, and among the lowest in the state. The FY 2013 rate for commercial, industrial and personal property was \$13.44 per thousand. In FY 2013, 87.8692% of the tax levy on property in the municipality came from commercial, industrial and personal property. In most rural communities, the tax levy on residential property is the predominant source. The presence of FirstLight Power Resource/GDF Suez's Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Facility contributes a large percentage to the Town's tax revenues. While this is beneficial and allows the Town to maintain a low residential tax rate, it also places the Town in a position of reliance on the facility as one of the main sources of tax revenue.

Table 10: FY2013 Erving Property Tax Information

Tax Classification	Assessed Values	% of Total Assessed Values	Tax Levy	% of Total Tax Levy	Tax Rate
Residential	\$120,548,555	18.5755%	\$975,237.81	12.0741%	\$8.09
Open Space	\$565,800	0.00872%	\$4,577.32	0.0567%	\$8.09
Commercial	\$7,003,044	1.0791%	\$94,120.91	1.0791%	\$13.44
Industrial	\$423,383,068	65.2397%	\$5,690,268.43	65.2397%	\$13.44
Personal Property	\$97,464,710	15.0185%	\$1,309,925.70	15.0185%	\$13.44
Total	\$648,965,177	100%	\$8,074,130.17	100%	-

Source: Town of Erving, Board of Assessors Office

Zoning Districts¹²

Erving is divided into four underlying zoning districts: Central Village (CV), Village Residential (VR), Rural Residential (RR), and the French King Commercial District (C). Within these districts, farming and forestry uses, and small scale commercial greenhouses are allowed by right in all districts. Larger commercial greenhouses (over 5 acres) and commercial recreation uses are allowed by Special Permit in all districts. Professional business offices are allowed either by right or by Special Permit in all districts, depending on the number of employees and the district. Home-based businesses are allowed by right in all districts, provided they meet certain requirements. Retail stores under 5,000 square feet are allowed by right in the CV district, and require a Special Permit or are not allowed (if over 2,500 square feet) in other districts. Any retail establishment over 5,000 square feet is only allowed in the CV district by Special Permit. Manufacturing, processing, and laboratories, freight or transportation facilities, gas stations and automotive repair shops, and bulk storage and warehousing are allowed by Special Permit in the CV district only. These and other industrial uses are not permitted in the other districts, with the exception of sawmills, which are allowed by Special Permit in the VR and RR districts.

Minimum lot size dimensions for the districts are 21,780 square feet in the Central Village (CV) and Village Residential (VR) districts, and 87,120 square feet in the Rural Residential (RR) and French King Commercial (C) districts. Frontage requirements range from 20 feet in the CV and VR districts, 50 feet in the RR district, and 100 feet in the C district. Height is restricted to 45 feet in the CV and C districts, and 35 feet in the VR and RR districts. Maximum lot coverage is 70% in the CV district, 50% in the VR and C districts, and 35% in the RR district.

There are also three overlay districts: the Groundwater Protection Overlay District, the Wireless Communications Facilities Overlay District, and the Floodplain District. The Groundwater Protection Overlay District is located in the western part of Erving, and encompasses sections of Ervingside and the French King Commercial District. The purpose of the overlay district is to protect existing and potential sources of drinking water, and prevent contamination of the groundwater. Uses such as underground storage tanks, and the storage or use of certain materials and products, are prohibited. Other uses may require a Special Permit, such as increasing the

¹² Information in this section is from *Town of Erving Zoning Bylaw*, first adopted in June 2005, and last amended in May 2011. Website: http://www.erving-ma.org/images/stories/publications/Zoning/ZONING_BYLAWS_Amended_05_04_2011.pdf.

amount of impervious surface on a site, or the application of fertilizers for non-domestic and non-agricultural uses.

Wireless communication facilities are allowed by Special Permit within the Wireless Communications Facilities Overlay District, located roughly along Route 2 between Erving side and Farley, and in the western portion of Erving Center. All Special Permits for the construction of a wireless communication facility must adhere to design guidelines and conditions.

The Floodplain District was added to the Zoning Bylaws at Town Meeting on May 9, 2012. The District encompasses the 100-year floodplain in Erving, which is located mostly in a narrow strip along the Millers River and Connecticut River, and broadens somewhat in Erving side. There is a total of 210 acres within the floodplain in Erving. Current development in the floodplain includes less than six acres of commercial, public/institutional and industrial uses and one acre of residential use. The majority of the land in and along the floodplain is undeveloped and zoned Rural Residential, Village Residential or Central Village.¹³ New development within the Floodplain District must meet certain state regulations, be built to minimize flood damage, and cannot result in any increase in flood levels. The Bylaw provides a list of preferred uses within the Floodplain District, providing they are permitted in the underlying zoning district and do not require structures, fill, or storage of materials or equipment:

1. Agricultural uses such as farming, grazing, truck farming, horticulture, etc.
2. Forestry and nursery uses.
3. Outdoor recreational uses, including fishing, boating, play areas, etc.
4. Conservation of water, plants, wildlife.
5. Wildlife management areas, foot, bicycle, and/or horse paths.
6. Temporary non-residential structures used in connection with fishing, growing, harvesting, storage, or sale of crops raised on the premises.
7. Buildings lawfully existing prior to the adoption of these provisions.

At the June 25, 2012 Special Town Meeting, a Large Scale Ground Mounted Photovoltaic Installation bylaw was adopted as part of the zoning bylaws. The bylaw allows for ground mounted installations with a capacity of 250 kWh or greater to be developed by-right with Site Plan Review if being installed on parcels of land under single ownership that contain 40 contiguous acres or greater. Large scale installations on parcels smaller than 40 acres, but larger than 20 acres, may be approved by Special Permit. Installations can occur in any zoning district, so long as the minimum acreage requirement is met and other site planning criteria are followed.

When reviewing a Special Permit application for any use, the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals will consider the impacts of the development on the community, including:

- The impact on adjoining premises from sound, light, odor, noise, and other disturbances is avoided or minimized.

¹³ *Erving Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan*, September 2012.

- The proposal will avoid or minimize topographic change, removal of mature trees or other botanical assets, removal of cover vegetation, risk of erosion or siltation, increased storm water runoff from the site, or displacement of natural habitats.
- The proposal will not cause surface or groundwater pollution, surface or subsurface drainage detrimental to abutting properties, or adverse effects upon the natural environment in the area where the use is located.
- There is adequate sight distance and traffic safety at the entrance to public ways.
- The proposal is compatible with the neighborhood character.
- The proposal minimizes adverse effects upon historic and other cultural resources.
- There are positive employment and fiscal consequences.
- The activity, traffic, site plan, and building design will influence positively the Town's community character.
- The activity, site plan, and building design are consistent with development of tourist activity in Erving.
- Curb cuts on Route 2 (Mohawk Trail) are minimized to prevent traffic congestion and accidents.
- Lighting is designed to minimize glare and light pollution and cut off fixtures will be employed to the maximum extent feasible.

A site plan is required for any non-residential or non-agricultural development that creates an enclosed floor space of greater than 5,000 square feet, has a drive through, or will have 10 or more parking spaces or greater than 2,000 square feet of parking.

Major Employers and Industry Sectors

This section reviews the top employers located in the Town of Erving and the industry sectors that are prominent in the economy of this community and the region.

Major Employers & Types of Businesses

The following table displays the three largest employers in Erving, representing the manufacturing, utilities, and public sectors.

Table 10: Major Employers in Erving

Company Name	Estimated Range of Employees
Erving Industries	100-249
Town of Erving (including schools)	50-99
Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Facility	20-49

Source: MA Department of Workforce & Labor's Largest Employers List (Infogroup 2012), and FRCOG's 2012 Greater Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Report.

According to Massachusetts labor market information, in 2011 there were a total of 29 business establishments located in Erving, with a total average monthly employment of 253.¹⁴ Most of the employers located in Erving are small businesses, employing less than 20 employees. These businesses range from restaurants, professional services, automotive services, and building contractors and supply.¹⁵ It is difficult to obtain information on employers in Erving due to the small number of establishments and suppression of data due to confidentiality.

