

Economic Development Strategic Plan



**Final Adopted Plan
(October 2018)**

Acknowledgements

Mayor Stephen L. DiNatale and the Fitchburg City Council wish to acknowledge the dedicated local business and civic leaders who served on the Project Advisory Group for this planning effort. (A complete list of the Project Advisory Group participants appears in *Appendix B*.) These volunteers devoted dozens of hours over more than a year toward the formulation of this strategic plan. An additional thank you is directed to the technical support provided by UMass Boston Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management, and specifically project consultant Monica Lamboy. Ms. Lamboy worked closely and collaboratively with the Fitchburg Community Development Department throughout the planning process, and a very polished work product was the result.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Background	1
Planning Process	1
History of Business in Fitchburg.....	3
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.....	7
Vision For Fitchburg’s Economy & Key Strategies	9
Strategic Action Plan.....	11
Downtown.....	13
Education / University Town.....	21
Family Friendly	27
Quality Housing Stock	31
Mix of Businesses.....	35
Distinct Neighborhood Commercial Districts	41
Outdoor Recreation & Culture.....	45
Transportation	51
Appendices.....	57
Appendix A – Trends Report Findings.....	59
Appendix B – Steering Committee Members	61
Appendix C – Implementation Plan	63

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

After securing Community Compact grant funding from the Baker-Polito administration, the City of Fitchburg hired the Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management at the University of Massachusetts Boston to help develop a *Strategic Plan for Economic Development*. To secure the funding, the City selected the best practice of “create an economic development plan / job retention” as the area it wished to pursue with the funding. As described in greater detail below, this strategic plan is the result of many months of work by residents, business leaders, City staff, and elected officials who came together to develop a vision for the economic future of Fitchburg and strategic goals and actions to help make that vision a reality. All goals and actions are designed to capitalize upon Fitchburg’s unique assets with the intent of positioning the city competitively within the region and beyond.

This strategic plan effort has only been made possible due to several key actions the City of Fitchburg has taken in recent years. In 2014, the City reaffirmed its commitment to economic development by reinstating a position dedicated to economic development. The Economic Development Director position, which is focused on the commercial sector, was added to the Community Development Department and filled in 2015. Since that time, the City has made progress on a variety of fronts. The downtown, spurred by the ReImagine North of Main partnership, recently secured a Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) designation from MassDevelopment, and has over \$100m in the development pipeline. Other progress of note includes the new Wachusett Station (2016 opening), the 2017 ground-breaking of the 96-acre "Game On Fitchburg" athletic complex, and the Twin City Rail Trail, an \$18M trail connecting downtown Fitchburg and Leominster. The City has active partners in its effort to strengthen the local economy.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Collins Center project team began its work by carefully analyzing data to understand Fitchburg’s current business environment and learn how it has changed over time. Multiple sources of information were used, including the Census Bureau’s Decennial Census, American Community Survey, and County Business Patterns, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Claritas retail leakage data, and Fitchburg Assessor’s data among others. The data analysis produced 36 significant findings or “trends,” which are captured in the *Fitchburg Economic Trends Report* published in February 2018, together with tables and graphics explaining each finding (see Appendix A for a list of the findings). In the trends report, which is a companion document to this strategic plan, Fitchburg is compared to five other communities in Massachusetts and to the Commonwealth as a whole. Comparison communities included: Everett, Leominster, Pittsfield, Westfield, and Woburn. While some of the same data has been incorporated into this strategic plan, the trends report contains significantly more information than can be repeated here.

For more than a year, from the summer of 2017 to the summer of 2018, the project Steering Committee,

consisting of a broad group of 26 Fitchburg residents, business leaders, and civic officials appointed by the Mayor, met to discuss how to strategically strengthen Fitchburg's economy. Over the course of multiple sessions, the trends data was presented and discussed. Steering Committee Members then used this information, along their personal knowledge of the community, to develop a proposed vision, goals, sub-goals, and actions to help grow the local economy. (See Appendix B for a list of Steering Committee participants.)

The group considered how a strategic plan differed from other long range plans. Specifically, that a key element of strategic planning is identifying, in a focused manner, those strengths upon which a community can build and those weaknesses or challenges that must be overcome. At the same time, being strategic is not only deciding what avenues to pursue, but also determining those that should not be pursued because they are not a match for the unique circumstances at hand.

On February 22, 2018, a public forum was held to gather input into the proposed plan elements from all interested community members. The meeting began with a brief presentation of several of the key findings of the *Trends Report*. Attendees then reviewed and discussed the different goal areas, meeting with Steering Committee Members and conversing with other residents and business persons during the course of the evening. All attendees had an opportunity to actively participate by putting their thoughts and insights into writing during the meeting, and they were able to show their support for various goals and actions by putting sticker dots next to the ones they found the most compelling. The ideas and feedback gathered from participants at the community forum have been incorporated into the final version of this *Strategic Plan*.

Plan Organization

This strategic plan includes brief history of Fitchburg's economy, a look at the city's strengths and weaknesses, followed by a vision statement. The vision includes eight sub-goals, and a section follows that provides background to each. In addition, in Appendix C, a detailed implementation plan can be found which identifies the goal, action, the project type, start year, and possible partners. Project type includes Business Development, Code Enforcement, Environment, Finance, Infrastructure, Marketing, Planning / Policy, Public Safety, Work Development, and Zoning / Permitting. Partners include an array of City departments, local institutions and organizations such as the Fitchburg Museum, Fitchburg State University, and many others.

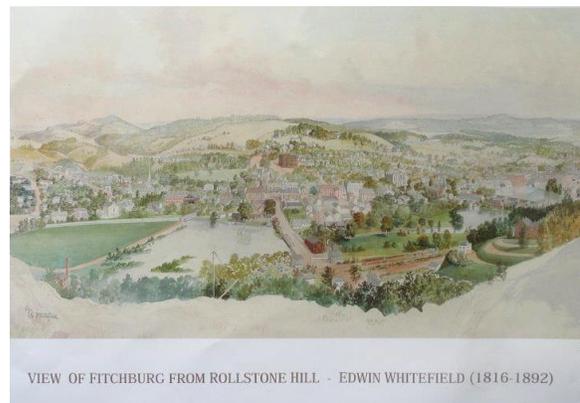
Overall, the plan contains 183 action items that are distributed relatively evenly across the next five years. Each action represents a new project and a new challenge to complete. Given this, the plan identifies the start year for each action as the completion of date each project cannot be anticipated.

HISTORY OF BUSINESS IN FITCHBURG

Fitchburg is a diverse city whose rich history is still visible today. Founded in the mid-17th century, the city was a mostly agrarian community for its first 150 years, before emerging as a regional hub of industrial paper and textile manufacturing. The end of the Industrial Revolution hit Fitchburg especially hard and ushered in a nearly century-long period of declining economic conditions. During this period, although total population in the city remained stagnant, the composition of city residents changed dramatically, with several waves of mostly Hispanic immigrants turning Fitchburg into a popular gateway community. Most recently, City officials have worked to turn around its economy and the fortunes of its residents, with new initiatives and industries brought in to revive this once bustling industrial center.

Pre-Colonial Settlement to Establishment of City of Fitchburg

The area now known as Fitchburg was originally a wilderness used by local Native Americans for hunting and horticultural gathering, with no known fixed settlements. European colonization began in the mid-1600s, but the first known clearing and structure in Fitchburg was a garrison built in 1735 to defend the growing regional population from Native American attacks. Indeed, the name for the eventual town, incorporated in 1764 from the western part of Lunenburg, was inspired by local resident John Fitch, who survived an attack and kidnapping by Native Americans.¹



Following the Revolutionary War, the population of Fitchburg grew rapidly, from 643 residents in 1776 to 2,169 in 1830, and the North Nashua River was identified as a prime location for water-powered industry. A dam built in 1794 helped control the river flow, and eight textile factories were built on its banks between 1807 and 1832. The town soon became the industrial center of Massachusetts' north-central region, adding paper and timber mills to the cotton and wool factories. The concentration of manufacturing production in Fitchburg also helped bring early railroad service to the town, linking it to Boston in 1845. Population and industrial production growth continued for almost a century, with the number of residents increasing to 11,260 by 1870, and 41,029 by 1920. Many new residents were immigrants, who as a share of the population increased from 19% to 35% over this fifty year period.

Fitchburg became a city in 1872 and developed its own streetcar system, initially using horse-drawn trolleys in the 1880s, then converting to an electric system in the 1890s. This system connected the city to routes running through other neighboring towns, further increasing access to and the importance of Fitchburg as the commercial and civic center in the region. Textile and paper production continued to drive Fitchburg's economy, with machine manufacturing later emerging as an important industry.

¹ City of Fitchburg, <http://www.ci.fitchburg.ma.us/443/Brief-History>

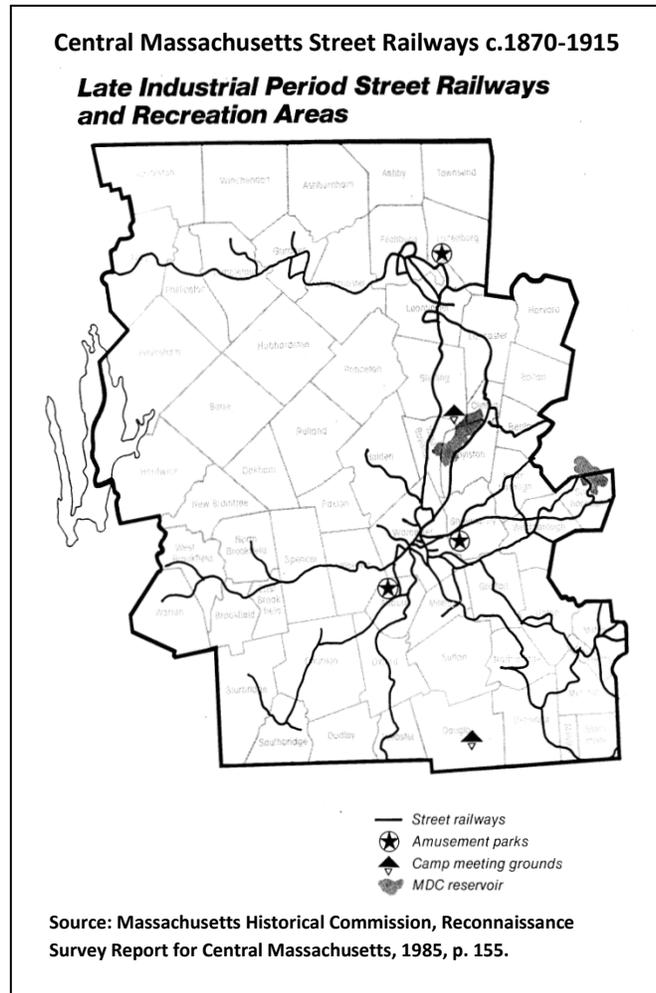
Declining Industrial Activity

Fortunes began to turn in the early part of the 20th century. The textile industry, which employed over 15% of male workers in Fitchburg in 1915, began to decline when many operations moved from Massachusetts to southern states after WWI. The Great Depression caused even more factories to close and jobs to disappear. In 1939, General Electric (GE) opened a plant in Fitchburg, bringing back hope of manufacturing growth, though few other new employers followed. In 1998, GE closed the plant.

As Fitchburg's economy changed, so did its population size and make up. After nearly quadrupling between 1870 and 1920, Fitchburg's population grew anemically for the next 50 years, to a high of 43,343 in 1970. At the same time, similar to many other urban communities in the U.S., many higher-income households left for surrounding suburban communities and were replaced with lower-income households. Eventually many shops and commercial enterprises also left for suburban shopping centers, draining the city of much of its remaining economic base.

These economic and population trends continued through the second half of the 20th century as manufacturing jobs fell from over 10,000 in 1966 to under 3,700 in 1996 (before the GE plant closed).² Some of these losses were offset by growth in service-related fields, such as healthcare and education, which collectively employed more than 4,300 people in 1996, up from 3,500 in 1980.³ A small boost came in 1960, when a small teachers college was expanded into Fitchburg State College (renamed Fitchburg State University in 2010).

Except for a small bump during the late-1980s regional housing boom, the population of Fitchburg declined by over 4,000 between 1970 and 2000. The residential composition continued to change as the minority share of the population grew from under 5% in 1980⁴ to 25% in 2000.⁵ The Hispanic population, in particular, began increasing rapidly in the 1980s and now makes up a significant portion of the residential population.



² City of Fitchburg, Vision2020 Comprehensive Master Plan (1998). <http://www.ci.fitchburg.ma.us/153/Vision2020>

³ Ibid. Due to changes in definitions, counts of service industry employment in Fitchburg are not available pre-1980.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census.

Fitchburg Today

The Great Recession in 2008 further challenged Fitchburg. Declines in house values left many properties worth less than the value of their outstanding mortgage balance and in foreclosure, and unemployment jumped from 7% in 2007 to over 11% by 2010.⁶ Recovery has been slow and, as late as 2015, more than one-quarter of Fitchburg properties were underwater, the second-highest share in the state at that time.⁷

Fitchburg's population peaked at 43,343 in 1970, then declined to 40,318 (-7.0%) by 2010. In general, Fitchburg is younger than the comparison communities and the Commonwealth (34.5 median age in Fitchburg vs 39.3 years for Massachusetts) and has fewer residents of working age (59.3% of residents between age 20 and 64). In addition, the residential population is more diverse (34% minority) and has a lower adult educational attainment level than the Commonwealth and all comparison communities except Everett. Fitchburg has the highest share of residents living in poverty among the comparison communities, including among seniors (13.5%) and children (29.1%), and has a higher unemployment rate (5.3%) than the Commonwealth and comparison communities.

Local jobs declined by 10.1% between 2001 and 2015 even as the number of businesses increased. As of 2015, there were 0.62 jobs per resident in the workforce, where a 1.0 ratio would mean that the total number of jobs was equal to the number of residents in the workforce. Today, Fitchburg contains a significant number of jobs in the Health Care & Social Services and Education job sectors; two sectors that are among those expected to grow most rapidly in the region in the future. Fitchburg contains a large number of retail jobs and brings grocery store dollars into the city, as residents from other communities come to Fitchburg to shop. However, Fitchburg is significantly underserved in the Food Service & Drinking retail sector, and \$50 million of unmet demand exists locally. Although smaller than in past, the manufacturing sector still constitutes 12% of local employment, especially in paper and metal fabrication.



⁶ Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

⁷ Boston Globe, "Mass. still recovering from housing crash", September 11, 2015.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2015/09/11/decade-later-effects-housing-crash-linger-many-communities/p6oKXSosynqDUXtUB3zg6J/story.html>.

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STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS

Despite the adverse impacts of the loss of manufacturing jobs in the U.S. and the effects of the 2007-08 Great Recession, Fitchburg has many strengths upon which a vibrant local economy can be built. At the same time, it faces unique challenges that must be overcome. Prior to identifying strategies to improve the business environment, an important step is contemplating the city's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (aka, SWOT analysis). Several sources contributed to the table below, including the Steering Committee and the project team.

<p><u>STRENGTHS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diversity ○ Youthful population ○ Civic engagement ○ Affordable real estate / Lower cost of living ○ MBTA Commuter Rail (2 stations) ○ Municipal Airport ○ Developable land (multiple redevelopment sites) ○ Longtime small business owners (longevity) ○ Deep roots (among many Fitchburg residents and business owners) ○ Community commitment ○ Distinct neighborhoods ○ Historic architecture ○ Access to higher education (FSU, Mount Wachusett Community College) ○ Uniqueness (topography, architecture, population) ○ Culture & arts community ○ Recreation amenities (parks, conservation lands, trails, nearby skiing, etc.) ○ Entrepreneurs and mentoring 	<p><u>WEAKNESSES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aging infrastructure (roads, bridges, utilities) ○ Poor first impression ○ Distance between Route 2 and downtown ○ Need for renewed community pride ○ Need for effective social media & 21st century marketing ○ Need for additional capacity building (how to keep community's cohesion intact) ○ Limited minority representation in leadership and in businesses ○ Adult educational attainment lower than State average ○ Significant portion of households living below the poverty level ○ City's largest employers are not-for-profits (Fitchburg Public Schools, City government, and FSU) ○ Only 0.62 jobs per resident in the workforce ○ Constrained municipal revenues
<p><u>OPPORTUNITIES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vibrant/diverse community ○ Small, unique businesses & experiences ○ Quality living at affordable prices ○ Walkable city (not just near downtown) ○ River views ○ Thousands of students at university and community college 	<p><u>THREATS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nostalgia for prior peak eras ○ Impacts of internet sales on local retailers ○ Delayed maintenance in many older buildings ○ Hesitancy by lenders to invest in local development projects ○ Historic commercial/industrial structures do not align with modern industrial needs

A few overarching observations can be made:

1. **“Hip-Ready Downtown Core”** – Fitchburg has most of the attributes that have led to the recent rejuvenation of mid-sized cities across the U.S. Key among them is the existence of a walkable, urban core of historic buildings that offer a community character that cannot be found in suburban communities. City after city across the U.S. have turned their historic downtowns into dynamic environments with a mix of restaurants, galleries, clothing shops, and other unique businesses that cannot be found elsewhere. In addition, downtown Fitchburg benefits from its close proximity to Fitchburg State University and its 7,200+ combined undergraduate and graduate students.
2. **Quality and Well-Priced Housing Stock** – The attractiveness of Fitchburg’s quality and well-priced housing stock cannot be overstated. Housing in the Boston metro area has been becoming increasingly unaffordable for a long time, and all signs indicate that housing cost pressures will continue to grow. According to Zillow, an online housing advertiser, “the median price of homes currently listed in Boston is \$725,000 while the median price of homes that sold is \$604,300. The median rent price in Boston is \$2,700...”⁸ The company indicates that Boston real estate prices have increased by 8.3% in the past year, and it projects a 7.7% increase next year. As a result, thousands of prospective homeowners are being priced out of eastern Massachusetts, and recent graduates and working families are renting individual rooms or doubling up to make their monthly rent payments. With Fitchburg’s two MBTA commuter rail stations and reasonably priced housing options, the city is well positioned to attract new residents who have jobs closer to Boston, but cannot afford to live there due to the high cost of housing.
3. **Outstanding Natural Environment** – For a city, Fitchburg enjoys a surprising quality of natural and rural assets. The Nashua River, which runs from the southeast corner of Fitchburg northeast through the downtown and then south toward the Fitchburg Municipal Airport, serves as the physical and historic heart of the city. Statistically, the city contains 10,921 acres of natural lands (approximately 60% of total land area), of which 1,876 acres is permanently protected (10.4% of land area). Unique landforms, such as Rollstone Hill, and regional open spaces, such as Coggshall Park and Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary, draw visitors from far beyond Fitchburg for recreation and relaxation. More formal parks and fields including the Upper Common, Monument Park, Crocker Field, and Coolidge Park are used year round. In addition, the Twin Cities Rail Trail, which will ultimately extend 4.5 miles, will begin construction in 2019. This paved shared use path will connect walkers, runners, and cyclists with the downtown and with Fitchburg’s neighbor to the south. Many communities cannot report such an array of natural and outdoor amenities, especially in close proximity to an urban downtown.

⁸ “Boston Home Prices & Values”, Zillow, retrieved from <https://www.zillow.com/boston-ma/home-values/>, June 25, 2018.