Although specific information on employment within Erving is difficult to ascertain, it is helpful to look at the employment picture for the region, which may provide some guidance on what types of businesses could be supported in Erving. Data from federal County Business Patterns provides employment information in the county for private sector businesses. In 2010, the largest private sector employment industries in Franklin County were Manufacturing; Health Care and Social Assistance; Retail Trade; Accommodation and Food Services, and Educational Services. This data does not include local, state and federal government employment or self-employed individuals, who are often in the agricultural and construction trades.

Overall Franklin County has a higher percentage of employment in the Manufacturing; Retail Trade; Arts, Entertainment and Recreation; and Education Services sectors than the state or nation. Conversely, the county has a smaller percentage of employment in the Financial and Insurance, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, and the Administrative, Support, Waste Management sectors than the state and nation. Employment in other sectors is relatively comparable across the county, state, and nation.

¹⁴ Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development 2011 annual ES-202 data.

¹⁵ Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development list of Major Employers.

In addition to data about employment sectors, federal County Business Pattern data provides information about the size of private sector employers. As of 2010, 95% of all Franklin County private sector establishments had fewer than 50 employees¹⁶, which is consistent with state and national trends. Establishments identified as major employers are often more recognizable in a community as they grow or confront difficult times. However, the impact of small businesses in the greater economy cannot be overstated. Access to technical assistance, financing, workforce training and other resources is important to sustain and encourage growth.

To encourage local entrepreneurship, attract new businesses and retain businesses that may need to expand their facilities, adequate space for businesses must be available. This space can be generated by the development of previous undeveloped land or through the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized buildings. In past Town plans, former or underutilized industrial properties were identified as being targeted for redevelopment, such as the former Usher Plant site in Erving Center and the former Millers Falls International Paper property.

Manufacturing Sector

From its inception, Erving's economy has been based on utilizing local resources to manufacture goods for sale to markets outside of the Town. Over the years, products including furniture, shoe heels, and paper products have been produced using waterpower from the Millers River and wood from the heavily forested hills above the river. Paper product manufacturing remains an important industry, providing a significant portion of the Town's current employment opportunities at the Erving Industries paper mill.

Manufacturing once made up the majority of employment in Erving. In 1990, for example, the manufacturing sector accounted for 79 percent of total employment in Erving, with an average annual employment of 623 workers. Since then, the sector has declined in the region with major facility closures occurring in the 1990s, including Erving Paper in 1992 (140 jobs) and Renovators Supply in 1994 (200 jobs). By 1999, average annual employment in manufacturing had dropped to 219, a decline of 65 percent.¹⁷ In 2000, an additional 120 jobs were lost with the closure of the Millers Falls International Paper Mill in Erving. Since 1999, employment data for the manufacturing sector in town has remained suppressed due to confidentiality reasons. However county, state, and national trends over the last decade show a continued decline in the manufacturing sector, especially since the onset of the recent national economic downturn.

This trend may be the result of pressures on manufacturers in the region to reduce costs or relocate. For example, the northeast generally has higher energy costs than in other areas of the country. Another factor that may contribute to the decline is technological innovation in the sector. Greater use of technology and enhanced production techniques may require fewer employees to operate equipment. These workers will also be required to have a greater skill set, and employers may offer higher wages for these skills. Declines may also be attributed to international trade impacts. In 2010, Franklin County was one of two counties in Massachusetts designated as automatically eligible to apply for funding under the federal Economic

¹⁶County Business Pattern data does not include workers employed by the public sector or workers who are self-employed.

¹⁷ MA Division of Employment and Training, ES-202 data, 1990-1999.

Development Administration's Community Trade Adjustment Act Program, due to recent manufacturing employment losses in the cutting and machine tools, hand tools, and packaging paper/plastic film product industries.

Despite these trends, manufacturing remains as the largest private sector employment industry in the county. Based on discussions with the Regional Employment Board, the sector shows signs of strength in the region, with some businesses recently expanding and adding jobs. The Kitty and Michael Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University has completed a study of the manufacturing sector in Massachusetts. According to *Staying Power II: A Report Card on Manufacturing in Massachusetts 2012*¹⁸, approximately 100,000 manufacturing jobs will become available in the state as older workers retire over the next decade. The skills needed for these jobs often differ from past manufacturing jobs in the region, and may require specific skills training and education. While there have been major plant closures, there have also been gains in small scale manufacturing that are flexible and meet the needs of their given market. These businesses require flexible spaces to locate and grow, and a workforce that is prepared to take advantage of these opportunities. Examining the reuse of vacant or underutilized properties may provide flexible space for manufacturing or other uses (see section on Mill Redevelopment for more information).

Energy Sector

The Northfield Pumped Storage Facility is a hydroelectric power plant that began operation in 1972, and is owned and operated by FirstLight Power Resources/GDF Suez. At the time it was constructed, it was the largest facility of its kind in the world, and is capable of producing up to 1,080 megawatts of electricity. The plant operates by pumping water from a lower reservoir, which consists of the 20 mile stretch of the Connecticut River extending from the Turners Falls dam north to the Vernon dam in Vernon, Vermont, to its 300-acre man-made upper reservoir, located 800 feet above the Connecticut River in Erving. The upper reservoir is capable of holding 5.6 billion gallons of water. The plant stores the water and releases it back to the lower reservoir through an underground tunnel with a turbine generator to produce power. Power from the plant can be released quickly during emergencies or peak power demand periods, improving the overall efficiency of regional power generation.¹⁹ Presently, FirstLight Power Resources/GDF Suez is in the midst of a five-year relicensing process for a 30 to 40 year license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

In 2011, Northfield Mountain completed installation of a 2 megawatt solar facility in a field adjacent to its entrance on Route 63 in Northfield. The facility covers approximately 11 acres. According to Northfield Mountain, the project will produce Massachusetts Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SRECs), which must be purchased by utility companies and other organizations to comply with Massachusetts' Renewable Energy Portfolio. The Renewable Energy Portfolio requires a certain percentage of the state's electricity to come from renewable energy sources.

¹⁸ Northeastern University Dukakis Center website, http://www.northeastern.edu/dukakiscenter/wp-content/uploads/Manufacturing-2012_138pp.pdf

¹⁹ FirstLight Power Resources/GDF Suez website, <http://www.firstlightpower.com/generation/north.asp>.

Businesses that advance new technologies to promote clean energy generation or reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as businesses that seek to retrofit homes and businesses to be more energy efficient, are part of the green economy, a growing industry being supported by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Franklin County region. In 2008, the FRCOG and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission created the Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan, in collaboration with members of the Pioneer Valley Renewable Energy Collaborative and with strong public input. The Plan's four primary goals were: to reduce energy use; to replace fossil fuels; to reduce greenhouse gas emissions causing global climate change; and to create local jobs in the clean energy sector. The Plan proposed a variety of clean energy generation activities for the region include solar photovoltaic and other projects. This Plan has been followed by the Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2020, produced by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs in 2011.

As part of the Green Jobs Act of 2008, the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) was created for the purpose of accelerating job growth and economic development in the state's clean energy industry. The MassCEC manages the Renewable Energy Trust, which provides funding for the installation of renewable energy generation projects (such as solar and hydropower). It also operates the Wind Technology Testing Center in Charlestown, makes capital investments in companies involved in clean energy, and supports workforce development programs such as the MassGREEN Energy Efficiency Skills Initiative.

The Commonwealth's Green Communities Act of 2008 created the Green Communities Division to assist municipalities to enhance energy efficiency in public buildings and encourage the development of clean energy generation facilities. As part of this Division, the Green Communities Grant Program was established to provide funding for designated municipalities to pursue energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives. To be designated, municipalities must meet the following five criteria:

- Adopt local zoning bylaw or ordinance that allows "as-of-right siting" for renewable and/or alternative energy research & development facilities, manufacturing facilities or generation units;
- Adopt an expedited permitting process related to the as-of-right facilities;
- Establish a municipal energy use baseline and a program to reduce use by 20% within five years;
- Purchase only fuel-efficient vehicles for municipal use, whenever such vehicles are commercially available and practicable; and
- Require all new residential construction over 3,000 square feet and all new commercial and industrial real estate construction to reduce lifecycle energy costs, which can be accomplished by the adoption of an energy-saving building "stretch code".

To date, thirteen Franklin County communities have been designated as Green Communities, and have been awarded grants to pursue energy projects. The Town of Erving was one of eight towns in the North Quabbin region to partner together and submit a regional application in 2009 to the Green Communities Planning Assistance Program. In the application, the Town of Erving stated that it has made significant progress on the criteria to reduce energy use in municipal buildings, streetlights, and the Town's wastewater treatment plant. Through the Planning Assistance

Program, the FRCOG assisted Erving's Energy Committee with developing an action plan to meet the five Green Communities criteria. The 2010 Green Communities Action Plan, titled *A Strategy for Regional Collaboration in the North Quabbin Region*²⁰, found that wind energy generation in Erving is not feasible, but that solar generation is a possibility. The closed sludge landfill along Route 2 was identified as a potential site for a solar installation. The Usher Mill Re-Use Committee is also considering the installation of renewable energies, such as solar, as part of the redevelopment plan for the Usher Plant property²¹. As mentioned above, Town Meeting adopted a Large Scale Ground Mounted Photovoltaic bylaw in June 2012, allowing installations with a minimum capacity of 250 kW or larger by-right with Site Plan Review in any zoning district, providing it will be located on at least 40 acres of contiguously owned property.

Renewable energy projects are being pursued and implemented in towns surrounding Erving. For example, Montague has installed solar panels on town buildings, is participating in the 2012 Solarize Mass²² program to encourage small scale solar electric systems for homes and businesses and is pursuing solar generation on its landfill.

In addition to these efforts, there are several other public sector and private sector initiatives to encourage the growth of the green economy. For example, the Franklin/Hampshire Regional Employment Board is a leader in green economy workforce development through their green career coaching network and Northern Tier Energy Sector Partnership. The NTESP integrated education and training efforts in the renewable energy and energy efficiency field among many partners, including community colleges, workforce investment agencies, technical and vocational educational institutions, economic development groups and private businesses. Funded by a federal Department of Labor grant, the NTESP established a workforce development system that encompassed training and job placement activities. As of June 30, 2012, the NTESP helped 165 unemployed, under-employed and incumbent workers to complete job training programs and helped 50 unemployed workers to secure jobs, meeting and exceeding the goals of the program. By its conclusion at the end of 2012, NTESP is on track to substantially exceed its job placement goal.

Another example is the Western Mass Green Consortium, which seeks to support sustainable living in the region through collaboration and education. Founded by individuals and businesses operating in the green economy, the Consortium meets regularly to discuss sustainable business practices, green policies, and their "Project Retrofit" effort to encourage greater green practices in construction. Greenfield Community College's Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency program provides training and education for entry level employment or skills improvement for those already working in the field. In addition, as the funding for the NTESP will end in 2012, Greenfield Community College is implementing a Workforce Development Transformation²³ program through a federal Department of Labor grant. The focus of this program is the clean energy, health care, and advanced manufacturing sectors. The purpose of the program is to

²⁰ *A Strategy for Regional Collaboration in the North Quabbin Region* was prepared by the nine municipalities of the North Quabbin region and the FRCOG in June 2010.

²¹ Erving: Re-Visioned/Re-Vitalized/Re-Connected presentation by the Usher Mill Re-Use Committee, as created by Jeanie K. Schermesser, December 3, 2012.

²² Website: www.solarizemass.com

²³ Workforce Development Transformation program website, <http://web.gcc.mass.edu/marketing/2012/06/11/gcc-ramps-up-workforce-development-transformation-program/>

shorten the time to graduate, increase graduation rates and increase job placement success for participating graduates.

Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Sector

Erving has rich forestry and recreational resources, which adds to the quality of life for residents and has attracted tourism. Today, the Millers River and the rich forests are important recreational resources. The Millers River runs mostly free of its historical impoundments. The two dams that remain provide flood control and help to enhance opportunities for whitewater rafting during the early spring. The forests are now mostly State owned and managed for wildlife habitat and recreational uses. The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) manages the roughly 2,524 acre Erving State Forest for recreation, forest products and wildlife habitat protection. It includes the Laurel Lake recreation area, and is one of the most popular recreation and wilderness areas used by residents of Erving and surrounding towns. The Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett Hiking Trail, a long-distance hiking trail extending from Connecticut to Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire, passes along the Millers River and through Erving State Forest in Erving. Sections of the M&M Trail on state forest land in Franklin County were designated as a “National Recreation Trail” by the National Park Service in 2001.²⁴ The Northfield Mountain Environmental and Recreation Center, operated by FirstLight Power Resources/GDF Suez, maintains roughly 800 acres for recreational uses, with an additional 600 acres in undeveloped recreation.

Two scenic byways travel through Erving. The Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway is one of the earliest scenic byways in New England, receiving its designation in 1953. The National Scenic Byway Program is a federal transportation program that provides funding for eligible scenic byway projects. A corridor management plan was completed in 2009 for the eastern section of the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway from Athol to Greenfield. The Plan includes inventories of the historic, cultural, and natural resources, and heritage and recreational attractions along the Byway. The Plan lists recommended actions that are intended to balance future growth with the preservation of the Byway’s resources.

In Franklin County, the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway travels along Route 63 in the Towns of Northfield, Erving, and Montague and Route 47 in Montague and Sunderland. The byway travels through the heart of the Connecticut River Valley, a landscape of distinct natural beauty with classic New England farm village patterns. Along the byway corridor, there are many sites and resources that highlight the rich history of the area dating back to the 1600s and the early inhabitation by Native Americans and Colonial settlers. The history and farming heritage that shaped the corridor is still evident today. As mentioned above, the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway is the only byway in Massachusetts to be designated a National Scenic Byway. This national designation represents an additional level of recognition and technical support from the National Scenic Byway Program. Nationally designated byways are included in scenic byway maps, brochures, and a website published and hosted by the National Scenic Byway Program. A corridor management plan was completed for the Franklin County and Hampshire County portion of the byway in 1998.

²⁴ AMC Berkshire website, <http://amcberkshire.org/mmm-trail>.

One persistent issue identified in both scenic byway corridor management plans is the lack of traveler information and promotional materials of the recreational and cultural opportunities available in the byway communities. Consequently, a project to market the seven scenic byways in Western Massachusetts (including the two that travel through Erving) has been developed. The project is referred to as the Western Massachusetts Scenic Byway Promotional Campaign. The campaign will include the development of marketing tools, logos, way-finding signs, and websites for all seven byways. The project is currently under development, and is estimated to take two years to complete. The project will provide Erving with an opportunity to market and promote its recreational and cultural attractions and provide tourists with information on lodging and other amenities.

The *2010 Erving Open Space and Recreation Plan* includes a goal to “Support, maintain, and enhance the quality of outdoor recreational experiences in order to promote the potential of recreational tourism within the Town of Erving.” During a public comment session for the updated plan, this goal was supported, as many people already visit Erving from all over each year for the large array of recreational resources in Town. However it was noted that there is a need to promote awareness of these resources to Town residents themselves, and that increased awareness can also bring negative impacts such as trash from recreational users. Overall it was felt that it is important to proceed by working closely with private property owners to understand all potential concerns.²⁵

In rural areas, recreational and cultural tourism can be an important sector for economic development. The tourism industry may act as a driver of economic development in two ways. The most apparent economic benefit is from visitors spending money on activities and services. The development of stores, restaurants, lodging, and recreational service providers (such as tour operators) provide job opportunities and increase the amount of dollars spent locally. A secondary impact of a vibrant tourism economy is that the same assets that attract visitors may also attract new residents and employers seeking a high quality of life for their workers.

The quality of the natural environment plays a key role in drawing visitors to rural areas. However, natural amenities alone are not enough to bring tourists to a region. Access provided by sufficient infrastructure such as roads, trails, and signage, must be in place, as well as supporting businesses including lodging, restaurants, and equipment stores or rental services. Marketing and promotion activities including web-based materials, maps, guidebooks, and advertising are also needed. While increased access and promotion can lead to economic growth, at the same time the integrity of the natural resources must be protected in order to sustain a healthy tourism industry into the future.²⁶

According to the International Ecotourism Society, ecotourism is “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people.”²⁷ In 2004, a report focusing on economic development in the northern tier region of Massachusetts, which includes Erving, identified ecotourism as one industry sector that, if supported, will “lead to a

²⁵ *Erving Open Space and Recreation Plan*, 2010.

²⁶ *Cultural and Recreational Industries in Rural America: Opportunities for State Legislators*. William B. Beyers, University of Washington, 2007.