VISION FOR FITCHBURG'S ECONOMY & KEY STRATEGIES

The vision for the future of Fitchburg's economy encapsulates the many strengths identified in the *Trends Report* and by the Steering Committee. From the vision, eight strategies were developed and are used throughout the strategic plan as a framework for future action.

Fitchburg is a diverse community with a rich history as a center of manufacturing and commercial activity. The city's downtown core has retained its historic form and feel, although it is not as active as it was in the past. Fitchburg State University's presence in the city center has enriched the lives of many by providing a top quality education, attracting visitors to the city, and setting the stage for outstanding future development. Residential neighborhoods vary from close knit blocks in the city's historic center to large lot suburban development and small farms in outlying areas. The Nashua River and the surrounding hills provide the city with its unique form and exceptional backdrop. Many acres of parks and conservation areas provide residents and visitors with opportunity to enjoy nature and the outdoors. Fitchburg offers the amenities of urban living surrounded by a picturesque rural landscape.

Building upon its unique landscape, historic form, diverse populace, and active business community, Fitchburg will:

- Support a diverse **mix of businesses** that offer good paying jobs and provide opportunities for entrepreneurship
- Encourage continued expansion in the number and variety of **family-friendly** venues and activities in order to attract visitors from throughout New England
- Highlight and build upon the city's natural amenities and local events to become known as a center of **outdoor recreational** and **cultural** activity
- Strengthen the **downtown core** as a vibrant location for contemporary commercial and residential uses while honoring its historic architecture and maintaining its pedestrian-oriented form and feel
- Enhance the city's **distinct neighborhood commercial districts** so that they meet local and area needs, and are vibrant and attractive places to shop and spend time
- Embrace Fitchburg's role as a **university town** and continue to grow the city's strong **educational** sector in order to provide residents and students of all ages with the skills to compete successfully for today's jobs and those of the future
- Maintain an attractive, **high quality housing stock** that is attractive to residents
- Make **transportation into and around** the city easy, fun, and affordable

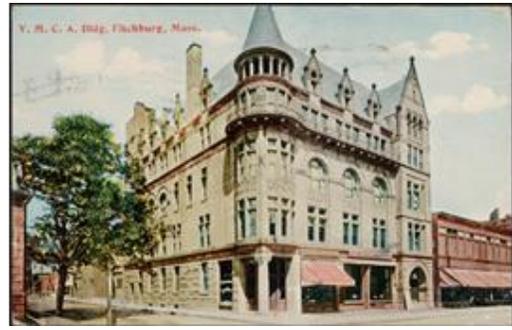
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STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

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DOWNTOWN

Downtown Fitchburg is the historic and current heart of the city. However, its placement along the Nashua River was not always certain. Beginning in 1735, when settlers began to develop the area that was then called South Town, but would become Fitchburg, three garrisons (one of which was owned by John Fitch, the city's future namesake) were built to protect the settlers from Native Americans.⁹ At the time Fitchburg was incorporated into a town in 1764 nearly 30 years later, debate was underway regarding whether the town center should be located along the river or on Dean Hill. A settler named Sam Hodgkins owned land southwest of one of the garrisons and near one of the bridges over the Nashua River; his donation of land for the construction of the first town meetinghouse at the corner of Crescent and Blossom Streets settled the debate about the location of the town center.¹⁰



The role of the river in Fitchburg's rapid industrialization cannot be overstated.

The establishment of sawmills and manufacturing facilities as early as 1750 led to a population increase in the town to 1,151 by 1790. Harnessing the water power along the Nashua River, more and more development appeared leading up to the 19th Century...By 1804, there existed three dams on the Nashua River for industrial facilities and the first cotton (sic) paper mill was established in that year. This mill was predated by several other saw mills in the area...In 1807, a fourth dam on the river was constructed in order to provide for the city's first cotton mill, the second of its kind in Massachusetts, and third in the entire United States.¹¹

The downtown gradually grew from the Upper Common, at Merriam Parkway, toward Blossom Street and Water Street drawn there by the location of the Fitchburg-Boston rail line built in 1845.



⁹ Sargent, Jon, Preservation Planning in Fitchburg Massachusetts, November 2013, p. 6.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 7-8.

The current layout of the downtown district owes its roots partly to the city's transportation history. Originally, the Upper Common was the principal city center with the meetinghouse having been constructed there and due to its proximity to the earliest cotton mill. However, when the railway came to Fitchburg, the station was chosen to be built east of downtown, near the current MBTA station on the western end of downtown. As a result, the downtown formed an upper and lower half, with the area in between gradually filling in along Main Street over time.¹²



The business boom from the city's many factories and the associated population increase resulted in decades of significant construction, and much of the downtown was built prior to the early 1900s. This includes commercial buildings built along Main Street and large scale homes built for factory owners and managers just outside of the downtown core. Many significant institutions such as the courthouse, hospital, library, opera house and City Hall were also built during this period. As noted on the City's website, "The pattern of the built environment was simple and clear. Factories were next to the river. The residential neighborhoods grew on the slopes of the hills near to the river. The commercial areas developed between the residential and industrial areas, especially where the floor of the river valley was wide."¹³

Unfortunately, the intervening decades have done damage to the former grandeur of the downtown. The advent of the automobile allowed upper income families to move out of city centers and the relocation of industrial plants from New England to the south contributed to an increasing number of vacant buildings. A flood in 1936, did extensive damage estimated at \$2 million¹⁴ in value at the time (or approximately \$36 million today). Other buildings have been lost to fire or decay.



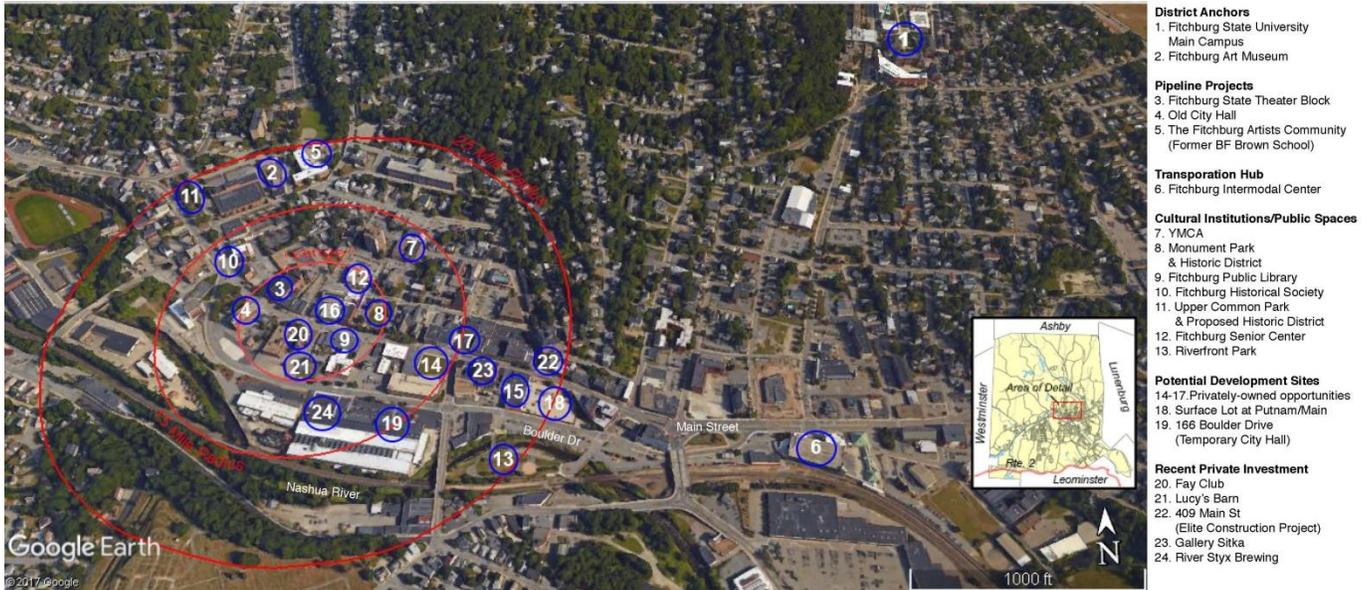
Nevertheless, downtown Fitchburg remains home to many important public and non-profit facilities and a center of activity. Key buildings include City Hall, the public library, the senior center / Fitchburg Armory, the Longsjo Middle School, the Fitchburg Art Museum, the Philbin Federal building, and the Fay Club, among others. The downtown's regional transit access via the MBTA Commuter Rail, its proximity to Fitchburg State University, and its location along the Nashua River remain tremendous assets to be capitalized upon in the future. Dynamic events such as Al Fresco Dining, Civic

¹² Ibid, p. 10.

¹³ "Brief History", City of Fitchburg, retrieved from <http://www.ci.fitchburg.ma.us/443/Brief-History>, July 4, 2018.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 12.

Days block party, Nashua River Brewers Festival, Fitchburg PRIDE events, Longjo Classic Bicycle Race, and a seasonal farmers market draw residents and visitors into the downtown. In addition, people of all ages are increasingly being attracted to urban communities as places to live, work, and enjoy cultural, dining, and recreational activities.



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Goal: Make Fitchburg's **Downtown** a vibrant, attractive, mixed-use destination that is active throughout the week, both daytime and into the evening.

Sub-goal D1: Engage in consistent, coordinated efforts to enhance the **safety, cleanliness, attractiveness, and livability** of downtown Fitchburg.

Action D1-1: Continue to expand the City's code enforcement efforts with a focus on vacant and/or underutilized buildings in the downtown. Encourage all to develop creative solutions that facilitate the reuse of vacant or underutilized buildings.

Action D1-2: Continue regular foot and bicycle police patrols in the downtown throughout the week and on the weekend. Ensure that officers are trained in community policing practices and encouraged to build relationships with local business persons and residents.

Action D1-3: Establish a well-funded façade improvement program to help property owners partially offset the cost of improvements to the exteriors of their buildings. Include signage as an allowable use of funds. (example: RNoM Storefront Improvement Grant.)

Action D1-4: Review existing downtown roadway and sidewalk conditions to identify other needed improvements/maintenance issues, with a particular focus on ADA compliance, nighttime lighting, trash collection receptacles, street trees and landscaping, damaged sidewalks, bicycle and pedestrian amenities, and directional signage.

D1-4a: Evaluate the results of the temporary reconfiguration of Main Street (fall 2017) on pedestrian and bicycle activity, parking, and business activity via a survey of nearby businesses.

Action D1-5: Highlight entrances to downtown via physical "gateways," using visual clues as public art, architectural elements, signage, etc.

Action D1-6: Identify a sustainable source of funds to invest in downtown staffing, capital projects, and grant funding to facilitate building reuse.

D1-6a: Explore the merits of creating a property-owner funded model (such as a Community Benefits District or business improvement district) with associated non-profit entity to support services and improvements in the downtown funded.

D1-6b: Consider the creation of a District Improvement Financing (DIF) District.

Sub-goal D2: Implement and maintain a series of diverse **events and activities** that will bring local residents and visitors into downtown Fitchburg throughout the year.

Action D2-1: Meet with coordinators of existing activities (e.g., al fresco dining, blacksmith, Halloween, beers for good, farmers market, Fitchburg PRIDE, etc.) to gather feedback on their experiences holding events in downtown Fitchburg including the benefits and challenges faced in order to gather ideas on how to make events easier to hold. Determine likelihood of events to continue, and potentially expand in frequency, in the future. Brainstorm how events can support each other, such as joint advertising, shared equipment, etc.

Action D2-2: Meet with local downtown business persons to gather feedback into their experiences with how events are coordinated, with a goal to developing event protocols that allow local businesses to remain open and benefit from the downtown activity.

Action D2-3: Support North of Main's efforts to create a Downtown Coordinator position that will be responsible for creating a series of downtown events. Ensure that the Downtown Coordinator creates

a multi-year action plan designed to: 1) reduce/remove impediments to events; 2) expand the number and types of events held; 3) encourage FSU students to attend events; and 4) include activities for children and youth.

Action D2-4: Encourage the Downtown Coordinator to seek input from residents, business persons, representatives of the arts community and FSU, and City staff in efforts to brainstorm potential future events.

Action D2-5: Establish a calendar of events, such as speakers and films, to be held at the Central Library throughout the year with a goal of adding evening and weekend activities.

Action D2-6: Consider an annual budget line item to establish funding for event-related costs, such as event coordination, outreach and publication of events calendar, and police and public works overtime.

Action D2-7: Facilitate the use of vacant spaces by “Pop Up” restaurants and shops by minimizing permitting requirements. Encourage pop ups of potential interest to students (ex. used clothing).

Sub-goal D3: Encourage the creation of a **mix of uses** in the downtown that bring residents and workers into the downtown, and contribute to an active streetscape.

Action D3-1: Review dimensional requirements in zoning ordinance (e.g., height, floor area ratio, units per acre, etc.) and compare with historic built environment. Determine whether existing code supports similar scale development or if “downzoning” has occurred. Consider amending zoning ordinance to reinstitute dimensional requirements modeled after historic downtown environment.

Action D3-2: Amend the Zoning Ordinance to define “pedestrian-oriented uses” (ex., restaurants, retail stores, art galleries, grocery stores, etc.) and add a map identifying where pedestrian-oriented uses are required on the ground floor.

Action D3-3: Review use table in Zoning Ordinance to determine if desired uses are allowed and how to facilitate permitting processes for desired uses (ex. Somerville MA Union Square rezoning “use clusters”).

Action D3-4: Amend the Zoning Ordinance to facilitate the creation of small and medium sized street level spaces, where small is 2,000 sf or less and medium is 5,000 sf or less). Allow for large footprint uses with a special permit below or above the street level.

Action D3-5: Facilitate and encourage the creation of outdoor dining opportunities in the downtown.

Action D3-6: Encourage the establishment of one or more co-working spaces in the Downtown to provide a location where start-ups, remote workers, free lancers, etc. can have a professional space in which to work. Review zoning to ensure co-working space is allowed and that parking requirements are not prohibitive. (ex. FSU IdeaLab, Workbar in Cambridge, Impact Hub Boston, WeWork Boston and Cambridge.)

Action D3-7: Increase the amount of housing in and nearby the downtown by reviewing zoning ordinance to identify and reduce/remove constraints to multi-family housing development (e.g., unit density, height, floor area ratio, parking requirements, etc.)

Action D3-8: Rezone Central Plaza site on Water Street to provide for transit-oriented development. Allow large footprint grocery store to be built within development site, provided that other uses, such as housing or office, are built above. Require, as conditions of approval: a) construction of (or ADA accessible connection to) pedestrian bridge to MBTA station; b) construction of shared use path along

Nashua River frontage; and c) provision of publicly accessible open space, preferably along the river. Require project to include uses oriented toward the river.

Action D3-9: Use elevation change between Main Street and Boulder Street to place parking and loading below future mixed-use buildings.

Action D3-10: Consider creating a Main Streets non-profit in the downtown following the four-point national model of economic vitality, design, organization, and promotion (<https://www.mainstreet.org/home>).

Action D 3-11: Market existing small business loan programs to existing and potential downtown businesses (e.g. CDBG, Chamber).

Action D3-12: Provide advocacy and technical assistance in support of the renovation of City Hall, redevelopment of the Theater Block, redevelopment of the former B.F. Brown School into an artist live/work space (“Fitchburg Arts Community”), and renovation/expansion of Fitchburg Public Library.

Action D3-13: Consider the role of Boulder Drive, which today consists mostly of parking and loading areas for businesses on Main Street. Given the road’s proximity to the river, determine how to support the addition of mixed-use development facing on Boulder Drive. Consider how the design of any garage for the renovated City Hall will influence the future of the rest of the street.

Sub-goal D4: Increase **accessibility to downtown** from multiple modes of transportation.

Action D4-1: Review utilization of City-owned downtown parking structure and maximize the number of spaces available to the general public throughout the week and weekend. For example, amend policies/contracts so that monthly parking passes either are only in effect during weekday business hours or create a second monthly pass for overnight parking.

Action D4-2: Have a professional parking study performed to inventory both publicly-owned and privately-owned areas to determine present utilization, and to anticipate future parking demand. Consider the role of parking fees on driver behavior and traffic (e.g. best practices research into how to encourage turnover of street spaces and discourage drivers from circling an area looking for on-street parking by charging higher fees for on-street parking and lower prices in parking structures).

Action D4-3: Establish a “payment in lieu of parking” program in the downtown where developers can make payment to the City for the construction and maintenance of public parking instead of providing parking on-site. Have the Planning Board establish an annual fee based upon the cost of construction of structured parking.

Action D4-4: Redevelop City-owned parking structure to allow for mixed-use development that is three to four stories high on the Main Street side. At a minimum, provide for ground floor retail with commercial or residential use above. Consider whether public parking spaces should be replaced on site, or whether proceeds from land sale should be used to construct parking elsewhere.

Action D4-5: Ensure the Twin Cities Rail Trail is well connected to the downtown and FSU, including a shared use path along the Nashua River.

Action D4-6: Increase downtown bicycle amenities, such as bicycle lanes (off-road cycle tracks preferred), bicycle parking, dockless bicycle rental (see MAPC regional procurement), free bike repair station (ex. Cambridge, Northpoint development), etc. Encourage the location of cycling-related businesses in or proximate to the downtown.

Action D4-7: Ensure that developer of Central Plaza site constructs a pedestrian bridge over the train tracks (or otherwise provides an ADA accessible connection to an existing bridge) to improve pedestrian access to station from neighborhoods to the south of the station.

Sub-goal D5: Recognize and build upon Fitchburg’s **historic architectural** character.

Action D5-1: Pursue historic district designations where appropriate.

Action D5-2: Restore old façade elements to retain historic character of key structures. Consider Old City Hall and Former District Courthouse as examples of standout buildings.

Action D5-3: Create design standards for the site plan review process to improve design quality. Acknowledge that contemporary buildings that are respectful of nearby historic character are a better design solution than creating “fake historic” structures.

Action D5-4: Consider establishing a design review commission with advisory oversight in key areas of the city such as in the downtown and along the Nashua River.

ADDITIONAL RELATED ACTIONS:

- F1-8: Renovate / expand Fitchburg library
- RC3-2: Open downtown to Nashua River
- RC3-3: Expand Riverfront Park
- T4-1: Pedestrian connection to commuter rail
- T4-2: Water and Laurel Street bridges

EDUCATION / UNIVERSITY TOWN

In July 2010, Fitchburg State College was granted university status by the Massachusetts State Legislature. With a total enrollment of approximately 7,200+ undergraduate and graduate students, Fitchburg State University (FSU) is the largest employer in the city outside of the city government and public school administration. Over the past 20 years, FSU's multi-million dollar investment in new construction and renovation has transformed the area. Aesthetically attractive features such as Hammond Hall, the Antonucci Science Center, the North Street entry corridor, and wayfinding signage across the city have set the standard for the quality of future development in Fitchburg. Most recently in 2017, FSU began a bold renovation of the Theater Block commercial building (707 Main Street) with Phase I construction of an entrepreneurial innovation center, the ideaLab. In addition to entrepreneurial space, the facility will house the University's popular video game design studio. The building's 25,000 sf theater will be renovated and reopened at a future date, as will the property's seven commercial storefronts. NewVue Communities is assisting in the effort by helping to program the building spaces.