²⁷ Website: www.ecotourism.org

stronger and more dynamic regional economic base.”²⁸ The report identifies hiking, biking, camping, canoeing, kayaking, rafting, swimming, birding, winter sports, horseback riding, and fishing as the most popular examples of outdoor activities in the region that fall into the category of ecotourism. Among the region’s existing strengths for supporting ecotourism is its significant amount of open space, both land and water. The report noted several weaknesses in the region that currently deter the growth of the ecotourism industry. Obstacles include inadequate parking and restroom facilities and inconsistent access and signage at trailheads and other sites, as well as the sporadic location of lodging and restaurants throughout the region. Other weaknesses are the lack of a strong image and marketing strategy, and the lack of funds and resources for implementation. The recommendations from the report are as follows:

- Convene a Northern Tier Ecotourism Working Group
- Develop more touring and recreation packages
- Explore new sources of revenue (such as charging entrance fees at state parks or adopting a local hotel tax)
- Broaden the region’s tourism infrastructure (particularly accommodations and mid-level to high-market restaurants)
- Begin an ecotourism branding campaign

There are continued efforts in the North Quabbin region to encourage this type of outdoor recreation based tourism, such as through promotional activities by the North Quabbin Woods initiative and private companies. The Millers River Watershed Council also supports recreation in the region through its Blue Trail Project. According to the Council’s website, a “blue trail (also known as a blueway or water trail) is a dedicated stretch of river that enjoys special clean water safeguards and is a destination for fishing, boating and other recreation. Just as hiking trails are designed to help people explore the land, blue trails help people discover rivers. Blue trails provide a fun, exciting way to get kids outdoors, connect communities to treasured landscapes, and are economic drivers benefiting local businesses and quality of life.”²⁹ The Council announced the first segment of the Millers River Blue Trail in 2011, between Athol and Orange, with accompanying map and trail guide that provides information on natural, recreational, and historical points of interest along this segment of the Millers River. The Council is working with other communities to extend the trail and develop new river access points.

The bike path and Blue Trail Project fit within the vision for the redevelopment of the Usher Plant property proposed by the Usher Mill Re-Use Committee³⁰. The bike path proposes to pass through the Usher Plant property and utilize the Arch Street Bridge to cross over the Millers River and connect to the Millers River Wildlife Management Area in Wendell. This bike path would then travel east to Wendell Depot and west to Millers Falls. This link would extend the bike path and serve to connect the three villages of Erving without using Route 2. Given the

²⁸ *Northern Tier Strategic Investment Initiatives*. Mt. Auburn Associates, Inc. 2004.

²⁹ Website: <http://millerswatershed.org/blue-trails/>

³⁰ Erving: Re-Visioned/Re-Vitalized/Re-Connected presentation by the Usher Mill Re-Use Committee, as created by Jeanie K. Schermesser, December 3, 2012.

heavy volume of car and truck traffic, Route 2 is not a preferred route for bicycle use. The Blue Trail Project would enhance the Usher Plant site for recreation uses such as fishing, boating, hiking and picnicking activities.

In addition, the redevelopment of the Usher Plant property will enhance Erving Center and serve to make this area a hub for tourism and community identity. It has the opportunity to generate increased “foot traffic” which would benefit existing businesses and encourage new businesses to be established. The installation of amenities and pedestrian improvements may improve safety and encourage greater village center vitality. This type of redevelopment and link to the Erving Center would create a tremendous connection for residents and visitors to one of the region’s greatest resources, the Millers River.

In addition to protecting existing natural resources, providing infrastructure and visitor amenities, and promoting the area as a recreation destination, training may be needed for area businesses in order to support, and capitalize on, the recreation industry. The region currently has training and education opportunities specific to outdoor activities, such as Greenfield Community College’s (GCC) Outdoor Leadership Program and the New England Naturalist Training Center in Northfield. GCC also offers a certificate in Hospitality and Tourism Management. Business development resources, discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter, include the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce, and GCC’s workforce development and community education classes.

A current example of how tourism can become a driver of economic development is the State of Maine’s ongoing promotion of “nature based” tourism in rural areas as a means for stimulating the local and regional economies. The state has a Nature Based Tourism Task Force that supports regional tourism initiatives. One such initiative is the Maine Woods Discovery, a collaborative effort of partners involved in outdoor recreation tourism in the Maine Woods region. Their website offers information on destination areas within the region and travel packages that bring together various businesses to provide a unique experience of the region to visitors.³¹

While the development and promotion of recreation tourism is regional in nature, much could be done to attract and keep visitors in town longer. Town officials, residents, and business owners can work together to develop and implement strategies to forward this goal in a way that is beneficial to all parties. A combination of improvements to the physical environment, increased awareness and access to recreational opportunities, training for businesses, attraction of new businesses that could help support tourism, and marketing and promotion efforts could help to more fully realize the potential of the recreation industry in Town. The preservation of the Town’s natural environment should also be of prime concern, as it is ultimately these resources that attract visitors.

³¹ Website: <http://mainewoodsdisccovery.com/index.php>.

Mill Redevelopment

Vacant or underutilized mill properties offer the opportunity to create new, and often more flexible space, for a mix of uses. This strategy of redeveloping former industrial properties supports economic development while also preserving natural resources from development. In some cases, the redevelopment of former industrial properties may be complicated by the presence or perceived presence of hazardous contamination. In these cases, the sites are referred to as a “Brownfield” site. For eligible properties, there are public resources available to assist in determining whether contamination is present and, if so, how it can be mitigated.

Both the state and the region, working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), have programs to protect the public health and the environment, as well as to encourage the redevelopment of Brownfields into economic use. The Commonwealth has the MassDEP Brownfields Program, which offers incentives, such as tax benefits, financing and insurance opportunities, to encourage the clean-up and reuse of abandoned or underutilized Brownfields. The Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) has an active Regional Brownfields Program which has successfully been awarded EPA funds to administer a Brownfields Clean-up Revolving Loan and Subgrant Fund and to conduct Environmental Site Assessment grants.

The vacant and underutilized industrial sites may be redeveloped for single use purposes or for a mix of uses and users. The Pioneer Valley region has seen successful redevelopment of mills for artist studios, business offices, and light manufacturing. Nearby examples of mill redevelopment include the Montague Book Mill, the Orange Innovation Center, the Arts & Industry Building in Florence, and the Eastworks Building in Easthampton. Some redevelopment projects specifically target businesses in the creative or artistic fields, by subdividing space for artist studio, light assembly, office or live/work use. In some cases, these buildings have become a destination for visitors.

Fostering a vibrant art and cultural scene in a community is attractive to both residents and visitors. Artists and craftspeople that grow and expand their businesses locally, provide employment and mentoring opportunities. The revenues earned circulate within the community longer than if the business had ownership from outside the area. In addition, creative economy businesses are generally small scale, environmentally friendly and contribute to the overall character of the community without significantly using town resources. Support by the community and the leveraging of public resources is important to assist property developers in accomplishing the challenging task of mill redevelopment.

The Town of Erving has three mill properties that are vacant and available for redevelopment, or could accommodate more intensive use. These properties are described below.

The Renovator’s Supply, Ervingside

The Renovator’s Supply, Inc. property is a 26 acre parcel in Ervingside that contains a complex of connected mill buildings that were built over decades, starting as early as the 1870s. The property had been home to both the manufacturing and corporate offices of The Renovator’s Supply, Inc. hardware company. The company outsourced much of its manufacturing in the 1990s, but retains its corporate world headquarters, distribution, and some manufacturing lines there. Space no longer used for the company’s manufacturing purposes has been leased to

multiple other companies. According to the building owner,³² the space remaining in the mill complex can accommodate up to 600 tenants or could be used by The Renovator's Supply, Inc. for the manufacturing of future product lines. In 2012, it was reported that only 17% of the building is occupied by its 100 tenants. The property has the opportunity to be leased for more intensive commercial and/or industrial use, such as office, artist studios and rehearsal space, distribution and manufacturing. The space allows businesses the flexibility to expand their facilities as they need to. These tenants generate economic activity for neighboring businesses in the village and along the nearby Route 2 corridor.