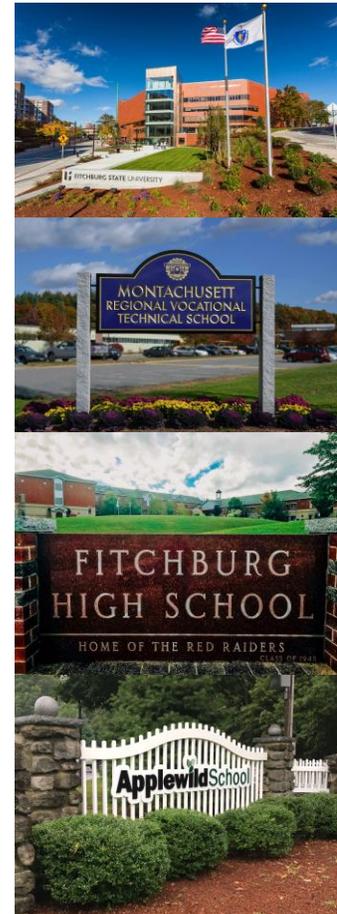
Mount Wachusett Community College through its new satellite automotive repair training facility on Boulder Drive, Montachusett Technical High School, and the Fitchburg public schools are also key educational institutions that serve local and area students.

FSU, and higher education in general, has the potential to make a profound impact upon Fitchburg's economy. Foremost is the fact that college graduates have a higher earning potential than persons without degrees. As noted by the Brookings Institute, "The average bachelor's degree holder contributes \$278,000 more to local economies than the average high school graduate through direct spending over the course of his or her lifetime".¹⁵ As of 2015, only 21% of Fitchburg residents age 25+ have a college degree or higher, while an additional 28% has an associate's degree or some college. A total of 18% of residents do not have a high school diploma. In contrast, across Massachusetts, 41% of residents have at least a bachelor's degree and only 10% do not have a high school diploma.

Studies have shown the direct impact universities can have on a local economy. A separate Brookings Institute report identified five reasons why "universities matter for economic growth:

- 1) *Research universities are essential for innovation, and innovation is essential for economic growth...*

¹⁵ "What colleges do for local economies: A direct measure based on consumption", Rotwell, Jonathan for the Brookings Institute, November 15, 2017 retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/what-colleges-do-for-local-economies-a-direct-measure-based-on-consumption/>, July 1 2018.



- 2) *Universities located in urban areas produce more patents, corporate partnerships, and startups...*
- 3) *Universities located within innovation districts build on existing urban assets....
Research universities are best positioned to have economic value when they cluster near firms, entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and other resources that deploy technology into the market...*
- 4) *Downtown universities specialize in research...
...One of the most pronounced differences between urban and non-urban schools is the relative size of their research budgets...*
- 5) *Downtown universities still have a lot of room to improve their outcomes....*¹⁶

Further, specific to Fitchburg is the fact that university students and workers living and/or working less than one mile away from the downtown are logical patrons of shops and restaurants located there.



¹⁶ “Five reasons why “downtown universities” matter for economic growth”, Andes, Scott for the Brookings Institute, October 11, 2017, retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/metropolitan-revolution/2017/10/11/five-reasons-why-downtown-universities-matter-for-economic-growth/>, July 1, 2018

Goal: Embrace Fitchburg's role as a **university town** and continue to grow the city's strong **educational** sector in order to provide residents and students of all ages with the skills to compete successfully for today's jobs and those of the future.

Sub-goal ED1: Increase the **connection** between Fitchburg State University, the downtown, and the city at large.

Action ED1-1: Make the 1 mile route between the FSU and the Public Library one of the most pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets in the city. Study vehicular and pedestrian safety at high crash locations in the area (i.e., intersection of Main Street and North Street), and identify options to improve safety.

Action ED1-2: Consider installing a cohesive set of decorative street lights in the blocks bound by Blossom Street, Main Street, North Streets, and the campus. (At least three different light standards in the area exist today.) Encourage residents and businesses in the area to install winter decorative lighting on their properties.

Action ED1-3: Increase bicycle amenities in the downtown and encourage FSU to make it easy for students to have a bicycle on campus (ex., adequate, secure bicycle storage, shared bicycles accessed with a student ID, low cost bicycle helmets and locks for purchase, etc.).

Action ED1-4: Survey students regarding off-campus shopping and entertainment needs/desires. Use results to develop action plan and in marketing materials.

Action ED1-5: Consider providing a free shuttle from the FSU campus to various downtown locations including, but not limited to the commuter rail station, Market Basket, public library, art museum, Coolidge Park, etc.

Action ED1-6: Encourage FSU to purchase goods and services from local businesses. Ask FSU to perform annual analysis of goods and services that could not be purchased locally and the volume.

Action ED1-7: Have representatives of the City participate in new student orientation to provide an overview of what Fitchburg has to offer including activities, amenities, and services.

Action ED1-8: Expand the number of local businesses that accept FSU's student meal card as a means of payment. Encourage businesses to provide student discounts. Market participating businesses to new and returning students.

Action ED1-9: Improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between FSU and Coolidge Park and the Wallace Civic Center including enhancing sidewalks along Pearl Street and determining if an easement can be secured through a property on John Fitch Highway to provide more direct access through the abutting neighborhood.

Sub-goal ED2: Embrace Fitchburg's identity as a **university town**.

Action ED2-1: Identify communities with effective town/gown relationships and similar demographics to serve as possible models for Fitchburg (examples include: Burlington VT, Ithaca NY, Keene NH). Review actions, policies, etc. undertaken by those similar communities to improve Town/Gown relationships.

Action ED2-2: Explore the creation of a formal "Town/Gown" partnership between the City and FSU.

Action ED2-3: Cultivate student leaders to serve on various planning committees (e.g. events planning, place-making, etc.)

Action ED2-4: Invite president of FSU to make an annual presentation to City Council on the “State of the University”.

Action ED2-5: Meet with the new leadership of Mount Wachsett Community College to discuss plans for the future and how the City can be of assistance in supporting the school’s goals.

Sub-goal ED3: Encourage FSU and Mount Wachusett Community College graduates to **remain in Fitchburg** after graduation.

Action ED3-1: Encourage local businesses, non-profits, and City departments to develop internships and hire local students during the school year and during the summer. Create a “Mayor’s Public Service Internship” program to hire one student in the Mayor’s office each year.

Action ED3-2: In partnership with FSU, establish a City internship program for students to work within City offices. Work with the Art Museum to provide/increase internships.

Action ED3-3: Help FSU market its job announcement portal to local businesses and non-profits.

Action ED3-4: Consider amending the Zoning Bylaw to allow for development of quality, appropriately-permitted efficiency units, co-housing, and other types of housing arrangements geared toward students and recent graduates.

Sub-goal ED4: Increase **educational attainment** and skills of Fitchburg residents of all ages.

Action ED4-1: Meet with leadership of Montachusett Tech’s School of Continuing Education to gather lessons learned from the school’s extensive adult learning curriculum and determine how offerings can be further expanded in Fitchburg and enrollment increased. Identify and address barriers impeding low income residents from accessing the educational offerings, i.e., consider access to daycare and MART during class hours.

Action ED4-2: Convene a Mayor’s Fitchburg Education Coalition with a charge of creating a multi-year action plan and partnerships to increase educational attainment among Fitchburg adults. At a minimum: 1) Seek participation from FSU, Montachusett Community College, the North Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board, other public and private educational institutions (e.g., Fitchburg Public Schools, MonteTech, Applewild School), and local non-profits; 2) identify barriers that prevent residents from pursuing additional training and education and determine how to reduce them (ex. childcare, scholarships, increased computer access at Fitchburg library); 3) establish specific goals and performance measures to determine success; and 4) provide City staff to facilitate the effort. Encourage participants to contemplate the needs of 21st century employers and how to promote creativity and entrepreneurship.

Action ED4-3: Encourage employers to increase on-site skill building training for employees (ex. some McDonalds provide ESL classes) and scholarships for employees to increase skills and education.

Action ED4-4: Consider how the public library, other municipal buildings, and local public schools could be used as classrooms for free or low cost trainings/classes in the evenings and on weekends.

Action ED4-5: Determine if CDBG funds could be used to provide scholarships for low income residents to secure additional schooling geared toward approving skills and job readiness.

Action ED4-6: Identify a school or organization that can provide training to Fitchburg residents on how to become licensed childcare providers. Offer free (or low cost) training to interested residents.

Action ED4-7: Learn more about the Massachusetts Workforce Training Fund that can provide up to \$250,000 grants to companies to provide training for employees and encourage Fitchburg businesses to apply. (see <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-awards-119-million-in-workforce-training-fund-grants>)

Action ED4-8: During design for renovated City Hall determine if some space can be allocated for community gathering / training center.

ADDITIONAL RELATED ACTIONS:

D2-7: "Pop up" restaurants and shops

F1-3: Family-friendly gathering places

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FAMILY FRIENDLY

Today, Great Wolf Lodge draws families and visitors from all over New England and farther to Fitchburg; soon to be added will be “Game On Fitchburg”, a 96 acre multi-field athletic facility which will further increase Fitchburg’s attractiveness to visitors. With its pick your own fruit, farm store, and “Fridays at the Farm” music series, Hollis Hills Farm has long been a family-friendly venue and regional draw. Together, these varying enterprises provide a solid foundation upon which Fitchburg’s hospitality and tourism business sectors can grow.

In July 2014, Great Wolf Lodge opened with 406 rooms, 68,000 square feet of water park space, 40,000 square feet of indoor activity areas (e.g., arcade, bowling, mini-golf, restaurants, shops, etc.) and a 12,000 square foot event space. The company renovated and significantly expanded the former Coco Key hotel and water park. In 2017, the lodge reported having “roughly half a million visitors per year.”¹⁷

When Game On Fitchburg opens in 2019, it will offer a mix of outdoor and indoor playing fields, a fitness center, multi-purpose rooms, a video game arcade and batting cages, and food concessions, among other activities. Estimates are that the facility will bring in several hundred visitors into Fitchburg each week. As sports tournaments can be more than one day in length and/or families may be travelling from some distance, it is possible that the facility will increase demand for lodging in the area. It certainly will increase restaurant demand as families look for something to eat before and after games.

A 2016 study prepared by the U.S. Travel Association under contract



with the Commonwealth quantified the economic impact of the travel on the state. This study found that “Travel expenditures directly supported 139,000 jobs within Massachusetts in 2016, up 3.0 percent from 2015. Travel-generated jobs in Massachusetts comprised 3.9 percent of the total nonfarm employment in the state during 2016”¹⁸ and that, “Traveler spending in Massachusetts directly generated \$3.2 billion in tax revenue for federal, state and local governments in 2016.”¹⁹ Within Worcester County, an estimated \$20.56

million was generated in local taxes as a result of domestic (not international) travel.

¹⁷ “Great Wolf Lodge anchors Fitchburg’s tourist economy”, Finaldi, Laura in Worcester Business Journal March 20, 2017, retrieved from <http://www.wbjournal.com/article/20170320/PRINTEDITION/303179995/great-wolf-lodge-anchors-fitchburgs-tourist-economym>, July 4, 2018.

¹⁸ U.S. Travel Association, The Economic Impact of Travel on Massachusetts Counties, 2016, October 2017, p. 2.

¹⁹ Ibid.



Locally, not only does Great Wolf Lodge bring thousands of first time visitors to Fitchburg, in FY2017, it generated just over \$1.08 million in lodging tax revenue. This constitutes all of the revenue in this category since it is the only lodging establishment in the city. In Massachusetts, 158 out of 351 cities and towns have a lodging tax in place and the revenue generated by Great Wolf Lodge places Fitchburg in 30th place in terms of the greatest amount of revenue generated. Other communities that generated between \$1 million and \$1.1 million in rooms revenue in FY2017 include: Billerica, Brewster, Chelsea, Lexington, Milford, Needham, Tewksbury, and Worcester. In all cases, each community has more than one hotel – evidence of the magnitude of impact Great Wolf Lodge has on Fitchburg revenues. One revenue source Fitchburg has not accessed is the meals tax which is in place in 210 cities and towns (60%) – an increase of 7 communities since 2016. Collectively, this 0.75% local tax generated \$118.8 million across Massachusetts in FY2017. Nearby Lunenburg (\$100,666), Shirley (\$40,524), and Townsend (\$105,760) all had a local meals tax in place and earned between \$40,000 and \$106,000 in revenue.



In addition to visiting families, Fitchburg itself is home to many families and university students who are looking for food and activities on a daily basis. Fitchburg is far younger than Massachusetts on average, with a median age of 34.5 years as compared to a statewide median of 39.3 years. This is driven largely by the higher percentage of children and youth 0 to 19 years of age (27.1% in Fitchburg v. 24.0% statewide) and also by young adults of childbearing age (20-44 years) (35.4% v. 33.6%). With 5,200 students, Fitchburg State University contributes to part of the youthful population, but Fitchburg stands out among the comparison community amount children ages 0 to 9 (13% of total population combined).

Goal: Encourage continued expansion in the number and variety of **family-friendly** venues and activities in order to attract visitors from throughout New England.

Sub-goal F1: Facilitate and encourage the provision of a series of **family-friendly businesses** and activities geared toward local residents and visitors.

Action F1-1: Increase the number of family-friendly restaurants in the downtown and neighborhood commercial districts. Review parking requirements for restaurants to ensure they are not prohibitive, encourage restaurants to provide some separation between dining and bar areas.

Action F1-2: Consider constructing pocket parks and play structures within or in close proximity to the downtown and neighborhood commercial districts. Consider requiring public open space as a condition of approval for larger developments in neighborhood commercial areas.

Action F1-3: Encourage the creation of gathering places in the downtown that are friendly to families and patrons under 21 years of age (ex., video arcade, live theater, comic book store, indoor play spaces, cafés, etc.). Review parking requirements to ensure they are not prohibitive.

Action F1-4: Increase the number and length of off-road bicycle paths (ex. Marion Stoddard trail).

Action F1-5: Identify multiple locations for potential construction of new hotels/motels proximate to significant attractions, such as Game On Fitchburg and Great Wolf Lodge. Establish zoning to facilitate development, and work with property owners to market sites to hotel developers.

Action F1-6: Encourage Great Wolf Lodge to create an annual “Fitchburg Day” when local residents can purchase one-day tickets to the water park.

Action F1-7: Ask the Fitchburg Museum, Fitchburg Airport, New Players Theater Guild, and other non-profits to determine how they can best contribute to the family-friendly theme.

Action F1-8: Renovate (and potentially expand) the Fitchburg public library so that becomes an increasingly active gathering space for persons of all ages and throughout the week.

Sub-goal F2: Market a **positive image** of the City that highlights the amenities Fitchburg has to offer.

Action F2-1: Develop a “tagline” that uniquely represents the City in a sentence or less.

Action F2-2: Work with a professional marketing firm to create and implement a cohesive marketing strategy for the City.

Action F2-3: Partner with the North Central MA Chamber to ensure that the marketing message is one that takes into account Fitchburg’s impact and unique identity in North Central Massachusetts.

Action F2-4: Develop and manage a marketing platform—print, radio, web, etc. —that will celebrate Fitchburg’s unique identity both locally and regionally.

Action F2-5: Create a pamphlet listing of local venues and activities with a focus on family-friendly locations attractive to family members of all ages. Make available on-line and hard copy. Include information on local parks (ex. Coolidge Park), bicycle paths, Fitchburg museum, etc.

ADDITIONAL RELATED ACTIONS:

D3-2: Annual calendar of events, including activities for children.

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QUALITY HOUSING STOCK

The quality and value of Fitchburg’s existing housing stock is one of the city’s greatest assets, and is one that can be leveraged to strengthen its economic base. According to the City Assessor, the average single family home has a value of just under \$164,500, while the average condominium value is \$127,000 based upon the number of parcels and total value. This is consistent with a 2016 study by I-Squared Community Development Consulting, Inc. that found the median single family sales price in Fitchburg was \$170,000 between 2011 and 2016.²⁰ The study further found that, “In 2015, there were 251 single family home sales in Fitchburg, up 67% from 2014 when there were only 150 single family home sales – a sign that the market is strengthening. Activity remains well below its peak level in 2004, when there were 382 single family home sales.”²¹ Today, large lot (2+ acres) single-family houses built in the 1980s-1990s can be found advertised for sale at approximately \$330,000 and a historic house with six bedrooms in Fitchburg also is asking the same price. These are prices and sizes that cannot be matched closer into the Boston metro area (the median sale price of a single family home/condominium in Boston was over \$604,000 in 2017²²).



Condominiums in Fitchburg also offer reasonable prices, and have the added benefit of less maintenance and upkeep. The asking prices of some condos today are above the sale price of single family homes. For example, units on Arden Mills Way are asking for over \$200,000 as is a unit on Quarter House Lane.²³ However, the number of condominiums is limited in Fitchburg – in the low 400s according to City Assessor data as compared to over 6,500 single family homes.



Data suggests that urban living in a walkable setting is increasingly popular with residents of all ages. “According to the National Association of Realtors, walkability is fast becoming one of the most important factors in choosing where to live. People of all ages want easy access to amenities such as stores, businesses, cultural center, and transit. Homebuyers are seeking locations within walking distance to shopping, cultural amenities, jobs, and open space and the value of homes in these types of neighborhoods has increased at a much faster pace than homes

²⁰ I-Squared Community Development Consulting, Inc. “Housing Market Trend Analysis: North of Main Neighborhood, Fitchburg, MA”, June 2016.

²¹ Ibid.

²² “Boston Home Prices & Values”, Zillow, retrieved from <https://www.zillow.com/boston-ma/home-values/>, June 25, 2018.

²³ ZipRealty.com, retrieved from https://www.ziprealty.com/for-sale-homes/Fitchburg-MA-3205c/propertytype_TOWNHOUSE,CONDO, July 12, 2018.

in driveable suburban neighborhoods.”²⁴ The cost of transportation tends to be the second highest household expense and households with private vehicles and “American families who are car-dependent spend 25 percent of their household income on their fleet of cars, compared with just 9 percent for transportation for those who live in walkable urban places.”²⁵



A challenge that exists in Fitchburg is the price and frequency of sales of two- and three-family homes. In fact, the price of these structures has fallen in the past five years, well after the end of the Great Recession. Specifically, the sales prices of small multi-unit buildings is 45% lower than the 2006 peak and the number of is extremely low, with an average of 35 sales per year between 2011 and 2016.²⁶ Despite this trend, these properties could be interesting to entrepreneurial families that would like to own an income generating property. In Somerville, for example, two- and three-family houses cannot be found for less than \$700,000 today and most are between \$800,000 and \$1 million. This was not the case less than 20 years ago.

²⁴ Missing Middle Housing, “What does the market want”, retrieved from <http://missingmiddlehousing.com/about/demand-trends/>, July 12, 2018.

²⁵ Leinberger, Christopher, “Bottom Line: It’s Cheaper” in New York Times, May 12, 2009.

²⁶ I-Squared Community Development Consulting, Inc.

Goal: Maintain an attractive, **high quality housing stock**

Sub-goal H1: Identify opportunities for transformational, **multi-family housing construction**.

Action H1-1: Identify locations in the downtown and vicinity of the commuter rail stations for construction of multi-family and mixed use housing. Consider amending zoning to: a) increase number of units per acre; and c) decrease parking requirements to promote construction.

Action H1-2: When market forces dictate, consider adopting an inclusionary housing ordinance that requires that all multi-family development projects over a certain size set aside a percentage of units as permanently affordable.

Action H1-3: Market identified multi-family housing sites to housing developers with expertise in securing multiple sources of capital (e.g. Historic Tax Credits, LIHTC) for high-quality housing options.

Action H1-4: Work with an identified market rate developer to seek State tax credit funding through the Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP).

Action H1-5: Amend the zoning in or near the downtown or other neighborhood commercial districts to allow development of multi-stage market rate, for-profit senior (and/or 55+) housing including independent living, assisted living, and skilled nursing at the same site.

Sub-goal H2: **Market the value** of Fitchburg's housing stock to potential buyers and tenants being priced out of the greater Boston Metro area.

Action H2-1: Determine target market(s) of potential new residents (ex. retirees, young adults, graduate students, families) and the type of housing and amenities that would be attractive to each of the potential groups.

Action H2-2: Partner with the real estate community to develop a sales pitch and ensure that adequate inventory exists.

Action H2-3: Refine market campaign for various audiences (i.e., inside 495, regional, etc.).

Action H2-4: Market the quality of Fitchburg's schools. Develop marketing materials and provide to local realtors for distribution to potential buyers.

Action H2-5: Create a down payment assistance program to help moderate income households purchase a home in Fitchburg.

Action H2-6: Encourage local employers to develop an incentive program to help employees purchase homes in Fitchburg.

Sub-goal H3: Improve the quality of life in Fitchburg **neighborhoods**.

Action H3-1: Work to implement recommendations from Neighborhood Improvement through Code Enforcement (NICE) Task Force's partnership with Harvard's Innovation Field Lab. Seek recommendations on how to strengthen the City's existing efforts, including but not limited to strategy development, enforcement tools, reporting relationships, and staffing levels.

Action H3-2: Create a parking plan to effectively manage parking challenges in the City's innermost neighborhoods. Consider the provision of additional public parking lots and shared use agreements at businesses with daytime parking use only.

Action H3-3: Identify communities with similar housing stock characteristics, (e.g., older, mixed small multi and single family in dense older neighborhoods) and similar demographics. Review actions, policies, etc. undertaken by those similar communities to improve the quality of housing. Identify possible models for Fitchburg.

ADDITIONAL RELATED ACTIONS:

NC4-3: Community building events

T5-6: Funding for streets and sidewalks

MIX OF BUSINESSES

The mix of businesses in Fitchburg has changed since the second half of the 20th century when manufacturing businesses declined significantly in New England. Since 2001, the total number of businesses has increased by nearly 16% (from 932 businesses in 2001 to 1,080 businesses in 2015), but at the same time, the number of jobs fell by 10.1% (from 14,416 to 12,966 jobs). Today, nearly half of businesses in Fitchburg are small, with fewer than five employees. Large employers, with 100 or more employees, are predominantly in the Health Care and Social Assistance (6 employers), Manufacturing (5 employers), and Retail Trade (3 employers) businesses sectors.

As of 2015, the greatest number of jobs in Fitchburg can be found in the Education and Health Services business sector (4,692 jobs), followed by Trade, Transportation and Utilities (2,547), Leisure and Hospitality (1,675), and Manufacturing (1,523). The number of jobs in these business sectors exceeds the State average. However, Fitchburg has a below average number of jobs in generally higher paying sectors such as Professional and Business Services, Financial Activities, Construction, and Information (technology).

Fitchburg public schools, Montachusett Technical High School, and Fitchburg State University are the dominant employers in the education sector. The largest number of jobs in the Health Services sub-sector can be found in Individual and Family Services (e.g., rehabilitation hospitals, youth and community centers, drug treatment facilities, companion services, and self-help programs with 870 jobs), followed by Nursing Care Facilities (450 jobs), and Residential Mental Health Facilities (319 jobs). Significant employers include Highlands Long Term Care Center on Nichols Road and Hillcrest on Summer Street. More than half of the jobs in the Trade, Transportation and Utilities business sector are in the retail sub-sector (1,767 jobs). Nevertheless, significant numbers of jobs can still be found in Transportation and Warehousing (479 jobs), with only 185 jobs in Wholesale Trade.

Distribution of Average Annual Employees by Industry (2015)		
	Fitchburg	State
All Employees	12,966	3,380,052
Education and Health Svcs	4,692	962,296
Trade, Transp. and Utilities	2,547	581,237
Leisure and Hospitality	1,675	354,370
Manufacturing	1,523	237,363
Prof. and Business Services	639	521,476
Financial Activities	491	206,527
Construction	490	145,378
Public Administration	485	95,761
Other Services	343	114,333
Information	81	83,375
Natural Resources & Mining	0	4,918
Education and Health Svcs	36.2%	28.5%
Trade, Transp. and Utilities	19.6%	17.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	12.9%	10.5%
Manufacturing	11.7%	7.0%
Prof. and Business Services	4.9%	15.4%
Financial Activities	3.8%	6.1%
Construction	3.8%	4.3%
Public Administration	3.7%	2.8%
Other Services	2.6%	3.4%
Information	0.6%	2.5%
Natural Resources & Mining	0.0%	0.1%

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

Though much reduced from its heyday, manufacturing establishments still employ 12% of Fitchburg workers, with nearly half of these engaged in paper and metal fabrication.

Of positive note is the fact that Fitchburg’s top two subsectors, i.e., Health Care and Social Assistance, and Educational Services are projected to be among the fastest growing sectors in Central Massachusetts through 2024.

Although the thousand or so businesses are vitally important to Fitchburg’s economy, the contribution of commercial and industrial property to the local tax base is far lower than that of residential property. In fact, as can be seen below, commercial and industrial property combined only make up 12.6% of local property value although on a per acre basis, commercial property has a higher value than other uses.

Value of Land Parcels in Fitchburg by Type					
Land Type	Acres		Value (\$M)		Value/ Acre
Residential	7,885	44.0%	\$1,677.5	61.9%	\$212,758
Tax Exempt Property	4,638	25.9%	\$652.6	24.1%	\$140,714
Commercial	755	4.2%	\$222.5	8.2%	\$294,947
Industrial	902	5.0%	\$119.0	4.4%	\$131,872
Multiple-Use	1,414	7.9%	\$39.0	1.4%	\$27,597
Agricult/Recl/ Wetlands	1,386	7.7%	\$0.5	0.0%	\$332
Total	16,979	94.8%	\$2,711.1	100.0%	\$159,674

Source: City of Fitchburg, Office of the Assessor

The generally low value of commercial and industrial property is due, in part to the fact those land use types are generally not intensively used as can be seen by their floor area ratio (FAR). (FAR is calculated by dividing the total square footage of a building by the square footage of land. For example, a 4,000 sf. house on an acre of land (43,560 sf.) lot would have a FAR of 0.092. A four-story building in the downtown that covers much of its lot could have a FAR of between 2.5 to 3.5 depending upon how much land is dedicated to landscaping, parking, and loading. A 40,000 sf building on a 40,000 sf lot would have an FAR of 1.) On average, commercial property (0.165 FAR) and industrial land (0.174 FAR) are not used very intensively.²⁷

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) by Parcel Type					
Prop Type	# of Parcels	Total Acres	Total Land SqFt	Gross Bldg Area SqFt	Avg FAR
Residential	11,598	7,885	343,459,362	37,716,518	0.110
Exempt Property	667	4,638	202,013,738	6,683,841	0.033
Commercial	744	755	32,867,810	5,427,884	0.165
Industrial	217	902	39,298,395	6,846,833	0.174
Multiple-Use	138	1,414	61,594,814	1,299,974	0.021
Agricult/Recl/ Wetlands	156	1386	60,374,160	6,144	0.000
Total	13,520	16,979	739,609,190	57,981,194	0.078

Source: Source: City of Fitchburg, Office of the Assessor.

This in contrast to most intensively used commercial parcels including the Santander bank building at 280-288 Main Street at Water Street (5.45 FAR), the Roux Travel Building at 350-356 Main Street (4.63 FAR), a red brick office building at 625 Main Street across from Monument Park at the corner of Wallace Street (4.35 FAR), and 326-344 Main Street, home to Tryst Lounge nightclub (4.01 FAR)..

²⁷ Figures include vacant parcels.

Goal: Support a diverse **mix of businesses** that offer good paying jobs and provide opportunities for entrepreneurship.

Sub-goal M1: Support the **thoughtful redevelopment** of significant vacant or underutilized sites.

Action M1-1: Create an area plan for the reuse of the Kmart commercial plaza on Carriage Court/Whalon Street that will allow for a mix of uses and promote a reduction in the amount of impervious surface on the sites.

Action M1-2: Consider use of limited duration special permits together with development agreements to allow for the continued active use of sites that are not ready for more significant development, but where the City wishes to promote a change in use in the future (ex. Somerville Boynton Yards; see also “Understanding and Crafting Development Agreements in Massachusetts” prepared by Collins Center at UMass Boston <https://www.umb.edu/cpm/publications>)

Sub-goal M2: Make Fitchburg into the **dining and entertainment** hub for the region.

Action M2-1: Convene a meeting of restauranteurs in Fitchburg to discuss their experience operating a business in the city. Gather feedback regarding City functions including permitting, licensing, inspections, etc. and identify ways to support restaurants.

Action M2-2: Review zoning for full service restaurants citywide to identify impediments to establishing new restaurants, such as parking requirements, permitting requirements, etc. Ensure that requirements needed to establish small restaurants (i.e., less than 2,000 sf) are modest.

Action M2-3: Determine if Fitchburg is in need of additional alcoholic beverage licenses. Pursue a home rule petition if licenses are needed. Follow model of other MA communities that are retaining ownership of licenses and allowing them to be used for an annual fee, instead of increasing the number of privately owned licenses.

Action M2-4: Encourage the creation of outdoor seating by reducing impediments and streamlining the application process. (ex. Cambridge DPW Outdoor Dining – Guidelines and Permitting Process).

Action M2-5: Create multiple “parklets” in the downtown and neighborhood commercial districts, where 1-2 parking spaces are turned into small public open spaces to allow for spontaneous outdoor dining and seating.

Action M2-6: Adopt the local Meals Tax to gather revenues from increased dining activity.

Sub-goal M3: Support Fitchburg’s **manufacturing** businesses, while encouraging diversity and entrepreneurship in recognition of national and regional trends in this sector.

Action M3-1: Convene a focus group(s) of significant manufacturing businesses in Fitchburg (e.g., Boutwell Owens & Co. (paper), Avery Dennison Corp (chemicals), Caraustar Industries (paper), Arrhythmia Research Technology (electronic instruments), among others) to discuss their future plans within Fitchburg, receive feedback on City support to date, and consider how the City of Fitchburg can be a partner in future efforts. Discuss where suppliers are located and if any could be attracted to Fitchburg.

Action M3-2: Consider rezoning some industrial properties to increase the amount of buildable square footage and to increase the number of allowable uses to allow property owners to maintain

low rents on industrial users and to diversify the business areas. Development agreements will likely be needed to encourage property owners to support industrial tenants.

Action M3-3: Use results of commercial land use inventory to identify small fabricators (e.g., bicycle, furniture, cabinets, etc.) and convene a meeting to discuss the future of small fabrication in Fitchburg.

Action M3-4: Undertake efforts to encourage the creation of a “makers’ space”, where members have access to equipment (ex. laser cutter, 3D printer, etc.) that can allow them to prototype new products for manufacture, take classes, and collaborate with others. (ex. Artisans Asylum, Cambridge Hackspace). Actions can include site identification, rezoning, business attraction, and grant writing to let potential operators know an opportunity exists.

Action M3-5: Use results of commercial land use inventory to identify vacant and underutilized properties, identify impediments to reuse, and consider how increased commercial activity can be facilitated.

Sub-goal M4: Create opportunities for **professional and technical** businesses to start, relocate, and grow in Fitchburg, and capture a large share of projected regional growth in professional and technical jobs.

Action M4-1: Actively market Fitchburg’s affordable, quality housing stock and access to the MBTA commuter rail to professional workers being priced out of the Boston Metro Area.

Action M4-2: Identify key locations near commuter rail stations where commercial uses are desired, and amend zoning to greatly restrict or prohibit housing. (ex. Boynton Yards rezoning in Somerville.)

Action M4-3: Review downtown zoning to reduce impediments to upper story commercial use, such as parking requirements, permit requirements, etc.

Sub-goal M5: Capitalize on the **Fitchburg Airport** to encourage growth in the number of airport-related businesses.

Action M5-1: Market Fitchburg Airport as an asset in the City and region.

Action M5-2: Perform a build-out analysis determine the availability and size of development sites at the airport, and any unique constraints.

Action M5-3: Promote commercial uses that cluster near airports.

Sub-goal M6: Capitalize on Fitchburg’s existing strength in the **Health Care and Social Assistance** sector to capture a significant portion of projected regional growth (+12.6% growth) in this sector.

Action M6-1: Convene a focus group(s) of major healthcare and social assistance providers (e.g., UMass Memorial Health Alliance, Highlands Long Term Care Center, Community Health Connections, Hillcrest, Golden Living Center, among others) to discuss their plans for future growth within Fitchburg, receive feedback on City support to date, and consider how the City of Fitchburg can be a partner in future efforts.

Action M6-2: Meet with representatives of UMass Memorial Health Alliance and Community Health Connections to discuss whether they anticipate any expansion at their Nichols Street campus.

Action M6-3: Ask health care and social assistance providers if they are willing to provide summary information regarding where their workers live. Consider performing outreach to encourage workers to live in Fitchburg.

ADDITIONAL RELATED ACTIONS:

D3-6: Entrepreneurial space in downtown

H1-5: Zoning for housing in downtown and commercial districts

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DISTINCT NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

Although downtown represents the historic center of commerce in Fitchburg, today the city has significant commercial activity of the city center. Concentrations of restaurants, grocery stores, retail shops, and other commercial businesses can be found on John Fitch Highway near Airport Road, Summer Street, Water Street, and Whalon Street. The majority of these commercial areas are auto-oriented with most typically single story structures amidst large fields of surface parking. Some more pedestrian oriented retail uses can be found near Fitchburg State University and on River and Lunenburg Streets.



Significant unmet demand exists in Fitchburg for certain types of retail. This includes building supplies, general merchandise, clothing and accessories, sporting goods, and electronics and appliances, among others. The same is true for multiple sub-sectors of Foodservice & Drinking Places. Specifically, unmet demand is significant for full service restaurants, limited service-eating place, snacks and non-alcoholic beverage bars and alcoholic beverage drinking places runs into the millions of dollars per year. While some of this demand could be met in the down- town, outlying neighborhoods are also potential locations for such businesses.

Retail Demand, Supply, and Opportunity Gap (2017) (select retail areas)			
Retail Stores	Aggregate Spending		
	Demand (Cons Expend	Supply (Retail Sales)	Opportunity Gap (Surplus)
Retail Sales			
Building Material, Garden Equipment Stores	\$68,677,712	\$61,214,518	\$7,463,194
General Merchandise Stores	\$77,987,688	\$49,278,034	\$28,709,654
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$20,139,184	\$15,241,327	\$4,897,857
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	\$13,387,164	\$9,146,486	\$4,240,678
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	\$32,290,088	\$7,918,550	\$24,371,538
Electronics & Appliances Stores	\$12,272,358	\$6,423,624	\$5,848,734
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music Stores	\$13,525,901	\$5,495,518	\$8,030,383
Foodservice & Drinking Places	\$89,026,584	\$39,426,306	\$49,600,278
Special Foodservices	\$6,639,925	\$9,332,854	(\$2,692,929)
Drinking Places -Alcoholic Beverages	\$2,898,503	\$563,727	\$2,334,776
Full-Service Restaurants	\$44,031,172	\$26,895,345	\$17,135,827
Limited-Service Eating Places	\$30,428,544	\$2,158,281	\$28,270,263
Cafeterias, Grill Buffets, and Buffets	\$801,677	\$0	\$801,677
Snack and Nonalcoholic Beverage Bars	\$4,226,763	\$476,099	\$3,750,664

A positive number in black indicates that local demand has not yet been met. A negative figure in red parenthesis indicates that local sales exceed demand generated by Fitchburg residents alone.

Source: Claritas Retail Market Power Report.

However, the future of retail remains uncertain. Multiple media sources have reported on changing buying patterns including increased internet shopping, discount shopping centers offering very low-cost items, and younger shopper's prioritization of technology goods above other areas such as clothing.²⁸ In May 2017, NPR reported that, "Nine U.S. chains have filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. Store closures are accelerating, and almost 90,000 retail workers have lost their jobs since October." These include The Limited, BCBG Max Azria, and Radio Shack. In addition, shopping malls are having to restructure and many are adding housing, office space, or athletic gyms.²⁹ VendHQ – the website for a retail management software company- offered 12 predictions for the future of retail including:



1. Retailers who promote product quality, transparency, & sustainability will flourish.
2. Stores providing unique in-store experiences will thrive.
3. Retailers across the board will adopt mobile payment solutions.
4. Smaller stores are in; larger stores are out.
5. Personalization will become increasingly important to consumers.
6. Same-day shipping will become more prominent.
7. Retailers will continue to invest in omnichannel. (*Omnichannel is defined as mobile apps or websites such as Instagram or Facebook Messenger.*)
8. "Retailtainment" will pervade the industry. (*i.e., the intersection of entertainment and retail.*)
9. Data will continue to be a significant component of retail success.
10. Specialty stores will be more productive than department stores.
11. Retailers will turn to apps, services, and third parties to fulfill the needs of modern shoppers.
12. Retail and technology will become even more inseparable.

The "2017 will favor retailers who come up with smart, bold ways to personalize & elevate every aspect of the shopping experience."³⁰



²⁸ "Why Retailers Must Restructure in 2016", Walter Loeb in Forbes Magazine, January 4, 2016, retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/walterloeb/2016/01/04/every-sign-is-saying-retailers-must-restructure-in-2016/#31a875713162>, August 14, 2017.

²⁹ "Retailers Scrambling to Adjust to Changing Consumer Habits", Yuki Noguchi on All Things Considered, National Public Radio, May 2, 2017, retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/2017/05/02/526560158/a-rapid-shakeup-for-retailers-as-consumer-habits-change>, August 14, 2017.

³⁰ VendHQ, retrieved from <https://www.vendhq.com/us/university/retail-trends-and-predictions-2017>, August 14, 2017.

Goal: Enhance the city’s **distinct neighborhood commercial districts** so that they meet local and area needs, and are vibrant and attractive places to shop and spend time.

Sub-goal NC1: Ensure that neighborhood commercial districts are **well-defined** and serve neighborhood needs.

Action NC1-1: Review zoning and building permit data over 3+ year period to identify the types of activities proposed and permits sought. Determine if trends are consistent with neighborhood desires.

Action NC1-2: As part of comprehensive planning process, gather information from residents about what they want the character of their commercial district to be.

Action NC1-3: Where appropriate support an increase in sit down restaurants in neighborhood commercial districts.

Action NC1-4: Utilize the land use inventory prepared by FSU to identify where concentrations of ethnic businesses may be located. Consider creating a marketing campaign to increase outside knowledge of unique groupings of ethnic businesses. Provide technical assistance to owners of existing ethnic businesses seeking to expand, and potential business operators considering locating in Fitchburg.