Millers Falls International Paper Mill, Ervingside

The former Millers Falls International Paper facility is vacant and available for redevelopment. The plant was built in 1965 has been vacant since its closure in 2000. There is over 240,000 square feet of gross floor space, which includes offices, manufacturing space, and loading docks and is in relatively good condition. The 43 acre site is served by municipal sewer and water infrastructure, utilities, access roads, and on-site parking. The parcel is located adjacent to the Millers River and down gradient from a residential neighborhood and Route 2. There are no developed uses directly adjacent to the buildings. The access road, Papermill Road, serves only this facility, and connects to Route 2, via Prospect Street, and to the Town of Montague near the Millers Falls railway.

The property is currently owned by a private entity that has sought to sell the property for redevelopment purposes. There have been two primary issues that have discouraged some interested buyers for redeveloping the property. The first issue is a concern about the potential for hazardous substances to be on the site, due to its previous use as a paper mill. The property owner and the Town of Erving worked with the FRCOG to have the site assessed for potential hazardous substances concerns. Using a federal EPA grant, the FRCOG had a Phase I environmental site assessment report and a Phase II & Class B-1 Response Action Outcome report completed by the engineering firm Weston & Sampson for the property in 2010 and 2011.

A second issue is related to the municipal sewer infrastructure that serves the property. The sewer infrastructure is oversized because it was designed to support a paper manufacturing facility using large volumes of wastewater. Regular sanitary sewer wastewater volumes are too low to utilize this existing municipal infrastructure, which would need to be retrofitted. The feasibility and cost for such a retrofit needs to be determined as well as a determination of other potential options, such as on-site wastewater treatment.

The Town of Erving had considered pursuing Priority Development Site (PDS) designation for the site. Such a designation is through the state's Chapter 43D: Local Expedited Permitting Program, which supports an expedited and streamlined local permit process for targeted economic development sites. An established, predictable local permitting process is considered advantageous by potential developers. For towns that choose to adopt Expedited Local Permitting this program gives them the ability to promote commercial/industrial development on pre-approved parcels by offering an expedited local permit process that guarantees a decision within 180 days. This requires the coordination of municipal staff and town boards, including

³² FRCOG interview with Claude Jeanloz of Renovator's Supply, Inc. on November 15, 2012.

the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, Fire Chief, Historic Commission, and Board of Health. In 2007, the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies published a document titled *A Best Practices Model for Streamlined Local Permitting*, to provide information on how such a permitting process could be implemented³³.

A town may choose to designate one or more “Priority Development Sites” (PDS), which must have property owner approval and meet specific criteria (such as being in a commercial, industrial or mixed use zone, and can accommodate the development or re-development of a building(s) of at least 50,000 square feet), and then apply to the state for the formal approval. In past years, towns with a designated PDS were eligible to apply for a one-time technical assistance grant. As of FY 2010, these grant funds were no longer funded in the state budget. However, communities may still apply to have PDS locations designated and adopt the provisions of Chapter 43D. Towns that have PDS designations may have priority consideration for select state grant programs (e.g. Brownfields, CDAG, and PWED) for PDS related applications and will also have their PDS included in state marketing efforts. The Town of Erving may want to re-visit this program for the Millers Falls International Paper site in the future.

The provisions of Chapter 43D do not include the issuance of building permits as one of the permits required to be part of the streamlined process. However, the request for a building permit is often one of the first steps a business will take. The Town of Erving should dialogue with the Franklin County Cooperative Building Inspection Program as part of the permit streamlining process.

Usher Plant, Erving Center

The Usher Plant site consists of two parcels located on both sides of Arch Street off of Route 2 in Erving Center. The property is adjacent to the Millers River to the south and railroad tracks to the north. The site has a long history of manufacturing use and is zoned industrial. The western parcel has multiple connected mill buildings, and the eastern parcel is primarily a parking lot. Municipal sewer infrastructure serves the property. The buildings were originally constructed in 1917 and have been used in the production of furniture, shoe heels, and paper. Also on the property are a Town of Erving sewer pump station, two small sheds sheltering hydrants, and a water tower. The most recent operator was Erving Paper, which ceased operations at the facility around 1990. The buildings have been vacant since that time.

Over the years, the Town of Erving, with property owner permission, pursued a Phase I environment site assessment and structural evaluation of the property to determine potential reuse options for the site. In July 2007, a portion of the building complex was set on fire by arsonists and destroyed. In August 2007, the property was purchased by Patriots Environmental Corporation for the purpose of demolishing the remaining buildings and redeveloping the site. This owner salvaged some materials from the remaining buildings, but did not pursue further demolition or clean-up. The Town of Erving continued to have the property assessed for potential contamination on the site, to estimate costs for clean-up and demolition, and to continue to explore re-use options. In 2012, the Town of Erving acquired the property through tax title proceedings. Presently, the Town of Erving is using its own resources and funding from the

³³ Website: <http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/pro/tools/best-practices-model-for-streamlined-local.html>

FRCOG Brownfields Clean-up Revolving Loan Fund and Subgrant Program (as originally funded by a U.S. EPA grant award) to clean-up the property.

Commercial, industrial, residential, community and recreational uses have been considered for the site. Given the deterioration of the buildings due to fire, the removal of structural elements and neglect, the rehabilitation of these structures is significantly more challenging. As a result most structures will be demolished, with a few structures of historic value being preserved. The property is located adjacent to the Millers River, and near the Millers River Wildlife Management Area and a proposed bike path. The Town hired the Conway School of Landscape Design in 2010, which created conceptual designs to reuse the site for recreational or community purposes. The final reuse purpose of the property continues to be discussed, while the site clean-up is being conducted.

A group of interested residents, businesses and public officials have formed the Usher Mill Re-Use Committee to advocate for the site's redevelopment and to forward a public planning process to spur its revitalization. The Committee proposes the creation of redevelopment plan that envisions multiple uses for the site, including recreational, natural resource conservation, community events, historic resources, and commercial/retail.

Home-Based Businesses

In general, home-based businesses are an important sector of the business community in rural communities. Home-based businesses work well for industries where much of the work can be done online or by telephone and does not require clients to visit the business site, such as business consulting, computer application and website development, and writing. Other prominent home-based industries are related to the arts or construction trades, provided that the location has adequate studio space or space for equipment storage.

While the reported percentage of people who work at home is relatively low compared to the region at large³⁴, home-based businesses in Erving are important and anticipated to increase. Home-based businesses are growing in the region due to greater access to advanced technology and applications, and the increased availability of broadband services. Workers may choose to work at home, at least part-time, for multiple reasons which may include quality of life factors, such as less time commuting and more time with family, to save on gas or other travel costs, and/or to reduce emissions associated with global warming. Home-based businesses do not typically require developing additional land in a community, as some types of industrial or commercial land uses would require. Increases in home-based businesses contribute to the local economy without the need for investing in additional infrastructure (such as roads and sewers), and tend not to adversely impact natural or scenic resources. They generally have minimal impacts on traffic, although residential zoning should be very clear about what uses are allowed, so that home-based businesses do not disturb neighbors or have a negative impact on the surrounding area.

³⁴ As according to the 2006-2010 ACS five-year estimate data.

Business Development and Economic Development Infrastructure Resources

Access to business development technical assistance is often a key component to successfully starting or growing a business. There are a variety programs and organizations available in the region that may offer support to individual businesses and entrepreneurs in Erving. These entities offer access to business planning, financing, networking, marketing, and workforce development opportunities. Connecting the Erving business community to these resources will be valuable to the existing businesses and encourage new ventures to be created.

The following are descriptions of a selection of business development organizations that may serve Erving. Included in the appendix is a more comprehensive list of organizations offering business development services with their contact information.