Sub-goal NC2: Establish **high quality design** expectations for neighborhood commercial districts.

Action NC2-1: Review dimensional requirements in neighborhood commercial districts and determine if appropriate for desired character. (ex., if having a pedestrian oriented feel is desired, requiring a large front yard setback will diminish that.)

Action NC2-2: Reduce the number of billboard signs by: 1) prohibiting construction of new billboards; 2) inventorying billboards citywide, including specific location, size of sign, company, and billboard number; and, 3) establishing an amortization program by which billboards are required to be removed after a specified time period has been established wherein the owner can recoup the capital investment on the sign construction (i.e., different size signs will have different amortization periods)

Action NC2-3: Assign DPW to remove old City-owned signs that are no longer relevant (i.e. “Fitchburg Rocks” campaign), and to regularly remove signs posted on telephone poles, trees, bus stop, etc.

Action NC2-4: Inventory “welcome to Fitchburg” signs citywide to identify gaps and duplicates. Assign DPW to remove/relocate duplicates. Secure funding to add signs where needed.

Action NC2-5: Determine if property owners can be required to remove sign faces that identify long-closed businesses.

Sub-goal NC3: Develop cohesive **directional signage** program to guide visitors to Fitchburg’s strongest amenities/assets.

Action NC3-1: Create an aesthetically pleasing sign aesthetic to be used to inform visitors about local attractions. Establish:

- Historic district signage (i.e. entering...District) in addition to being on specific buildings.
- Place-naming signs at key spots (i.e. Upper Common, Monument Park, Rollstone Boulder).

- Wayfinding along main thoroughfares and at key junctions where travelers may need to turn or may get confused.

Sub-goal NC4: Heighten **awareness** of each distinct neighborhood and its offerings.

Action NC4-1: Consider installing gateway signage or artwork at entrance to each commercial district to reinforce sense of place.

Action NC4-2: Develop marketing materials to showcase businesses by district and by business type.

Action NC4-3: Consider creating a series of community building events in each neighborhood (ex. “open streets” where several blocks of a street are closed to vehicle traffic and an event is held).

ADDITIONAL RELATED ACTIONS:

D3-10: Main Street organization downtown

F1-2: Pocket parks in neighborhood commercial areas

OUTDOOR RECREATION & CULTURE

Fitchburg is home to nearly 3,600 acres defined as open space, recreational, and agricultural land that are owned by the Commonwealth, the City, non-profits, and private entities. The configuration of the city is the direct result of its unique geographic features including the Nashua River, Scott Brook, Falulah Brook, and other waterways, and the hills and valleys that cross the city. The amount of open space and natural features serves as a juxtaposition to the urban downtown core and offers residents and places to walk and cycle in nature.



More than half of the open space in Fitchburg (1,948 acres) is owned by the City of Fitchburg. This includes watersheds managed by the Water Department (911 acres), fields and parks managed by the Parks and Recreation Department (458 acres) including the Coggshall Park and Bird Sanctuary, and the Green’s Hill and Littlefield Farm properties managed by the Conservation Commission (172 acres). The nearly-300 acres of State-owned open space includes the Willard Brook and Leominster State Forests managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), and the Scripture Hill wildlife area managed by the Department of Fish and Game.



Fitchburg Open Space Parcels by Type		
Owner/Manager	Number of Parcels	Number of Acres
State of Massachusetts	8	297
City of Fitchburg	135	1,948
Charitable Land Trusts	14	484
Massachusetts Audubon Society	10	329
North County Land Trust	4	155
Private Non-profit	7	96
Private For-Profit	23	744
Carlson Custom Homes	2	27
Doak, S. and K.	1	55
Hertel Farm	3	210
Kelly, B. and A.	2	43
Hollis Hills Farm	2	85
Oak Hill Country Club	6	234
Rossbach Farm	3	66
Stoneybrook Village Homeowners Assoc	4	24
Total	187	3,569

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

Another quarter of open space (840 acres) land is held privately. The largest of these is Oak Hill Country Club, which owns 234 acres in the southwest part of the city, while the rest are a mix of farms, individual holdings, residential developments, and cemeteries owned by non-profit religious organizations. In addition, two charitable land trusts own nearly 500 acres of publicly-accessible open space, almost all of which is located in the center of the city around the Mass Audubon Society's Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary and the North County Land Trust's Crocker Conservation Area.



Fitchburg is also recognized as the home of the Fitchburg Art Museum, founded in 1925. With a collection of 5,000 works of art, the museum has a mission of serving as “catalyst for learning, creativity, and community building.”³¹ It is a unique cultural amenity of a scale not found in communities, even those larger than Fitchburg. The Fitchburg Art Museum along with the New Players Theatre Guild Center for the Performing Arts, Stratton Players, the Boulder Art Gallery, Gallery Sitka, the Revolving Museum, and other arts organizations/businesses can together serve as catalysts for increasing arts and cultural activities in Fitchburg.



³¹ Fitchburg Art Museum website, available at <http://www.fitchburgartmuseum.org/mission-and-vision/>

Goal: Highlight and build upon the city's natural amenities and local events to become known as a center of **outdoor recreational** and **cultural** activity.

Sub-goal RC1: Encourage **recreational tourism** and highlight existing recreational amenities.

Action RC1-1: Engage the Fitchburg Trails Committee in plans to connect and promote trails and open spaces.

Action RC1-2: Revisit past plans to identify short-term projects for enhancing parks and open spaces.

Action RC1-3: Support the creation of the Marion Stoddard Trail to connect the Steamline Trail with Coolidge Park.

Action RC1-4: Highlight parks and recreation amenities in City's marketing plan and materials.

Action RC1-5: Consider expanding the Fitchburg Riverfront Park so that it has land area on both sides of the river and determine how the park could be used as a significant community gathering space, including an outdoor stage and seating area.

Action RC1-7: Identify multiple locations for potential construction of new hotels/motels proximate to significant attractions, such as Great Wolf Lodge and Game On. Establish zoning to facilitate development, and work with property owners to market sites to hotel developers.

Action RC1-8: Consider the installation of a zipline from Rollstone Boulder to Crocker Field (i.e., distribute an RFP that would authorize the highest bidder use of the City facilities for the purpose of installing a commercial zipline).

Sub-goal RC2: Encourage **recreational uses** in appropriate spaces in Fitchburg.

Action RC2-1: Take City leaders on a tour of other MA communities (e.g., Charlemont, Millers Falls, Orange) to visit recreational assets and meet with town leaders to discuss lessons learned in how to create a concentration of outdoor recreational activities.

Action RC2-2: Develop a three year action plan that includes site identification to encourage more recreation/hospitality uses in Fitchburg.

Action RC2-3: Identify infrastructure needs to support ongoing/annual festival events (ex., temporary or permanent parking areas, restroom facilities in City parks, etc.)

Action RC2-4: Update zoning to allow for Commercial Recreation in rural areas by special permit from the Planning Board.

Action RC2-5: Meet with coordinators of the Longsjo Classic bicycle to discuss what has been learned from prior events, gather feedback on City permitting and operations, and gather ideas into future recreational events. Establish a marketing and outreach plan for Longsjo to increase attendance. (ex. Lowell kinetic sculpture race)

Action RC2-6: In the City's *Open Space & Recreation Plan* identify a location (or locations) for off leash dog park(s).

Action RC2-7: Consider the installation of a seasonal outdoor ice skating venue in Fitchburg, including possibly in the downtown and/or at Coggshall Park.

Sub-goal RC3: Promote **stewardship** of Fitchburg's unique natural environment.

Action RC3-1: Initiate planning to develop a shared use path along the Nashua River.

Action RC3-2: Identify ways to open the downtown to the Nashua River, including but not limited to: a) construct shared use path abutting the river; b) performing detailed land use inventory of parcels abutting river; c) identify catalyst sites where development that faces the river could occur. Possible uses could include restaurants with outdoor seating, amphitheater for music and theatrical performances, bicycle and outdoor apparel shops, etc. (ex. San Antonio TX Riverwalk) Establish physical standards for a shared use path along the water front and a standard condition of approval requiring abutting properties to construct their section.

Action RC3-3: Consider expanding the Fitchburg Riverfront Park so that it has land area on both sides of the river and determine how the park could be used as a significant community gathering space. Consider relocating surface parking lot on opposite side of the river on Boulder Street.

Action RC3-4: Revise zoning to ensure that development—particularly in West Fitchburg—occurs in a manner that highlights/leverages the city’s natural amenities (ex. cluster zoning, public open space requirements, design review, etc.)

Action RC3-5: Utilize *Smart Growth* principles to maintain the clear urban/rural edge critical to Fitchburg’s identity.

Action RC3-6: Increase the City’s annual investment in the installation and maintenance of street trees to increase the attractiveness of Fitchburg neighborhoods and combat heat island effect.

Sub-goal RC4: Promote a **sense of community** through outdoor activity and appreciation of nature.

Action RC4-1: Strive to have all residents live within 1/2 mile of an outdoor amenity such as a shared use path, public park, community garden, etc.

Action RC4-2: Host an annual lecture series on nature and natural phenomena at the Fitchburg Library and partner with an exhibit at the Fitchburg Museum.

Action RC4-3: Formalize the Fitchburg “Rock Walk” (from Upper Common to top of Rollstone Hill) with mapping, wayfinding signage, and trail improvements.

Action RC4-4: Capitalize on city’s distinctive topography by recruiting commercial recreation ventures that utilize Fitchburg’s physical features (ex. Rock climbing, zipline course, drone school).

Action RC4-5: Engage FSU in stewardship of recreation areas through volunteerism to help with maintenance of local parks, open spaces & trails.

Sub-goal RC5: Grow the **artist community** in Fitchburg and artist participation in community activities.

Action RC5-1: Visit other communities with strong artist communities to learn how were created and what types of amenities artists look for in a community. (ex. Lowell, North Adams, ArtsUnion in Somerville)

Action RC5-2: Encourage the participation of non-local artists in art shows / cultural events as a way of learning more about Fitchburg, i.e., send notice of upcoming events to a large radius.

Action RC5-3: Leverage 'Fitchburg Arts Community' project to establish and sustain the city as the regional center for arts/culture and for stimulating creative economy initiatives locally.

Sub-goal RC6: Increase the number of **cultural events and venues** in Fitchburg.

Action RC6-1: Create a plan for public art / place-making in the downtown, including permanent and temporary installations.

Action RC6-2: Visit Lowell to gather information about its kinetic sculpture event, how such a large event can be conceived and implemented, and the relative benefits to the community

ADDITIONAL RELATED ACTIONS:

D3-2: Tech assistance for City Hall, Theater Block, and BF Browne

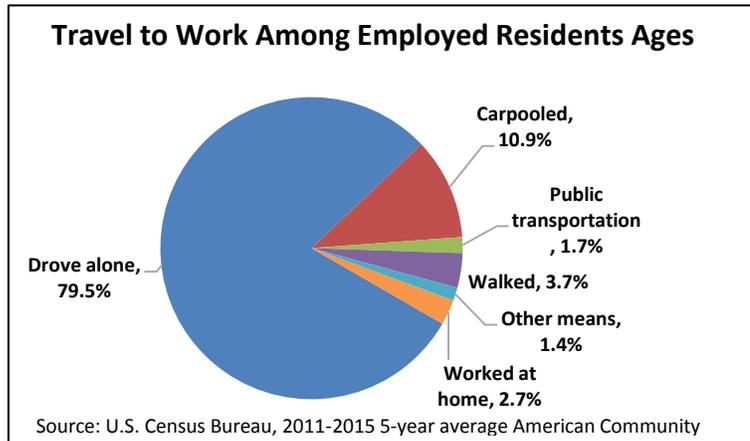
T1-1: Implement Complete Streets Prioritization plan

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TRANSPORTATION

Fitchburg benefits from access to multiple modes of transportation including the MBTA commuter rail, local and area bus service via Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART), and 202 miles of roadway (180 of which are maintained by the City). The City also has miles of painted bicycle lanes and sidewalk found predominantly in the central, more urbanized core of Fitchburg. Planning for the Twin City Rail Trail is underway and Fitchburg is recognized by bicycling enthusiasts worldwide for its Longsjo Classic Road Race held each summer.

However, despite the transit amenities found in Fitchburg, only 1.7% of residents reported using public transportation as a means to work, a figure that was lower than the 3.7% of residents who reported walking to work. This means that the vast majority of workers traveled by either single



occupancy vehicles (79.5%) or carpool (10.9%). Transportation costs – predominantly the cost of a vehicle, insurance, maintenance, and gasoline – are recognized as the second greatest household expense after housing in the U.S.



While the personal automobile is anticipated to remain a dominant means of travel in the near future, considerable change is occurring in terms of technology and personal preference. Recent technological changes include car share services such as Zipcar and Getaround³² which provide users access to vehicles without owning them, and the internet-based livery services of Uber and Lyft. Over the near horizon are self-driving cars. Multiple sources are projecting steep reductions in private vehicle ownership up to and including a future in which private ownership is an anomaly and not a norm. Although considerable skepticism of these projections can be found, an article in Forbes Magazine anticipates that, “Private car ownership will drop 80% by 2030 in the US” and “The number of passenger vehicles on American roads will go from

³² “Now you can rent your car to strangers while you are stuck at work”, Vaccaro, Adam in Boston Globe May 10, 2017, retrieved from <https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2017/05/10/now-you-can-rent-your-car-strangers-while-you-stuck-work/XdkxuN3EiSRegNcnxavQhO/story.html>, June 30, 2018

247 million in 2020 to 44 million in 2030.”³³ References to the same trend can be found in the Wall Street Journal³⁴ and Business Insider. As Business Insider reports, “On average, cars sold in the US sit parked more than 95% of the time.”³⁵ Change in behavior can already be seen in young adults. An April 2012 study prepared by the Frontier Group and U.S. PIRG found a 23% drop in vehicle miles traveled by young adults aged 16 to 34 between 2001 and 2009.³⁶

While the future of transportation remains to be seen, making getting around the city easy, fun, and affordable will benefit residents, employers, and workers today, as well as those in the future.



³³“What will car ownership look like in the future”, Michael Barnard in Forbes.com June 22, 2017, retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2017/06/22/what-will-car-ownership-look-like-in-the-future/#3a037d546b99>, June 30, 2018.

³⁴ “The end of car ownership”, Higgins, Tim in the Wall Street Journal, June 20, 2017, retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-end-of-car-ownership-1498011001>, June 30, 2018.

³⁵ “Only 20% of Americans will own a car in 20 year”, Garfield, Leanna in Business Insider, May 4, 2017, retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/no-one-will-own-a-car-in-the-future-2017-5>, June 30, 2018.

³⁶ Frontier Group and U.S. PIRG, Transportation and the New Generation: Why Young People Are Driving Less and What It Means for Transportation Policy, April 2012.

Goal: Make **transportation into and around** the city easy, fun, and affordable.

Sub-goal T1: Make Fitchburg increasingly **pedestrian and bicycle friendly**.

Action T1-1: Continue to work with MassDOT on implementation of Fitchburg's Complete Streets Prioritization Plan. Track and make public progress on the performance standards included in the City's complete streets policy (e.g., total miles of bicycle lanes/paths, number of ADA accommodations built, etc.)

Action T1-2: Ensure the City is active with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to advocate for Fitchburg priorities.

Action T1-3: Allocate funding in the annual capital plan for engineering design services to prepare conceptual design of key transportation improvements so that when funding becomes available the City is ready to pursue funding expeditiously.

Action T1-4: Ensure that the Twin City Rail Trail is funded and built within the current fiscal year 2019 timeframe.

Action T1-5: Initiate planning to develop a shared use path along the Nashua River.

Action T1-6: Establish a Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission consisting of residents and business persons with a mission of developing a comprehensive plan for bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Action T1-7: Seek TIP funding for improvements, including but not limited to safety enhancements, pedestrian and bicycle amenities, and gateway signage at key entrances into the city.

Sub-goal T2: Increase residents' ability to **travel without a private vehicle**.

Action T2-1: Modify zoning requirements to facilitate the presence of car share. Specifically, all the by-right conversion of up to three parking spaces at a commercial use in a non-residential zone into car share spaces. Require a special permit for conversion of a greater number of spaces.

Action T2-2: Pursue a commercial bike share in Fitchburg, including a dockless option where bicycles can be parked throughout the city and located electronically.

Sub-goal T3: Increase the attractiveness and utilization of **public bus service** in Fitchburg.

Action T3-1: Create a map that compares existing bus routes with historic trolley routes to identify neighborhoods and locations that were previously accessible by public transportation.

Action T3-2: Survey residents to gather feedback on existing bus service and determine what would encourage them to use the bus.

Action T3-3: Work with MART to see if existing routes could be extended and/or if new routes could be created to serve more Fitchburg residents and businesses, with an initial focus on streets that used to be trolley routes.

Sub-goal T4: Increase connectivity to and activity around existing **commuter rail** stations.

Action T4-1: Improve the pedestrian experience between the MBTA Commuter Rail Station and downtown and the FSU campus, with a focus on complete streets improvements such as narrowed road crossings, expanded buffer between pedestrian and moving vehicles, etc. Consider eliminating slip lanes at intersection of Main Street and Water Street.

Action T4-2: Improve intersections and roadways at Water Street / Laurel Street and Water Street / Main Street to ensure drivers are aware of turning movements well in advance and to highlight the river crossing. Significantly widen sidewalks and provide for safe bicycle facilities.

Action T4-3: Prepare a specific plan for the area around the Wachusett Station with the intent of intensifying uses within a ½ to ¾ mile walking distance of the station. The plan should identify physical improvements to facilitate pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular travel to the station.

Action T4-4: Request that Great Wolf Lodge include access to the hotel from Wachusett Station via Bus Route 11 to its directions page.

Action T4-5: Together with Great Wolf Lodge, request that MART provide Saturday service on bus Route 11.

Sub-goal T5: Improve the **maintenance of roadways** at key gateways where visitors enter the city and throughout commercial and industrial areas.

Action T5-1: Identify a series of roadway projects needed to strengthen economic development, and an associated implementation schedule to identify when design and construction should take place.

Action T5-2: Set aside funding each year in the annual five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to be used to for transportation analyses and the preparation of concept and construction design plans for projects designed to strengthen economic development.

Action T5-3: Maintain active participation in the MPO which allocates federal and state transportation funds to regional projects.

Action T5-4: Regularly submit proposed projects to the MPO for inclusion in the five year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Action T5-5: Actively seek additional sources of funding for roadway improvements (e.g., EDA, MassWorks, CDBG, I-Cubed for major development projects, etc.)

Action T5-6: Strive to increase the amount of general funds allocated to roadway maintenance, sidewalk repairs, and adding sidewalks in the CIP, in addition to the City's annual Chapter 90 allocation.

Sub-goal T6: Capitalize on city's many **bridges** as a visually distinctive element.

Action T6-1: Use thematic lighting or painting of bridges as artistic statements and area attractions. If feasible, have lighting be able to change seasonally, if not on command. (ex. Zakim Bridge)

Action T6-2: Establish general tidiness as baseline along key roadway corridors and gateways into city, regularly removing trash, debris, overgrowth.

Action T6-3: Remove overgrown vegetation, especially along roadsides, that obscure view of Nashua River, after consultation with the Conservation Commission.

ADDITIONAL RELATED ACTIONS:

D3-8: Rezone Central Plaza site for transit oriented development

D4-5: Twin Cities rail trail

D4-6: Bicycle amenities

D4-8: Pedestrian connectivity at Central Plaza site

ED1-5: FSU shuttle

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APPENDICES

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Appendix A – Trends Report Findings

FITCHBURG ECONOMIC TRENDS

The Economic Trends Report was prepared by the Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management at UMass Boston to establish a solid foundation of data from which to inform future policy decisions. Key findings of the report include the following:

1. Fitchburg's population peaked at 43,343 in 1970, then declined to 40,318 (-7.0%) by 2010, even as most comparison communities and the state grew.
2. Fitchburg is generally a young community, with both the lowest median age (34.5 years) and smallest share of working-age residents (59.3%) relative to comparison communities.
3. Fitchburg is more diverse (34% minority) than all comparison communities except Everett. However, its share of foreign-born residents (11%) is smaller than in Everett (41%), Woburn (17%), and the state (16%).
4. The educational attainment of Fitchburg residents ages 25 and older lags all comparison communities except Everett.
5. Fitchburg has the second-smallest share of married couples with children (16.4%) among comparison communities, and the second-highest share of single-parent households (12.9%), after Everett (15.2%).
6. Median household income in Fitchburg (\$48,724) is the second-lowest of all the comparison communities. Per capita income is also second-lowest.
7. Fitchburg has the highest share of residents living in poverty among the comparison communities, including among seniors (13.5%) and children (29.1%).
8. The unemployment rate in Fitchburg (5.3% in 2016) is higher than that of the comparison communities.
9. By industry, Fitchburg residents are most likely to work in manufacturing (15.7%) and retail trade (13.5%).
10. Fitchburg residents are less likely to work in higher paying employment industries when compared to the state average. When they do work in higher paying industries, their wages remain below the state average.
11. Nearly four out of five Fitchburg workers are employed by private companies, while only 5% are self-employed, the lowest among comparison communities.
12. By occupation, Fitchburg residents are most likely to be in office and administrative support jobs (14.5%), followed by sales (10.1%).
13. Nearly 80% of Fitchburg residents in the workforce drive alone to work.
14. Although the number of business establishments in Fitchburg increased 15.6% between 2001 and 2015, the city has fewer businesses than nearly all comparison communities.
15. Despite the growth in the number of Fitchburg business establishments, local jobs declined by 10.1% between 2001 and 2015. As of 2015, there were 0.62 jobs per resident in the workforce.
16. Among businesses with payrolls, nearly half (47%) in Fitchburg have fewer than 5 employees.
17. Although a number of different business sectors can be found in Fitchburg, in 2015, 40% of Fitchburg businesses were in the Education and Health Service sector, the highest share among the comparison communities.

18. Large employers in Fitchburg, with 100 or more employees, are predominantly in the Health Care and Social Assistance (6 employers), Manufacturing (5 employers), and Retail Trade (3 employers) sectors.
19. The Education and Health Services business sector has the greatest number of jobs in Fitchburg, followed by Trade, Transportation and Utilities, Leisure and Hospitality, and Manufacturing, each of which contains more than 10% of total local jobs.
20. Most Education and Health Services companies in Fitchburg are Individual and Family Service providers. However, Elementary and Secondary Schools have the greatest number of jobs.
21. Nearly 20% of jobs in Fitchburg are in the Trade, Transportation and Utilities sector; more than half of these are in Retail Trade.
22. Though much reduced from its heyday, manufacturing establishments still employ 12% of Fitchburg workers, with nearly half of these engaged in paper and metal fabrication.
23. Fitchburg's top two subsectors, i.e., Health Care and Social Assistance, and Educational Services are projected to be among the fastest growing sectors in Central Massachusetts through 2024.
24. Retail establishments in Fitchburg sell more than \$726 million in goods, a figure that is \$41.5 million greater than local demand.
25. The category of Food Service & Drinking Places had the largest retail opportunity gap, with nearly \$50 million in local demand not being met by Fitchburg businesses.
26. Nearly 74% of property tax revenues in Fitchburg are generated by residential property owners. Leominster (78.4%) is the only comparison community with a greater reliance on residential property taxes.
27. Fitchburg has the highest residential tax rate and the 4th highest commercial rate among the comparison communities, yet it has the lowest average single-family tax bill and generates the least amount of total tax levy.
28. The amount of new tax levy growth each year in Fitchburg has been highly variable since before the Great Recession.
29. Local receipts (e.g., motor vehicle excise, fees and fines, and payments in lieu of taxes) have grown by \$2.5 million since FY2012. A significant share of this growth is due to Fitchburg's adoption of the room tax.
30. Fitchburg has made significant progress in increasing its free cash and stabilization fund balance since the end of Great Recession.
31. Residential land (7,885 acres) accounts for 44% of land area in Fitchburg, excluding roads and railways.
32. The total value of land parcels in Fitchburg is \$2.7 billion, 62% of which is residential and 24% of which is tax exempt. On average, land in Fitchburg is used for low intensity uses.
33. Single-family homes account for more than half (56% of parcels and 55% of acres) of all residential land in Fitchburg.
34. Overall, industrial land area is nearly 1 ½ times the size of commercial land area (902 v 626 acres), but its value is only approximately half that of commercial property.
35. Nearly half of tax-exempt properties (311 parcels) are owned by the City and schools, covering over 3,000 acres.
36. Fitchburg is home to several thousand acres of open space, recreational, and agricultural land, which are owned by the Commonwealth, the City of Fitchburg, non-profits, and private entities.

Appendix B – Project Advisory Group Members

<u>LastName</u>	<u>FirstName</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Title (Role)</u>
DiNatale	Stephen	City of Fitchburg	Mayor
Kushmerek	Michael	City of Fitchburg	Council President, Ward 4
Donnelly	Tom	City of Fitchburg	Councilor at Large, FRA chair
Green	Amy	City of Fitchburg	Ward 1 Councilor
Bisol	Angelo	City of Fitchburg	Ward 5 Councilor (through Dec. 2017)
Fleming	Marisa	City of Fitchburg	Ward 5 Council (2018 to present)
Caron	Paula	City of Fitchburg	Planning Board chair
McLaughlin	Michael	City of Fitchburg	Zoning Board of Appeals co-chair
Curley	Dan	Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority	executive director
Capasso	Nick	Fitchburg Art Museum	Director
Celuzza	Dave	Slattery's Restaurant & Bar	restaurant business owner; FSU alumnus
Duvarney	Steve	Duvarney Jewelers	biz owner; also Fay Club board member
Feen	Bob	Feen's Country Living	retail business owner
Fournier	Matt	Elite Construction & Design	R.E. developer; "Fitchburg Pride" president
Freeman	Mark	Steel-Fab Inc.	manuf. biz owner; Chamber board chairman (2017-2018)
Jansson	Brian	Boutwell, Owens & Co. Inc.	VP of Finance & Administration
Krikorian	Bill	Tree Horsemen Realty Trust	commercial developer
Lapidus	Richard	Fitchburg State University	President
Bry	Jay	Fitchburg State University	VP, Administration & Finance
Marsden	Steve	Marsden Engineering (& Game On Fitch.)	business owner; real estate developer
Mercadante	Anthony	Mercadante & Mercadante CPAs	Managing Partner; Chamber board chair
Nascimento	Roy	North Central MA Chamber of Commerce	President/CEO
O'Kane	Laura	Geronimo Properties	R.E. professional; Planning Board member
Roberts	Dana	Fidelity Bank	Vice President
Spacciapoli	Bill	OPCO Laboratory Inc.	Business Development Director
Stover	Christie	Applewild School	Head of School
Tessman	Henry	Great Wolf Lodge	General Manager

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Appendix C – Implementation Plan

DOWNTOWN Make Fitchburg’s Downtown a vibrant, attractive, mixed-use destination that is active throughout the week, both daytime and into the evening.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
Sub-goal D1: Engage in consistent, coordinated efforts to enhance the safety, cleanliness, attractiveness, and livability of downtown Fitchburg.					
D1-1:	Continue to expand the City’s code enforcement efforts with a focus on vacant and/or underutilized buildings in the downtown. Encourage all to develop creative solutions that facilitate the reuse of vacant or underutilized buildings.	Code Enf	1	N.I.C.E Task Force, ReImagine North of Main (RNoM), Pride	
D1-2:	Continue regular foot and bicycle police patrols in the downtown throughout the week and on the weekend. Ensure that officers are trained in community policing practices and encouraged to build relationships with local business persons and residents.	Public Safety	1	Fitchburg PD; Community Dev Department (CDD)	
D1-3:	Establish a well-funded façade improvement program to help property owners partially offset the cost of improvements to the exteriors of their buildings. Include signage as an allowable use of funds. (ex. RNoM Storefront Improvement Grant).	Bus Devt	3	CDD, RNoM, Transformative Development Initiative (TDI)	
D1-4:	Review existing downtown roadway and sidewalk conditions to identify other needed improvements/maintenance issues, with a particular focus on ADA compliance, nighttime lighting, trash collection receptacles, street trees and landscaping, damaged sidewalks, bicycle and pedestrian amenities, and directional signage.	Infra	1	CDD, Public Works (DPW), RNoM, Fitchburg State University (FSU)	
D1-4a:	Evaluate the results of the temporary reconfiguration of Main Street (fall 2017) on pedestrian and bicycle activity, parking, and business activity via a survey of nearby businesses.	Infra	1	CDD, DPW, RNoM, FSU	
D1-5:	Highlight entrances to downtown via physical “gateways,” using visual clues as public art, architectural elements, signage, etc.	Infra	4	CDD, FAM	
D1-6:	Identify a sustainable source of funds to invest in downtown staffing, capital projects, and grant funding to facilitate building reuse.	Finance	1	CDD, Pride, RNoM, TDI	

DOWNTOWN Make Fitchburg’s Downtown a vibrant, attractive, mixed-use destination that is active throughout the week, both daytime and into the evening.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
	D1-6a:	Explore the merits of creating a property-owner funded model--such as a Main Streets program, Community Benefits District, or business-improvement district--with an associated non-profit entity to support services and improvements in the downtown funded.	Finance	3	CDD, Pride, RNoM/TDI,
	D1-6b:	Consider the creation of a District Improvement Financing (DIF) District.	Finance	5	CDD, Pride, RNoM/TDI, City Council (CC)
Sub-goal D2: Implement and maintain a series of diverse events and activities that will bring local residents and visitors into downtown Fitchburg throughout the year.					
	D2-1:	Meet with coordinators of existing activities (e.g., al fresco dining, blacksmith, Halloween, beers for good, Fitchburg Pride, farmers market, etc.) to gather feedback on their experiences holding events in downtown Fitchburg including the benefits and challenges faced in order to gather ideas on how to make events easier to hold. Determine likelihood of events to continue, and potentially expand in frequency, in the future. Brainstorm how events can support each other, such as joint advertising, shared equipment, etc.	Special Events	1	CDD, RNoM, NewVue
	D2-2:	Meet with local downtown business persons to gather feedback into their experiences with how events are coordinated, with a goal to developing event protocols that allow local businesses to remain open and benefit from the downtown activity.	Special Events	1	CDD, Pride, RNoM/TDI
	D2-3:	Support North of Main’s efforts to create a Downtown Coordinator position that will be responsible for creating a series of downtown events. Ensure that the Downtown Coordinator creates a multi-year action plan designed to: 1) reduce/remove impediments to events; 2) expand the number and types of events held; 3) encourage FSU students to attend events; and 4) include activities for children and youths.	Special Events	1	RNoM, CDD, FSU, Pride

DOWNTOWN Make Fitchburg’s Downtown a vibrant, attractive, mixed-use destination that is active throughout the week, both daytime and into the evening.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
	D2-4:	Encourage the Downtown Coordinator to seek input from residents, business persons, representatives of the arts community and FSU, and City staff in efforts to brainstorm potential future events.	Special Events	1	RNoM, CDD, FSU
	D2-5:	Establish a calendar of events, such as speakers and films, to be held at the Central Library throughout the year with a goal of adding evening and weekend activities.	Special Events	2	RNoM, CDD, FSU
	D2-6:	Consider an annual budget line item to establish funding for event-related costs, such as event coordination, outreach and publication of events calendar, and police and public works overtime.	Finance	3	Mayor's Office
	D2-7:	Facilitate the use of vacant spaces by “Pop Up” restaurants and shops by minimizing permitting requirements. Encourage pop ups of potential interest to students (ex. used clothing).	Zoning / Permit	3	CDD, Pride, RNoM/TDI
Sub-goal D3: Encourage the creation of a mix of uses in the downtown that bring residents and workers into the downtown, and contribute to an active streetscape.					
	D3-1:	Review dimensional requirements in zoning ordinance (e.g., height, floor area ratio, units per acre, etc.) and compare with historic built environment. Determine whether existing code supports similar scale development or if “downzoning” has occurred. Consider amending zoning ordinance to reinstitute dimensional requirements modeled after historic downtown environment.	Zoning / Permit	2	CDD, Planning Board, Building Dept, CC
	D3-2:	Amend the Zoning Ordinance to define “pedestrian-oriented uses” (ex., restaurants, retail stores, art galleries, grocery stores, etc.) and add a map identifying where pedestrian-oriented uses are required on the ground floor.	Zoning / Permit	2	CDD, Planning Board, Building Dept, CC
	D3-3:	Review use table in Zoning Ordinance to determine if desired uses are allowed and how to facilitate permitting processes for desired uses (ex. Somerville MA Union Square rezoning “use clusters”).	Zoning / Permit	2	CDD, Planning Board, Building Dept, CC

DOWNTOWN Make Fitchburg’s Downtown a vibrant, attractive, mixed-use destination that is active throughout the week, both daytime and into the evening.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
D3-4:	Amend the Zoning Ordinance to facilitate the creation of small and medium sized street level spaces, where small is 2,000 sf or less and medium is 5,000 sf or less). Allow for large footprint uses with a special permit below or above the street level.	Zoning / Permit	2	CDD, Planning Board, Building Dept, CC	
D3-5:	Facilitate and encourage the creation of outdoor dining opportunities in the downtown.	Zoning / Permit	2	CDD, Planning Board, Building Dept, CC	
D3-6:	Encourage the establishment of one or more co-working spaces in the Downtown to provide a location where start-ups, remote workers, free lancers, etc. can have a professional space in which to work. Review zoning to ensure co-working space is allowed and that parking requirements are not prohibitive. (ex. FSU Idea Lab, Workbar in Cambridge, Impact Hub Boston, We Work Boston)	Zoning / Permit	3	CDD, Pride, RNoM/TDI	
D3-7:	Increase the amount of housing in and nearby the downtown by reviewing zoning ordinance to identify and reduce/remove constraints to multi-family housing development (e.g., unit density, height, floor area ratio, parking requirements, etc.)	Zoning / Permit	4	CDD, Planning Board, Building Dept, CC	
D3-8:	Rezone Central Plaza site on Water Street to provide for transit-oriented development. Allow large footprint grocery store to be built within development site, provided that other uses, such as housing or office, are built above. Require, as conditions of approval: a) construction of (or ADA accessible connection to) pedestrian bridge to MBTA station; b) construction of shared use path along Nashua River frontage; and c) provision of publicly accessible open space, preferably along the river. Require project to include uses oriented toward the river.	Zoning / Permit	4	CDD, Planning Board, Building Dept, CC	

DOWNTOWN Make Fitchburg's Downtown a vibrant, attractive, mixed-use destination that is active throughout the week, both daytime and into the evening.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
D3-9:	Use elevation change between Main Street and Boulder Street to place parking and loading below future mixed-use buildings.	Zoning / Permit	4	CDD, Planning Board, Building Dept, CC	
D3-10:	Consider creating a Main Streets non-profit in the downtown following the four-point national model of economic vitality, design, organization, and promotion (https://www.mainstreet.org/home)	Bus Devt	4	CDD, Pride, RNoM/TDI, downtown landlords	
D 3-11:	Market existing small business loan programs to existing and potential downtown businesses (e.g. CDBG, Chamber).	Bus Devt	1	CDD, Pride, RNoM/TDI	
D3-12:	Provide advocacy and technical assistance in support of the renovation of City Hall , redevelopment of the Theater Block , redevelopment of the former B.F. Brown School into an artist live/work space ("Fitchburg Arts Community"), and renovation/expansion of Fitchburg Public Library.	Bus Devt	1	City, NewVue, FSU, RNoM/TDI	
D3-13:	Consider the role of Boulder Drive, which today consists mostly of parking and loading areas for businesses on Main Street. Given the road's proximity to the river, determine how to support the addition of mixed use development facing on Boulder Drive. Consider how the design of any garage for the renovated City Hall will influence the future of the rest of the street.	Zoning / Permit	2	CDD, Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority (FRA)	
Sub-goal D4: Increase accessibility to downtown from multiple modes of transportation.					
D4-1:	Review utilization of City-owned downtown parking structure and maximize the number of spaces available to the general public throughout the week and weekend. For example, amend policies/contracts so that monthly parking passes either are only in effect during weekday business hours or create a second monthly pass for overnight parking.	Infra	2	City Parking Committee, CDD, Treasurer, TDI	

DOWNTOWN | Make Fitchburg’s Downtown a vibrant, attractive, mixed-use destination that is active throughout the week, both daytime and into the evening.