Select List of Business Development and Economic Development Infrastructure Resources:

- The **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program** provides assistance for housing, community, and economic development projects that assist low and moderate-income residents. Municipalities with populations under 50,000 must apply to the competitive state program administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development for funds. Within the CDBG Program is the Economic Development Fund. The purpose of this Fund is to provide financing for projects that create and/or retain jobs, improve the tax base, or otherwise enhance the quality of life in the community. Website: www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/community-development-block-grant-cdbg.html
- The **MassWorks Infrastructure Program** coordinates the administration of six infrastructure programs: Public Works Economic Development (PWED), Community Development Action Grant (CDAG), Growth District Initiative (GDI) Grants, Massachusetts Opportunity Relocation and Expansion (MORE) Grants, Small Town Rural Assistance Program (STRAP), and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Grants. These programs fund a range of publicly owned infrastructure projects. The CDAG Program provides funding to local governments for projects that “build local economies, eliminate blight, create jobs and produce workforce and affordable housing that would not occur by private enterprise alone.” The Program requires that projects do not benefit any single individual or business, and that the project must be publicly owned/managed for a minimum of 30 years. Website: www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/pro/infrastructure/massworks
- The **Massachusetts Downtown Initiative** offers the Technical Assistance Site Visit Program to municipalities. Professional consultant services valued up to \$10,000 are provided to the community for specific issues related to a downtown revitalization effort. Recent awards have included a market study to support the pilot Shelburne Falls Composting Collaborative project, a market analysis to explore the development of artist live/work space in Turners Falls, and design guidelines for the Orange town center that included recommendations for a future sign and façade program. Other types of services that have been provided include: downtown master plan, zoning bylaw update, parking management study, way-finding signage system, and exploring Business Improvement

District implementation. Website:

www.mass.gov/hed/community/planning/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi.html

- The FRCOG administers the Greater Franklin County Economic Target Area (ETA) Program in cooperation with the Massachusetts Office of Business Development's Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP). The ETA Region encompasses thirty towns in the greater Franklin County area, including Erving. The EDIP allows communities to negotiate a **Tax Incrementing Financing (TIF)** and other tax incentive agreements with a private business that is expanding, renovating, relocating, or building new facilities and creating jobs with an Economic Opportunity Area (a targeted area designated for economic development within an established ETA). For a business seeking a break from their State tax obligation using this program, they must be able to demonstrate that the project will generate substantial sales outside of Massachusetts, and the project must be approved by Town Meeting and the state. Municipalities may choose to offer a tax incentive applicable to the business' local property tax obligation, which does not require the same thresholds to be met as required by the State. Website: www.mass.gov/hed/business/incentives
- The FRCOG administers the **Greater Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Program**, which provides coordinated regional economic development planning for twenty-nine towns for Franklin County plus the towns of Amherst, Athol and Phillipston. This program maintains the region's eligibility for select federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding programs. The intention of the CEDS Program is to create an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy, in a way that benefits its constituents and is in keeping with their values and goals. Oversight of this program is provided by the CEDS Committee which consists of volunteer members appointed by participating municipalities and partnering organizations. Website: www.frcog.org
- The FRCOG administers a **Regional Brownfields Program**, which includes access to a revolving loan fund and subgrant program that offers low interest loans to eligible, credit worthy public and private sector entities to clean-up brownfields sites. Some of these funds may be available as a subgrant to eligible municipalities. The FRCOG has also received multiple U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grants to conduct environmental site assessments to determine if properties are contaminated, and if so to what extent. Website: www.frcog.org
- The **National Scenic Byway Program** is a federal transportation program that provides funding for eligible scenic byway projects. The FRCOG completed a corridor management plan in 2009 for the eastern section of the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway from Athol to Greenfield. The Plan includes inventories of the historic, cultural, and natural resources, and heritage and recreational attractions along the Byway. The Plan lists recommended actions that are intended to balance future growth with the preservation of the Byway's resources. The Western Massachusetts Scenic Byway Promotional Campaign, currently in progress, will include the development of marketing tools, logos, way-finding signs, and websites for all seven byways in western Massachusetts. Website: www.frcog.org

- The **Franklin County Community Development Corporation** provides direct technical assistance and business planning workshops, administers a small business lending program and operates a commercial processing kitchen for food-based enterprises and a business incubator in Greenfield. Website: www.fccdc.org
- **Franklin County Chamber of Commerce** provides services to large and small businesses throughout Franklin County, including health insurance, networking opportunities, lobbying representation, and assistance with town events. Website: www.franklincc.org
- The **North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce** serves the businesses of the nine-town North Quabbin region, including Erving, and acts as a liaison between businesses and a variety of health and human services in the region. The Chamber also offers access to health insurance plans, and sponsors events and programs throughout the area. Website: www.northquabbinchamber.com
- **North Quabbin Community Coalition** works to improve the quality of life in the North Quabbin towns through addressing community-identified issues. The Economic Development Task Force seeks to coordinate efforts in the region and encourage broad community involvement in economic development initiatives. Website: <http://nqcc.org>
- **North Quabbin Woods** is a project of the North Quabbin Community Coalition that seeks to revitalize the economy through the responsible utilization of the region's forests. The website provides an area guide of businesses, focusing on recreation, agriculture, local artisans and woodworkers, local lumber and building materials, and sustainable forestry. A visitor information center and artisan gift store is located in downtown Orange on the Mohawk Trail (Route 2A). Website: www.northquabbinwoods.org
- **North Quabbin Entrepreneurship Center**, located in Athol, is a project of Mount Wachusett Community College. The Center offers non-credit business development classes and training for those considering starting their own business, or for existing small business owners who want to improve their knowledge and skills. Class registration is open to anyone, and income eligible residents from Erving may be eligible for tuition waivers as class space allows. Website: <http://mwcc.edu/wf>
- The **Mohawk Trail Association** is a regional tourism council that markets the northern tier region from central Massachusetts to the Berkshires. The Association produces an annual visitors' guide and maintains a comprehensive website that identifies attractions and tourism services. Website: www.mohawktrail.com
- The **Franklin/Hampshire Regional Employment Board** and Franklin/Hampshire Career Center work with individuals seeking employment and employers seeking to find workers. The Board provides training programs on behalf of businesses and industry seeking a workforce with skills or knowledge. Website: www.franklinhampshirereb.org
- The **Millers River Watershed Council** is a non-profit organization that works to protect the lands and waters of the watershed for people, plants and animals. The Council's work includes water quality monitoring, river clean ups and restoration projects, storm water management, and public education, along with working to develop recreation access points and opportunities in the watershed. Website: <http://millerswatershed.org>

- **Fostering Art and Culture in Franklin County Project and Partnership** is an initiative to grow the creative economy in Franklin County. The project manages an online database of artists and creative businesses, and has initiated various events and projects such as the annual Creative Economy Summit, drawing artists and business people from the greater western Massachusetts region, and monthly networking opportunities for artists in the community. Website: www.fosteringartandculture.org
- **Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA)** is a Pioneer Valley-based organization dedicated to making connections between farms and the community. CISA conducts marketing programs and offers business technical assistance workshop to farmers and agri-businesses. Website: www.buylocalfood.org
- **Hidden Tech** is a community of mostly home-based businesses in western Massachusetts that connect to each other online and at events for networking and business development programs. Website: www.hiddentech.net

Economic Development Assets & Challenges

Through the process of developing this chapter, a brief list of the community's assets and challenges for economic development in the Town of Erving has been assembled. These identified conditions and factors reflect potential opportunities and impediments to be addressed when forming recommendations for future action regarding economic development in the town.

Table 11: Assets and Challenges Summary

Assets	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautiful rural town, with three distinct villages. • Erving Center located on Route 2, the state's primary northern tier transportation corridor. • "Mohawk Trail" and area attractions have name recognition from outside region. • Mohawk Trail (Route 2) and the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway (Route 63) are designated scenic byways. • Natural and recreational resources, including the Erving State Forest and the Millers River. • Low residential taxes and good public schools, make Erving an attractive, affordable place to live for individuals and families. • Public investments have been made to improve safety and efficiency on Route 2. • Infrastructure (i.e. water, sewer, sidewalks) in Erving can support further development. • Funding has been secured through the Scenic Byway program to construct sidewalk and streetscape improvements in Erving. • Internet access will improve greatly in the region as public and private investment in a broadband network continues. • There is adequate sewer capacity in the three wastewater treatment facilities in town to accommodate new uses. • Access to regional business development and tourism organizations. • Access to public transportation connecting Erving Center to Orange, Athol, and Gardner to the east, and Greenfield to the west. • The former Usher Plant property is now owned by the town, and presents an opportunity for Erving Center. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited visitor services infrastructure in Erving Center, such as parking, signage, restrooms, and tourist information. • Tax base predominantly dependent on one major property owner. • Several major employers have closed over the last two decades, resulting in a significant decline in jobs in town. • Route 2, while an asset, also poses a challenge in creating a safe, pedestrian friendly environment in Erving Center and Farley. • More small businesses, which are in keeping with the community character, are needed to help diversify the tax base and provide employment opportunities. • Concerns expressed related to phone service and line quality in the community. • Lack of public water supply in Erving Center and Farley. • Need for a public access point to the Millers River and dissemination of information to the public on where to access the river and safe use of the river. • To encourage the reuse of the Millers Falls International Paper Mill property, a feasibility study is needed to determine reuse options as well options for on-site wastewater treatment.