			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
D4-2:	Have a professional parking study performed to inventory both publicly-owned and privately owned areas to determine present utilization, and to anticipate future parking demand. Consider the role of parking fees on driver behavior and traffic (e.g. best practices research into how to encourage turnover of street spaces and discourage drivers from circling an area looking for on- street parking by charging higher fees for on-street parking, lower prices in parking structures).	Infra	2	CDD, TDI/RNoM, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)	
D4-3:	Establish a “payment in lieu of parking” program downtown where developers can make payment to the City for the construction and maintenance of public parking instead of providing parking on-site. Have Planning Board establish an annual fee based upon the cost of construction of structured parking.	Zoning / Permit	5	CDD, Planning Board (PB), CC	
D4-4:	Redevelop City-owned parking structure to allow for mixed-use development that is 3 to 4 stories high on the Main Street side. At a minimum, provide for ground floor retail with commercial or residential use above. Consider whether public parking spaces should be replaced on site, or whether proceeds from land sale should be used to construct parking elsewhere.	Infra	5+	CDD, FRA	
D4-5:	Ensure the Twin Cities Rail Trail is well connected to the downtown and FSU, including a shared use path along the Nashua River.	Infra	1	FSU, CDD	
D4-6:	Increase downtown bicycle amenities, such as bicycle lanes (off-road cycle tracks preferred), bicycle parking, dockless bicycle rental (see MAPC regional procurement), free bike repair station (ex. Cambridge, Northpoint development), etc. Encourage the location of cycling- related businesses in or proximate to the downtown.	Infra	3	CDD, TDI/RNoM	
D4-7:	Ensure that developer of Central Plaza site constructs a pedestrian bridge over the train tracks (or otherwise provides an ADA accessible connection to an existing bridge) to improve pedestrian access to station from neighborhoods to the south of the station.	Zoning / Permit	5+	CDD	

DOWNTOWN Make Fitchburg’s Downtown a vibrant, attractive, mixed-use destination that is active throughout the week, both daytime and into the evening.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
Sub-goal D5: Recognize and build upon Fitchburg’s historic architectural character.					
D5-1:	Pursue historic district designations where appropriate.	Planning/Policy	4	CDD, Historic Society & Commission	
D5-2:	Restore old façade elements to retain historic character of key structures. Consider Old City Hall and Former District Courthouse as examples of standout buildings.	Code Enf	3	CDD, Historic Society & Commission	
D5-3:	Create design standards for the site plan review process to improve design quality.	Zoning / Permit	2	CDD, PB	
D5-4:	Consider establishing a design review commission with advisory oversight in key areas of the city such as in the downtown and along the Nashua River.	Zoning / Permit	4	CDD, Mayor's Office, CC	
EDUCATION / UNIVERSITY TOWN Embrace Fitchburg’s role as a university town and continue to grow the city’s strong educational sector in order to provide residents and students of all ages with the skills to compete successfully for today’s jobs and those of the future					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
Sub-goal ED1: Increase the connection between Fitchburg State University, the downtown, and the city at large.					
ED1-1:	Make the 1 mile route between the FSU and the Public Library one of the most pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets in the city. Study vehicular and pedestrian safety at high crash locations in the area (i.e., intersection of Main Street and North Street), and identify options to improve safety.	Infra	3	CDD, FSU, DPW	

EDUCATION / UNIVERSITY TOWN | Embrace Fitchburg’s role as a university town and continue to grow the city’s strong educational sector in order to provide residents and students of all ages with the skills to compete successfully for today’s jobs and those of the future

			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
	ED1-2:	Consider installing a cohesive set of decorative street lights in the blocks bound by Blossom Street, Main Street, North Streets, and the campus. (At least three different light standards in the area exist today.) Encourage residents and businesses in the area to install winter decorative lighting on their properties.	Infra	5+	CDD, FSU, DPW
	ED1-3:	Increase bicycle amenities in the downtown and encourage FSU to make it easy for students to have a bicycle on campus (ex., adequate, secure bicycle storage, shared bicycles accessed with a student ID, low cost bicycle helmets and locks for purchase, etc.).	Infra	3	CDD, TDI, FSU, DPW
	ED1-4:	Survey students regarding off-campus shopping and entertainment needs/desires. Use results to develop action plan and in marketing materials.	Marketing	1	CDD, FSU, DPW, RNoM
	ED1-5:	Consider providing a free shuttle from the FSU campus to various downtown locations including, but not limited to the commuter rail station, Market Basket, public library, art museum, Coolidge Park, etc.	Infra	4	CDD, Mont Area Regional Transit (MART), FSU
	ED1-6:	Encourage FSU to purchase goods and services from local businesses. Ask FSU to perform annual analysis of goods and services that could not be purchased locally and the volume.	Marketing	1	FSU, Mayor's Office
	ED1-7:	Have representatives of the City participate in new student orientation to provide an overview of what Fitchburg has to offer including activities, amenities, and services.	Marketing	2	CDD, TDI, FSU, Pride
	ED1-8:	Expand the number of local businesses that accept FSU’s student meal card as a means of payment. Encourage businesses to provide student discounts. Market participating businesses to new and returning students.	Marketing	5	CDD, FSU, TDI, Pride

EDUCATION / UNIVERSITY TOWN Embrace Fitchburg’s role as a university town and continue to grow the city’s strong educational sector in order to provide residents and students of all ages with the skills to compete successfully for today’s jobs and those of the future					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
ED1-9:	Improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between FSU and Coolidge Park and the Wallace Civic Center including enhancing sidewalks along Pearl Street and determining if an easement can be secured through a property on John Fitch Highway to provide more direct access through the abutting neighborhood.		Infra	5	CDD, FSU
Sub-goal ED2: Embrace Fitchburg’s identity as a university town .					
ED2-1:	Identify communities with effective town/gown relationships and similar demographics to serve as possible models for Fitchburg (examples include: Burlington VT, Ithaca NY,		Marketing	1	FSU, CDD, RNoM, TDI
ED2-2:	Explore the creation of a formal “Town/Gown” partnership between the City and FSU.		Marketing	2	FSU, Mayor's Ofc, CC
ED2-3:	Cultivate student leaders to serve on various planning committees (e.g. events planning, place-making, etc.)		Marketing	3	FSU, TDI, CDD, RNoM
ED2-4:	Invite president of FSU to make an annual presentation to City Council on the “State of the		Marketing	1	FSU, CC, Mayor's Ofc
ED2-5:	Meet with the new leadership of Mount Wachsett Community College (MWCC) to discuss plans for the future and how the City can be of assistance in supporting the school’s goals.		Marketing	1	MWCC, Mayor's Ofc
Sub-goal E3: Encourage FSU and Mount Wachusett Community College graduates to remain in Fitchburg after graduation.					
ED3-1:	Encourage local businesses, non-profits, and City departments to develop internships and hire local students during the school year and during the summer. Create a “Mayor’s Public Service Internship” program to hire one student in the Mayor’s office each year.		Work Dev	4	CDD, MWCC, FSU
ED3-2:	In partnership with FSU, establish a City internship program for students to work within City offices. Work with the Art Museum to provide/increase internships.		Work Dev	1	CDD, MWCC, FSU

EDUCATION / UNIVERSITY TOWN Embrace Fitchburg’s role as a university town and continue to grow the city’s strong educational sector in order to provide residents and students of all ages with the skills to compete successfully for today’s jobs and those of the future					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
	ED3-3:	Help FSU market its job announcement portal to local businesses and non-profits.	Work Dev	1	Mayor's Ofc, CDD, FSU
	ED3-4:	Consider amending the Zoning Bylaw to allow for development of quality, appropriately-permitted efficiency units, co-housing, and other types of housing arrangements geared toward students and recent graduates.	Zoning / Permit	4	CDD, CC, PB
Sub-goal ED4: Increase educational attainment and skills of Fitchburg residents of all ages.					
	ED4-1:	Meet with leadership of Montachusett Tech’s School of Continuing Education to gather lessons learned from the school’s extensive adult learning curriculum and determine how offerings can be further expanded in Fitchburg and enrollment increased. Identify and address barriers impeding low income residents from accessing the educational offerings, i.e., consider access to daycare and MART during class hours.	Work Dev	3	Monty Tech, CDD, NewVue, MART, North Central MA Chamber of Commerce (NCMCC)
	ED4-2:	Convene a Mayor’s Fitchburg Education Coalition with a charge of creating a multi-year action plan and partnerships to increase educational attainment among Fitchburg adults. At a minimum: 1) Seek participation from FSU, Montachusett Community College, the North Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board, other public and private educational institutions (e.g., Fitchburg Public Schools, MonteTech, Applewild School), and local non-profits; 2) identify barriers that prevent residents from pursuing additional training and education and determine how to reduce them (ex. childcare, scholarships, increased computer access at Fitchburg library); 3) establish specific goals and performance measures to determine success; and 4) provide City staff to facilitate the effort. Encourage participants to contemplate the needs of 21 st century employers and how to promote creativity and entrepreneurship.	Work Dev	5	MWCC, North Central Workforce Investment Board (WIB), Fitchburg Public Schools (FPS), Applewild, Mayor’s Ofc, NCMCC

EDUCATION / UNIVERSITY TOWN | Embrace Fitchburg’s role as a university town and continue to grow the city’s strong educational sector in order to provide residents and students of all ages with the skills to compete successfully for today’s jobs and those of the future

			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
ED4-3:	Encourage employers to increase on-site skill building training for employees (ex. some McDonalds provide ESL classes) and scholarships for employees to increase skills and education.	Work Dev	4	Mayors Ofc, MWCC, WIB, Monty, NCMCC	
ED4-4:	Consider how the public library, other municipal buildings, and local public schools could be used as classrooms for free or low cost trainings/classes in the evenings and on weekends.	Work Dev	2	NCMCC, CDD, NCWIB, Newvue	
ED4-5:	Determine if CDBG funds could be used to provide scholarships for low income residents to secure additional schooling geared toward approving skills and job readiness.	Work Dev	3	CDD, NewVue	
ED4-6:	Identify a school or organization that can provide training to Fitchburg residents on how to become licensed childcare providers. Offer free (or low cost) training to interested residents.	Work Dev	3	NewVue, NCMCC, CDD	
ED4-7:	Learn more about the Massachusetts Workforce Training Fund that can provide up to \$250,000 grants to companies to provide training for employees and encourage Fitchburg businesses to apply.	Work Dev	1	CDD, WIB, NCMCC	
ED4-8:	During design for renovated City Hall determine if some space call be allocated for community gathering / training center.	Work Dev	2	CDD, Mayor's Ofc	

FAMILY FRIENDLY | Encourage continued expansion in the number and variety of family-friendly venues and activities in order to attract visitors from throughout New England.

			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
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Sub-goal F1: Facilitate and encourage the provision of a series of **family-friendly businesses** and activities geared toward local residents and visitors.

FAMILY FRIENDLY Encourage continued expansion in the number and variety of family-friendly venues and activities in order to attract visitors from throughout New England.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
	F1-1:	Increase the number of family-friendly restaurants in the downtown and neighborhood commercial districts. Review parking requirements for restaurants to ensure they are not prohibitive, encourage restaurants to provide some separation between dining and bar areas.	Zoning / Permit	4	CDD, NCMCC, PB
	F1-2:	Consider constructing pocket parks and play structures within or in close proximity to the downtown and neighborhood commercial districts. Consider requiring public open space as a condition of approval for larger developments in neighborhood commercial areas.	Zoning / Permit	5	CDD, DPW, RNoM, TDI, PB
	F1-3:	Encourage the creation of gathering places in the downtown that are friendly to families and patrons under 21 years of age (ex., video arcade, live theater, comic book store, indoor play spaces, cafés, etc.). Review parking requirements to ensure they are not prohibitive.	Zoning / Permit	3	CDD, TDI, RNoM, Trails Committee
	F1-4:	Increase the number and length of off-road bicycle paths (ex. Marion Stoddard trail).	Infra	5	CDD, DPW, CC, Trails Committee
	F1-5:	Identify multiple locations for potential construction of new hotels/motels proximate to significant attractions, such as Great Wolf Lodge and Game On. Establish zoning to facilitate development, and work with property owners to market sites to hotel developers.	Zoning / Permit	3	CDD, PB
	F1-6:	Encourage Great Wolf Lodge to create an annual “Fitchburg Day” when local residents can purchase one-day tickets to the water park.	Special Events	1	Mayor's Ofc, CDD

FAMILY FRIENDLY Encourage continued expansion in the number and variety of family-friendly venues and activities in order to attract visitors from throughout New England.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
	F1-7:	Ask the Fitchburg Museum, Fitchburg Airport, New Players Theater Guild, and other non-profits to determine how they can best contribute to the family-friendly theme.	Special Events	1	FAM, CDD, Mayor's Ofc, Airport Commission, New Player's Guild
	F1-8:	Renovate (and potentially expand) the Fitchburg public library so that becomes an increasingly active gathering space for persons of all ages and throughout the week.	Infra	2	FPL, CC, Mayor's Ofc
Sub-goal F2: Market a positive image of the City that highlights the amenities Fitchburg has to offer.					
	F2-1:	Develop a "tagline" that uniquely represents the City in a sentence or less.	Marketing	4	Mayor's Ofc, CDD
	F2-2:	Work with a professional marketing firm to create and implement a cohesive marketing strategy for the City.	Marketing	4	Mayor's Ofc, CDD
	F2-3:	Partner with the North Central MA Chamber to ensure that the marketing message is one that takes into account Fitchburg's impact and unique identity in North Central Massachusetts.	Marketing	4	CDD, NCMCC Mayor's Ofc
	F2-4:	Develop and manage a marketing platform—print, radio, web, etc. —that will celebrate Fitchburg's unique identity both locally and regionally.	Marketing	4	CDD, Mayor's Ofc
	F2-5:	Create a pamphlet listing of local venues and activities with a focus on family-friendly locations attractive to family members of all ages. Make available on-line and hard copy. Include information on local parks (ex. Coolidge Park), bicycle paths, Fitchburg museum, etc.	Marketing	3	CDD, NCMCC, Mayor's Ofc

QUALITY HOUSING STOCK Maintain an attractive, high-quality housing stock					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
Sub-goal H1: Identify opportunities for transformational, multi-family housing construction.					
H1-1:	Identify locations in the downtown and vicinity of the commuter rail stations for construction of multi-family and mixed use housing. Consider amending zoning to: a) increase number of units per acre; and b) decrease parking requirements to promote construction.	Zoning / Permit	4	CDD, PB, CC, TDI	
H1-2:	When market forces dictate, consider adopting an inclusionary housing ordinance that requires that all multi-family development projects over a certain size set aside a percentage of units as permanently affordable.	Zoning / Permit	5+	PB, CC, Mayor's Ofc, CDD	
H1-3:	Market identified multi-family housing sites to housing developers with expertise in securing multiple sources of capital (e.g. Historic Tax Credits, LIHTC) for high-quality housing options.	Zoning / Permit	3	CDD, TDI	
H1-4:	Work with an identified market rate developer to seek funding through the Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP).	Zoning / Permit	2	CDD, TDI	
H1-5:	Amend the zoning in or near the downtown or other neighborhood commercial districts to allow development of multi-stage market rate, for-profit senior (and/or 55+) housing including independent living	Zoning / Permit	4	CDD, TDI, PB, CC	
Sub-goal H2: Market the value of Fitchburg's housing stock to potential buyers and tenants being priced out of the greater Boston Metro area.					
H2-1:	Determine target market(s) of potential new residents (ex. retirees, young adults, graduate students, families) and the type of housing and amenities that would be attractive to each of the potential groups.	Marketing	4	CDD, TDI, FSU	
H2-2:	Partner with the real estate community to develop a sales pitch and ensure that adequate inventory exists.	Marketing	4	CDD, Board of Realtors (NCMAR)	
H2-3:	Refine market campaign for various audiences (i.e.g, inside 495, regional, etc.).	Marketing	4	CDD, NCMAR, TDI	
H2-4:	Market the quality of Fitchburg's schools. Develop marketing materials and provide to local realtors for distribution to potential buyers.	Marketing	2	CDD, FPS, NCMAR	

QUALITY HOUSING STOCK Maintain an attractive, high-quality housing stock					
			TYPE	START	POSSIBLE
	H2-5:	Create a downpayment assistance program to help moderate income households purchase a home in Fitchburg.	Marketing	2	CDD, CC, Mayor's Ofc, NewVue
	H2-6:	Encourage local employers to develop an incentive program to help employees purchase homes in Fitchburg.	Marketing	5	CDD, NCMCC, Mayor's
Sub-goal H3: Improve the quality of life in Fitchburg neighborhoods .					
	H3-1:	Work to implement recommendations from Neighborhood Improvement through Code Enforcement (NICE) Task Force's partnership with Harvard's Innovation Field Lab.	Code Enf	1	CDD, NICE, Harvard, Mayor's Ofc
	H3-2:	Create a parking plan to effectively manage parking challenges in the City's innermost neighborhoods. Consider the provision of additional public parking lots and shared use agreements at businesses with daytime parking use only.	Infra	4	City Parking Committee, CDD, Treasurers, Pride, TDI,
	H3-3:	Identify communities with similar housing stock characteristics, (e.g., older, mixed small multi and single family in dense older neighborhoods) and similar demographics. Review actions, policies, etc. undertaken by those similar communities to improve the quality of housing.	Code Enf	3	PB, CDD, NICE, MRPC
MIX OF BUSINESSES Support a diverse mix of businesses that offer good paying jobs and provide opportunities for entrepreneurship.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
Sub-goal M1: Support the thoughtful redevelopment of significant vacant or underutilized sites .					
	M1-1:	Create an area plan for the reuse of the Kmart commercial plaza on Carriage Court/Whalon Street that will allow for a mix of uses and promote a reduction in the amount of impervious surface on the sites.	Zoning / Permit	5	PB, CDD

MIX OF BUSINESSES Support a diverse mix of businesses that offer good paying jobs and provide opportunities for entrepreneurship.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
	M1-2:	Consider use of limited duration special permits together with development agreements to allow for the continued active use of sites that are not ready for more significant development, but where the City wishes to promote a change in use in the future.	Zoning / Permit	4	PB, CDD
Sub-goal M2: Make Fitchburg into the dining and entertainment hub for the region.					
	M2-1:	Convene a meeting of restauranteurs in Fitchburg to discuss their experience operating a business in the city. Gather feedback regarding City functions including permitting, licensing, inspections, etc. and identify ways to support restaurants.	Marketing	1	CDD, NCMCC, Pride, TDI
	M2-2:	Review zoning for full service restaurants citywide to identify impediments to establishing new restaurants, such as parking requirements, permitting requirements, etc. Ensure that requirements needed to establish small restaurants (i.e., less than 2,000 sf) are modest.	Zoning / Permit	2	PB, CDD
	M2-4:	Encourage the creation of outdoor seating by reducing impediments and streamlining the application process. (ex. Cambridge DPW Outdoor Dining – Guidelines and Permitting Process).	Zoning / Permit	2	CDD
	M2-5:	Create multiple “parklets” in the downtown and neighborhood commercial districts, where 1-2 parking spaces are turned into small public open spaces to allow for spontaneous outdoor dining and seating.	Special Events	4	PB, CDD, CC
	M2-6:	Adopt the local Meals Tax to gather revenues from increased dining activity.	Finance	5	Pride, TDI, NoM
Sub-goal M3: Support Fitchburg’s manufacturing businesses, while encouraging diversity and entrepreneurship in recognition of national and regional trends in this sector.					

MIX OF BUSINESSES Support a diverse mix of businesses that offer good paying jobs and provide opportunities for entrepreneurship.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
M3-1:	Convene a focus group(s) of significant manufacturing businesses in Fitchburg (e.g., Boutwell Owens & Co. (paper), Avery Dennison Corp (chemicals), Carastar Industries (paper), Arrhythmia Research Technology (electronic instruments), among others) to discuss their future plans within Fitchburg, receive feedback on City support to date, and consider how the City of Fitchburg can be a partner in future efforts. Discuss where suppliers are located and if any could be attracted to Fitchburg.	Marketing	1	CDD, NCMCC	
M3-2:	Consider rezoning some industrial properties to increase the amount of buildable square footage and to increase the number of allowable uses to allow property owners to maintain low rents on industrial users and to diversify the business areas. Development agreements will likely be needed to encourage property owners to support industrial tenants.	Zoning / Permit	3	PB, CC, CDD	
M3-3:	Use results of commercial land use inventory to identify small fabricators (e.g., bicycle, furniture, cabinets, etc.) and convene a meeting to discuss the future of small fabrication in Fitchburg.	Planning / Policy	3	CDD, NCMCC	
M3-4:	Undertake efforts to encourage the creation of a “makers’ space”, where members have access to equipment (ex. laser cutter, 3D printer, etc.) that can allow them to prototype new products for manufacture, take classes, and collaborate with others. (ex. Artists’ Asylum, Cambridge Hackspace). Actions can include site identification, rezoning, business attraction, and grant writing to let potential operators know an opportunity exists.	Work Dev	4	CDD, NewVue, Fitchburg Public Library, FSU, TDI	
M3-5:	Use results of commercial land use inventory to identify vacant and underutilized properties, identify impediments to reuse, and consider how increased commercial activity can be facilitated.	Zoning / Permit	2	CDD, RNoM, TDI	
Sub-goal M4: Create opportunities for professional and technical businesses to start, relocate, and grow in Fitchburg, and capture a large share of projected regional growth in professional and technical jobs.					