Recommendations and Action Items

These Recommendations and Action Items are based on those from the Economic Development Chapter of the *2002 Erving Master Plan*, with input and updates from the Economic Development Chapter Committee in 2012. Please note that these Recommendations are not listed in any prioritized order.

- 1. Encourage broader citizen participation in discussions of the Town's economic development potential, in order to create consensus around a strong vision for the future.**
 - 1.1. Action Item: Create a coordinated vision for the future of the Town of Erving by updating the remaining Chapters of the *2002 Erving Master Plan*.
 - 1.2. Action Item: Post the updated *2012 Erving Economic Development Chapter* on the Town of Erving website to encourage its use by residents, businesses and public officials.
- 2. Diversify the Town's employment base to include small and medium-sized businesses in a variety of sectors to reduce the dependence on manufacturing and major employers.**
 - 2.1. Action Item: Develop a specific strategy plan to attract business investment in Erving.
 - 2.2. Action Item: Make available to the public information about local entrepreneurship programs, such as offered by the Franklin County Community Development Corporation or the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network, to encourage the growth of locally-owned businesses, cooperatives and non-profit organizations.
 - 2.3. Action Item: Examine how vacant or underutilized commercial/industrial space may be redeveloped or may be more utilized more intensely, such as at the Usher Plant property, Millers Falls International Paper Mill property, and The Renovator's Supply complex. Strategies may include supporting infrastructure improvements, using local Tax Increment Financing or other available financial incentives, and establishing a predictable local permitting process.
 - 2.4. Action Item: Explore a redevelopment model that would support the creation of flexible spaces for a mix of uses in vacant or underutilized former mill buildings. These uses may include artist studios or other spaces for creative businesses, retail space (i.e. restaurants, stores, galleries), or light manufacturing (such as specialty food businesses, micro-breweries, woodworking).
- 3. Establish stronger links with regional organizations that can provide resources and technical assistance with economic development issues.**
 - 3.1. Action Item: Regional organizations such as the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, the North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce, the Franklin/Hampshire Regional Employment Board, and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments have expertise and information to offer municipal officials and business owners with regards to business development. Utilize these resources by inviting them to present to municipal boards

or at business community events, or by designating municipal representation on committees of these organizations.

- 3.2. Action Item: Continue to utilize the FRCOG Regional Brownfields Program to access resources to support the assessment and/or clean-up of hazardous substances at eligible commercial and industrial sites seeking to be redeveloped.
- 3.3. Action Item: Invite regional organizations to contribute economic development related information to be included in *Around Town, An Erving Community Newsletter* that is distributed to businesses and residents.

4. Facilitate the redevelopment of the Usher Plant property for future reuse of the site.

- 4.1. Action Item: Complete an Usher Plant Redevelopment Plan that could incorporate economic, recreational and community considerations, such as a mix of tourism-based businesses, a bike path and access to the Millers River.
- 4.2. Action Item: Complete the clean-up of debris and the mitigation of hazardous substances, while preserving select historical structures on the site.
- 4.3. Action Item: Conduct joint meetings of municipal boards and commissions with the Usher Mill Re-use Committee to maintain communication on the project's progress and to advance the redevelopment process.
- 4.4. Action Item: Encourage and support the Usher Mill Re-use Committee to research and apply for grants to help redevelop the Usher Plant property.
- 4.5. Action Item: Explore hiring a planner or consultant services to expedite the redevelopment process.
- 4.6. Action Item: Explore the creation of a municipal redevelopment authority that could champion the redevelopment process and take over control of the site.
- 4.7. Action Item: Consider acquiring additional parcels adjacent to the Usher Plant property to accommodate preferred uses identified for the site.

5. Collaborate with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the Route 2 Safety Improvement Task Force to continue efforts to make Erving Center and the Farley area safer and more pedestrian friendly.

- 5.1. Action Item: Continue the Town of Erving's participation in the Route 2 Safety Improvement Task Force.
- 5.2. Action Item: Promote opportunities for residents, business-people, and public officials to provide input on Route 2 Safety Improvement projects, such as at Route 2 Safety Improvement Task Force meetings, and MassDOT project design hearings for Project #604818: Erving- Reconstruction of Route 2 (Erving Center) and Project #604959: Erving- Reconstruction & Improvements on Route 2 (Farley Area).

6. Develop ways for the municipal government of Erving to further support business development.

- 6.1. Action Item: Establish a business ombudsman to facilitate local businesses and entrepreneurs with connecting to municipal and state government regulations and services.

- 6.2. Action Item: Review the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies' *A Best Practices Model for Streamlined Local Permitting* published in 2007, and establish a streamlined permitting process to create a clear, predictable and efficient procedure for local permitting decisions to be made.
- 6.3. Action Item: Explore adoption of the Chapter 43D: Expedited Local Permitting, which would include identifying area(s) to target for commercial, industrial or mixed-used purposes and applying for Chapter 43D designation through the Massachusetts Permit Regulatory Office.
- 6.4. Action Item: Dialogue with the Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program to help ensure a streamlined permitting process.
7. **Work with new and existing business owners to address infrastructure issues that may be compromising their ability to compete and expand.**
 - 7.1. Action Item: Explore the expansion of the public water system infrastructure in Erving Center. Such an infrastructure investment will support business expansion opportunities and help with fire suppression sprinklers and hydrants.
 - 7.2. Action Item: Explore potential resources to support the retrofit of sewer system at the Millers Falls International Paper Mill, which was built to support intensive wastewater use at the papermill but is not suitable for less intensive uses, and is considered a hindrance for the site's redevelopment. A feasibility study is needed to determine reuse options for the site as well as options for on-site wastewater treatment.
8. **Develop the potential for Erving to become a tourist destination.**
 - 8.1. Action Item: Coordinate a committee charged with developing and implementing community and business events, such as a periodic Farmers Market. These activities build sense of community by residents and foster the recognition of Erving by visitors.
 - 8.2. Action Item: Develop a plan to promote Erving, either on its own or work in conjunction with regional marketing efforts, such as through the coordinated marketing program being developed for the Western Massachusetts Scenic Byway Marketing Project (which includes marketing for the Mohawk Trail on Route 2 and the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway on Route 63).
 - 8.3. Action Item: Further develop the tourism infrastructure in Erving by inventorying attractions, identifying the amenities needed to support visitor use of these attractions, and prioritizing these projects for implementation, such as identified in the Erving Open Space and Recreation Plan. Examples of amenities may include signage, tourist information kiosks, parking, trash receptacles, and benches.
 - 8.4. Action Item: Support creation of bike path that utilizes the Arch Street Bridge and provides a pedestrian and bicycle connection for the three villages of Erving without the use of Route 2.
 - 8.5. Action Item: Support the implementation of the Blue Trail Project.
 - 8.6. Action Item: Explore the potential for reuse of the Usher Mill site for tourism services, and to potentially connect to the nearby historical commission property.

9. Join in regional efforts to improve the economic vitality of forest and wood product industries.

- 9.1. Action Item: Work with the North Quabbin Community Coalition, which oversees the North Quabbin Woods project to promote timber harvesting, the development of new businesses to add value to timber products, the cultivation/collection of non-timber forest products, and natural resources-based tourism in the region to create and sustain local jobs.

10. Investigate the opportunities that new technologies can provide for the future of Erving's economy, such as through broadband access and renewable energy generation and energy efficiency.

- 10.1. Action Item: Refer to *A Strategy for Regional Collaboration in the North Quabbin Region*, to review the opportunities available to Erving to work independently or in collaboration with the North Quabbin region to proceed with project development. Projects may include participating in the establishment of a Regional Sustainability Coordinator or implementing a financing program to fund energy efficiency improvements for homes and businesses.
- 10.2. Action Item: Renewable energy technologies that can harness the abundance of natural flows passing through Town can benefit of its citizens, potential resources include solar, wind, micro-hydro, biomass, landfill gas, and waste-to-energy. The Town should openly address any aesthetic and recreational issues related to each technology early in the process. Explore the use of the closed sludge landfill along Route 2 as a potential site for the installation of a solar energy generation project.
- 10.3. Action Item: Periodically review Comcast's cable television license renewal agreement with the Town of Erving. This review should include determining the status of any conditions that may have been met that would lead to the extension of the cable system to unserved areas of the community.
- 10.4. Action Item: Encourage any residents or businesses with telephone service or line quality issues to report problems to their service providers. If these issues are not rectified by the service provider, they should contact the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications & Cable for assistance.
- 10.5. Action Item: Maintain communication with the Massachusetts Broadband Institute to monitor the progress of the Axia MassBroadband123 network and connection of Community Anchor Institutions in Erving. Work with last mile network builders and service providers to encourage the creation of a robust next-generation network in the community.

11. Support locally-owned businesses and collaboration among them to help keep money recirculating in the local economy.

- 11.1. Action Item: Rather than continuing to spend money on products and services produced in distant lands and then trying to attract new businesses that will bring money back to town, focus on keeping money circulating within the local and regional economy. Determine the products and services that citizens and businesses can provide for each other locally and regionally. Energy and food are examples of two vitally necessary products that consistently allow money to leak out of local circulation. An energy

efficiency program can help to keep to a minimum the money spent to heat homes, run appliances, and power industry. Local generation of renewable energy could help to keep even more money in local circulation. Producing more food locally is another way to keep money circulating in the local economy, such as through ecologically designed fish and water based vegetable production (aquaculture/hydroponics) or in greenhouses. The vacant Millers Falls International Paper Mill could potentially accommodate such a reuse for these purposes.

Appendix

Demographic and Labor Force Data Tables:

The following data tables refer to information discussed previously in the chapter. Please note that “Surrounding Towns” refers to Erving and the towns bordering Erving, which are Gill, Montague, Northfield, Orange, Warwick, and Wendell.

Table 12: Population, 1990-2010

Geography	1990 Census	2000 Census	2010 Census	Difference			Change
				1990 - 2000	2000 - 2010	1990 - 2010	
Erving	1,372	1,467	1,800	95	333	428	31.2%
Gill	1,583	1,363	1,500	-220	137	-83	-5.2%
Montague	8,316	8,489	8,437	173	-52	121	1.5%
Northfield	2,838	2,951	3,032	113	81	194	6.8%
Orange	7,312	7,518	7,839	206	321	527	7.2%
Warwick	740	750	780	10	30	40	5.4%
Wendell	899	986	848	87	-138	-51	-5.7%
Surrounding Towns	23,060	23,524	24,236	464	712	1,176	5.1%
Franklin County	70,092	71,535	71,372	1,443	-163	1,280	1.8%
Massachusetts	6,016,425	6,349,097	6,547,629	332,672	198,532	531,204	8.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 1990 Census, 2000 Census, and 2010 Census; www.census.gov

Table 13: Income and Poverty Data

Geography	2006-2010 ACS Five-year Estimate			
	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Poverty Rate
Erving	\$22,491	\$51,458	\$54,375	8.5%
Gill	\$28,922	\$58,487	\$71,528	5.9%
Montague	\$25,306	\$42,140	\$62,371	16.8%
Northfield	\$31,479	\$70,606	\$74,258	1.8%
Orange	\$21,825	\$42,809	\$52,141	11.8%
Warwick	\$30,232	\$67,554	\$68,438	5.4%
Wendell	\$31,162	\$59,500	\$58,333	6.3%
Franklin County	\$27,544	\$52,002	\$65,760	11.3%
Massachusetts	\$33,966	\$64,509	\$81,165	10.5%

Note: Dollar amounts are 2010 inflation adjusted.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate; www.census.gov

Table 14: 2010 Age Distribution

Geography	Total Population	Under 18	18 to 24 Years	25 to 44 Years	45 to 64 Years	65 to 74 Years	75 Years & Over	Median Age
Erving	1,467	336	95	448	386	98	104	38.7
Gill	1,363	323	90	365	411	81	93	46.3
Montague	8,489	1,949	663	2,488	1,985	693	711	42.0
Northfield	2,951	776	185	813	780	207	190	45.7
Orange	7,518	2,004	544	2,131	1,758	551	530	41.1
Warwick	750	185	51	218	213	44	39	50.7
Wendell	986	253	72	302	314	24	21	47.9
Surrounding Towns	23,524	5,826	1,700	6,765	5,847	1,698	1,688	NA
Franklin County	71,372	14,068	4,262	16,522	24,019	5,653	5,225	43.3
Massachusetts	6,547,629	1,418,923	475,668	1,732,290	1,815,804	456,460	446,264	38.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2010 Census Demographic Profile; www.census.gov

Table 15: Highest Educational Attainment

Geography	2006-2010 ACS Five-year Estimate						
	Total Population 25 years and over	Less than 12th Grade	High School Diploma	Some College	Associate Degree	Bachelor Degree	Graduate, Professional Degree
Erving	1,234	138	511	267	128	161	29
Gill	1,051	75	437	190	89	144	116
Montague	5,875	828	1,649	1,200	646	913	639
Northfield	2,212	84	524	475	267	471	391
Orange	5,571	730	2,481	996	362	575	427
Warwick	431	26	141	82	56	77	49
Wendell	774	85	226	93	52	162	156
Surrounding Towns	17,148	1,966	5,969	3,303	1,600	2,503	1,807
Franklin County	51,066	4,547	15,686	9,364	4,863	9,283	7,323
Massachusetts	4,382,378	495,822	1,171,725	701,624	334,998	961,563	716,646

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-year Estimate; www.census.gov

Table 16: 2011 Labor Force and Unemployment

Geography	2011 Labor Force	2011 Employed Persons	2011 Unemploy- ed Persons	2011 Unemploy- ment Rate	2010 Unemploy- ment Rate	2009 Unemploy- ment Rate
Erving	984	915	69	7.0%	7.8%	9.6%
Gill	874	816	58	6.6%	7.4%	8.2%
Montague	4,424	4,060	364	8.2%	9.0%	9.2%
Northfield	1,755	1,662	93	5.3%	6.6%	6.8%
Orange	3,740	3,395	345	9.2%	10.8%	11.0%
Warwick	359	331	28	7.8%	9.5%	8.7%
Wendell	488	453	35	7.2%	8.1%	7.1%
Surrounding Towns	12,624	11,632	992	7.3%	8.5%	8.7%
Franklin County	38,558	35,960	2,598	6.7%	8.4%	7.9%
Massachusetts	3,456,433	3,202,050	254,383	7.4%	8.8%	8.4%

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development;
http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/lmi_lur_a.asp

Table 17: Place of Work

Geography	Total Workers (16 years & over)	% Worked out of state	% Worked out of county	% Worked in county, not in town	% Worked in town
Erving	878	3%	21%	61%	14%
Gill	729	6%	17%	68%	8%
Montague	4,137	8%	27%	44%	21%
Northfield	1,644	12%	18%	50%	19%
Orange	3,474	3%	51%	12%	34%
Warwick	316	10%	42%	38%	9%
Wendell	534	5%	37%	35%	24%
Surrounding Towns	11,712	7%	33%	37%	23%
Franklin County	36,503	5%	33%	35%	28%
Massachusetts	3,188,619	4%	31%	34%	32%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-year Estimate;
www.census.gov

Table 18: Travel to Work

Geography	Total Workers (16 years & over)	% Drove to work	% Walked	% Other means*	% Worked at home
Erving	878	93%	1%	1%	4%
Gill	729	91%	2%	2%	3%
Montague	4137	93%	4%	1%	2%
Northfield	1,644	93%	3%	1%	3%
Orange	3,474	89%	4%	1%	7%
Warwick	316	95%	1%	0%	4%
Wendell	534	75%	6%	1%	15%
Surrounding Towns	11712	91%	4%	1%	4%
Franklin County	36,503	88%	4%	1%	6%
Massachusetts	3,188,619	81%	5%	2%	4%

* Other means includes public transportation, taxi, motorcycle or other means not identified.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-year Estimate