MIX OF BUSINESSES Support a diverse mix of businesses that offer good paying jobs and provide opportunities for entrepreneurship.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
M4-1:	Actively market Fitchburg’s affordable, quality housing stock and access to the MBTA commuter rail to professional workers being priced out of the Boston Metro Area.		Marketing	4	CDD, NCMAR
M4-2:	Identify key locations near commuter rail stations where commercial uses are desired, and amend zoning to greatly restrict or prohibit housing. (ex. Boynton Yards rezoning in Somerville.)		Zoning / Permit	4	PB, CDD, TDI
M4-3:	Review downtown zoning to reduce impediments to upper story commercial use, such as parking requirements, permit requirements, etc.		Zoning / Permit	2	PB, CDD, TDI
Sub-goal M5: Capitalize on the Fitchburg Airport to encourage growth in the number of airport-related businesses.					
M5-1:	Market Fitchburg Airport as an asset in the City and region.		Marketing	4	CDD, Airport Commission
M5-2:	Perform Build-Out Analysis to determine the availability and size of development sites at the airport, and any unique constraints.		Planning / Policy	3	CDD, Airport Commission
M5-3:	Promote commercial uses that cluster near airports.		Planning / Policy	3	CDD, Airport Commission
Sub-goal M6: Capitalize on Fitchburg’s existing strength in the Health Care and Social Assistance sector to capture a significant portion of growth) in this sector.					
M6-1:	Convene a focus group(s) of major healthcare and social assistance providers (e.g., UMass Memorial Health Alliance, Highlands Long Term Care Center, Community Health Connections, Hillcrest, Golden Living Center, among others) to discuss their plans for future growth within Fitchburg, receive feedback on City support to date, and consider how the City of Fitchburg can be a partner in future efforts.		Work Dev	3	CDD, NCMCC

MIX OF BUSINESSES Support a diverse mix of businesses that offer good paying jobs and provide opportunities for entrepreneurship.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
	M6-2:	Meet with representatives of UMass Memorial Health Alliance and Community Health Connections to discuss whether they anticipate any expansion at their Nichols Street campus.	Work Dev	3	CDD, RNoM
	M6-3:	Ask health care and social assistance providers if they are willing to provide summary information regarding where their workers live. Consider performing outreach to encourage workers to live in Fitchburg.	Marketing	4	CDD, RNoM, NewVue
DISTINCT NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS Enhance the city's distinct neighborhood commercial districts so that they meet local and area needs, and are vibrant and attractive places to shop and spend time.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
Sub-goal NC1: Ensure that neighborhood commercial districts are well-defined and serve neighborhood needs.					
	NC1-1:	Review zoning and building permit data over 3+ year period to identify the types of activities proposed and permits sought. Determine if trends are consistent with neighborhood desires.	Zoning / Permit	1	CDD, Building Dept, FSU
	NC1-2:	As part of comprehensive planning process, gather information from residents about what they want the character of their commercial district to be.	Planning / Policy	3	CDD, FSU
	NC1-3:	Where appropriate support an increase in sit down restaurants in neighborhood commercial districts.	Bus Devt	3	CDD, FSU
	NC1-4:	Utilize the land use inventory prepared by FSU to identify where concentrations of ethnic businesses may be located. Consider creating a marketing campaign to increase outside knowledge of unique groupings of ethnic businesses. Provide technical assistance to owners of existing ethnic businesses seeking to expand, and potential business operators considering locating in Fitchburg.	Bus Devt	3	NewVue, Chamber, CDD

DISTINCT NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS Enhance the city’s distinct neighborhood commercial districts so that they meet local and area needs, and are vibrant and attractive places to shop and spend time.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
Sub-goal NC2: Establish high quality design expectations for neighborhood commercial districts.					
NC2-1:	Review dimensional requirements in neighborhood commercial districts and determine if appropriate for desired character. (ex., if having a pedestrian oriented feel is desired, requiring a large front yard setback will diminish that.)	Zoning / Permit	3	CDD, Planning Board	
NC2-2:	Reduce the number of billboard signs by: 1) prohibiting construction of new billboards; 2) inventorying billboards citywide, including specific location, size of sign, company, and billboard number; and, 3) establishing an amortization program by which billboards are required to be removed after a specified time period has been established wherein the owner can recoup the capital investment on the sign construction (i.e., different size signs will have different amortization periods)	Planning / Policy	4	CDD, Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)	
NC2-3:	Assign DPW to remove old City-owned signs that are no longer relevant (i.e. “Fitchburg Rocks” campaign), and to regularly remove signs posted on telephone poles, trees, bus stop, etc.	Infra	2	DPW, neighborhood groups	
NC2-4:	Inventory “welcome to Fitchburg” signs citywide to identify gaps and duplicates. Assign DPW to remove/relocate duplicates. Secure funding to add signs where needed.	Infra	2	CDD	
NC2-5:	Determine if property owners can be required to remove sign faces that identify long-closed businesses.	Zoning / Permit	3	CDD, Planning Board, Bldg. Dept.	

DISTINCT NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS Enhance the city’s distinct neighborhood commercial districts so that they meet local and area needs, and are vibrant and attractive places to shop and spend time.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
Sub-goal NC3: Develop cohesive directional signage program to guide visitors to Fitchburg’s strongest amenities/assets.					
	NC3-1:	Create an aesthetically pleasing tourism signage to be used to inform visitors about local attractions. Establish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Historic district signage (i.e. entering...District) in addition to being on specific buildings. •Place-naming signs at key spots (i.e. Upper Common, Monument Park, Rollstone Boulder). •Wayfinding along main thoroughfares and at key junctions where travelers may need to turn or may get confused. 	Marketing	4	Planning Board, CDD, Historic Commission, Mayor's Office, DPW, FAM
Sub-goal NC4: Heighten awareness of each distinct neighborhood and its offerings.					
	NC4-1:	Consider installing gateway signage or artwork at entrance to each commercial district to reinforce sense of place.	Marketing	4	CDD, DPW, FAM
	NC4-2:	Develop marketing materials to showcase businesses by district and by business type.	Marketing	4	Mayor's Office, CDD
	NC4-3:	Consider creating a series of community building events in each neighborhood (ex. “open streets” where several blocks of a street are closed to vehicle traffic and an event is held).	Marketing	3	CDD, Fitchburg Cultural Council

COMMERCIAL RECREATION AND CULTURE Highlight and build upon the city’s natural amenities, institutions, and local events to become known as a center of outdoor recreational and cultural activity.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
Sub-goal RC1: Encourage recreational tourism and highlight existing recreational amenities.					
	RC1-1:	Engage the Fitchburg Trails Committee in plans to connect and promote trails and open spaces.	Marketing	2	CDD, Trails Committee
	RC1-2:	Revisit past plans to identify short-term projects for enhancing parks and open spaces.	Infra	2	CDD, Trails Committee, Fun N Fit
	RC1-3:	Support the creation of the Marion Stoddard Trail to connect the Steamline Trail with Coolidge Park.	Infra	5	CDD, DPW
	RC1-4:	Highlight parks and recreation amenities in City’s marketing plan and materials.	Marketing	4	CDD, Trails Committee, Parks Board
	RC1-5:	Consider expanding the Fitchburg Riverfront Park so that it has land area on both sides of the river and determine how the park could be used as a significant community gathering space, including an outdoor stage and seating area.	Infra	5	CDD, DPW, Fitchburg Pride, RNoM, TDI
	RC1-7:	Identify multiple locations for potential construction of new hotels/motels proximate to significant attractions, such as Great Wolf Lodge and Game On. Establish zoning to facilitate development, and work with property owners to market sites to hotel developers.	Bus Devt	2	CDD, Planning Board
	RC1-8:	Consider the installation of a zipline from Rollstone Boulder to Crocker Field (i.e., distribute an RFP that would authorize the highest bidder use of the City facilities for the purpose of installing a commercial zipline).	Bus Devt	5+	CDD

COMMERCIAL RECREATION AND CULTURE | Highlight and build upon the city’s natural amenities, institutions, and local events to become known as a center of outdoor recreational and cultural activity.

			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
Sub-goal RC2: Encourage recreational uses in appropriate spaces in Fitchburg.					
RC2-1:	Take City leaders on a tour of MA communities (e.g., Charlemont, Millers Falls, Orange) to visit recreational assets and meet with town leaders to discuss lessons learned in how to create a concentration of outdoor recreational activities.		Bus Devt	2	CDD, Mayor's Office, Recreation Dept
RC2-2:	Develop a three year action plan that includes site identification to encourage more recreation/hospitality uses in Fitchburg.		Bus Devt	3	CDD
RC2-3:	Identify infrastructure needs to support ongoing/annual festival events (ex., temporary or permanent parking areas, restroom facilities in City parks, etc.)		Infra	3	RNoM, CDD, Fitchburg Pride, Civic Days Committee
RC2-4:	Update zoning to allow for Commercial Recreation in rural areas by special permit from the Planning Board.		Zoning / Permit	3	CDD, Planning Board
RC2-5:	Meet with coordinators of the Longsjo Classic bicycle to discuss what has been learned from prior events, gather feedback on City permitting and operations, and gather ideas into future recreational events. Establish a marketing and outreach plan for Longsjo to increase attendance.		Marketing	1	CDD, Longsjo Classic Foundation
RC2-6:	In the City’s Open Space & Recreation Plan identify a location (or locations) for off leash dog park(s).		Infra	5	CDD, DPW
RC2-7:	Consider the installation of a seasonal outdoor ice skating venue in Fitchburg, including possibly in the downtown and/or at Cogshall Park.		Infra	5	CDD, DPW
Sub-goal RC3: Promote stewardship of Fitchburg’s unique natural environment .					
RC3-1:	Initiate planning to develop a shared use path along the Nashua River.		Planning / Policy	4	CDD, Trails Committee, Fun N Fit, Planning Board

COMMERCIAL RECREATION AND CULTURE Highlight and build upon the city’s natural amenities, institutions, and local events to become known as a center of outdoor recreational and cultural activity.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
	RC3-2:	Identify ways to open the downtown to the Nashua River, including but not limited to: a) construct shared use path abutting the river; b) performing detailed land use inventory of parcels abutting river; c) identify catalyst sites where development that faces the river could occur. Possible uses could include restaurants with outdoor seating, amphitheater for music and theatrical performances, bicycle and outdoor apparel shops, etc. (ex. San Antonio TX Riverwalk) Establish physical standards for a shared use path along the water front and a standard condition of approval requiring abutting properties to construct their section.	Zoning / Permit	2	CDD, Planning Board
	RC3-3:	Consider expanding the Fitchburg Riverfront Park so that it has land area on both sides of the river and determine how the park could be used as a significant community gathering space. Consider relocating surface parking lot on opposite side of the river on Boulder Street.	Infra	5	CDD, Parks, DPW
	RC3-4:	Revise zoning to ensure that development—particularly in West Fitchburg—occurs in a manner that highlights/leverages the city’s natural amenities (ex. cluster zoning, public open space requirements, design review, etc.)	Zoning / Permit	4	CDD, Planning Board
	RC3-5:	Utilize Smart Growth principles to maintain the clear urban/rural edge critical to Fitchburg’s identity.	Zoning / Permit	4	CDD, Planning Board
	RC3-6:	Increase the City’s annual investment in the installation and maintenance of street trees to increase the attractiveness of Fitchburg neighborhoods and combat heat island effect.	Infra	3	CDD, DPW, Planning Board

COMMERCIAL RECREATION AND CULTURE | Highlight and build upon the city’s natural amenities, institutions, and local events to become known as a center of outdoor recreational and cultural activity.

		TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
Sub-goal RC4: Promote a sense of community through outdoor activity and appreciation of nature.				
RC4-1:	Strive to have all residents live within 1/2 mile of an outdoor amenity such as a shared use path, public park, community garden, etc.	Infra	5+	CDD, DPW, Bike/Ped
RC4-2:	Host a annual lecture series on nature and natural phenomena at the Fitchburg Library and partner with an exhibit at the Fitchburg Museum.	Marketing	5	FPL, FAM, FSU
RC4-3:	Formalize the Fitchburg “Rock Walk” (from Upper Common to top of Rollstone Hill) with mapping, wayfinding signage, and trail improvements.	Infra	3	CDD, DPW, Parks, Greenway
RC4-4:	Capitalize on city’s distinctive topography by recruiting commercial recreation ventures that utilize Fitchburg’s physical features (ex. Rock climbing, zipline course, drone school).	Bus Devt	4	CDD, Mayor's Office
RC4-5:	Engage FSU in stewardship of recreation areas through volunteerism to help with maintenance of local parks, open spaces & trails.	Infra	3	Rotary Clubs, Trails Committee, TCRT Association, N County Land Trust
Sub-goal RC5: Grow the artist community in Fitchburg and artist participation in community activities.				
RC5-1:	Visit other communities with strong artist communities to learn how were created and what types of amenities artists look for in a community. (ex. Lowell, North Adams, ArtsUnion in Somerville)	Planning / Policy	2	City, NewVue, TDI, RNoM, FSU, FAM
RC5-2:	Encourage the participation of non-local artists in art shows / cultural events as a way of learning more about Fitchburg, i.e., send notice of upcoming events to a large radius.	Marketing	2	CDD, Mayor's Office, NewVue, TDI, RNoM, FSU,
RC5-3:	Leverage 'Fitchburg Arts Community' project to establish and sustain city as the regional center for arts/culture & for stimulating Creative Economy initiatives locally.	Marketing	4	FAM, TDI, RNoM, FSU

COMMERCIAL RECREATION AND CULTURE | Highlight and build upon the city’s natural amenities, institutions, and local events to become known as a center of outdoor recreational and cultural activity.

			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
Sub-goal RC6: Increase the number of cultural events and venues in Fitchburg.					
RC6-1:	Create a plan for public art / place-making in the downtown, including permanent and temporary installations.	Planning / Policy	4	FAM, Revolving Museum, Cultural	
RC6-2:	Visit Lowell to gather information about its kinetic sculpture event, how such a large event can be conceived and implemented, and the relative benefits to the community.	Planning / Policy	2	FAM, Revolving Museum, Cultural Council, Fitchburg Pride, RNoM	

TRANSPORTATION | Make transportation into and around the city easy, fun, and affordable.

			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
Sub-goal T1: Make Fitchburg increasingly pedestrian and bicycle friendly .					
T1-1:	Continue to work with MassDOT on implementation of Fitchburg’s Complete Streets Prioritization Plan. Track and make public progress on the performance standards included in the City’s complete streets policy (e.g., total miles of bicycle lanes/paths, number of ADA accommodations built, etc.)	Infra	1	CDD, DPW, Bike/Ped Committee, FSU, Fun N Fit	
T1-2:	Ensure the City is active with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to advocate for Fitchburg priorities.	Planning / Policy	1	CDD, Planning Board	
T1-3:	Allocate funding in the annual capital plan for engineering design services to prepare conceptual design of key transportation improvements so that when funding becomes available the City is ready to pursue funding expeditiously.	Planning / Policy	3	Mayor's Office, CDD, DPW	
T1-4:	Ensure that the Twin City Rail Trail is funded and built within the current fiscal year 2019 timeframe.	Planning / Policy	1	CDD	

TRANSPORTATION Make transportation into and around the city easy, fun, and affordable.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
	T1-5:	Initiate planning to develop a shared use path along the Nashua River.	Planning / Policy	3	Trails Committee, Fun N Fit, CDD,
	T1-6:	Establish a Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission consisting of residents and business persons with a mission of developing a comprehensive plan for bicycle and pedestrian improvements.	Planning / Policy	2	Trails Committee, CDD, Fun N Fit
	T1-7:	Seek TIP funding for improvements, including but not limited to safety enhancements, pedestrian and bicycle amenities, and gateway signage at key entrances into the city.	Planning / Policy	3	CDD, DPW
Sub-goal T2: Increase residents' ability to travel without a private vehicle.					
	T2-1:	Modify zoning requirements to facilitate the presence of car share. Specifically, all the by-right conversion of up to three parking spaces at a commercial use in a non-residential zone into car share spaces. Require a special permit for conversion of a greater number of spaces.	Zoning/Permit	2	Planning Board, CDD
	T2-2:	Pursue a commercial bike share in Fitchburg, including a dockless option where bicycles can be parked throughout the city and located electronically.	Infra	2	CDD, RNoM, Bike/Ped Committee, Fun N Fit
Sub-goal T3: Increase the attractiveness and utilization of public bus service in Fitchburg.					
	T3-1:	Create a map that compares existing bus routes with historic trolley routes to identify neighborhoods and locations that were previously accessible by public transportation.	Planning / Policy	4	MART, CDD
	T3-2:	Survey residents to gather feedback on existing bus service and determine what would encourage them to use the bus.	Planning / Policy	4	MART, CDD, Fun N Fit

TRANSPORTATION Make transportation into and around the city easy, fun, and affordable.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
	T3-3:	Work with MART to see if existing routes could be extended and/or if new routes could be created to serve more Fitchburg residents and businesses, with an initial focus on streets that used to be trolley routes.	Planning / Policy	5	MART, CDD, Fun N Fit
Sub-goal T4: Increase connectivity to and activity around existing commuter rail stations.					
	T4-1:	Improve the pedestrian experience between the MBTA Commuter Rail Station and downtown and the FSU campus, with a focus on complete streets improvements such as narrowed road crossings, expanded buffer between pedestrian and moving vehicles, etc. Consider eliminating slip lanes at intersection of Main Street and Water Street.	Infra	4	DPW, CDD, FSU
	T4-2:	Ensure that the designs for the replacement of the Water Street and Laurel Street	Infra	3	DPW, CDD,
	T4-3:	Prepare a specific plan for the area around the Wachusett Station with the intent of intensifying uses within a ½ to ¾ mile walking distance of the station. The plan should identify physical improvements to facilitate pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular travel to the station.	Planning / Policy	4	CDD, FRA
	T4-4:	Request that Great Wolf Lodge include access to the hotel from Wachusett Station via Bus Route 11 to its directions page.	Planning / Policy	1	CDD, Great Wolf
	T4-5:	Together with Great Wolf Lodge, request that MART provide Saturday service on bus Route 11.	Planning / Policy	3	CDD, Great Wolf
Sub-goal T5: Improve the maintenance of roadways at key gateways where visitors enter the city and throughout commercial and industrial areas.					
	T5-1:	Identify a series of roadway projects needed to strengthen economic development, and an associated implementation schedule to identify when design and construction should take place.	Infra	2	CDD, DPW
	T5-2:	Set aside funding each year in the annual five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to be used to for transportation analyses and the preparation of concept and construction design plans for projects designed to strengthen economic development.	Infra	2	CDD, DPW

TRANSPORTATION Make transportation into and around the city easy, fun, and affordable.					
			TYPE	START YEAR	POSSIBLE PARTNERS
	T5-3:	Maintain active participation in the MPO which allocates federal and state transportation funds to regional projects.	Infra	1	CDD, DPW
	T5-4:	Regularly submit proposed projects to the MPO for inclusion in the five year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	Infra	2	CDD, DPW
	T5-5:	Actively seek additional sources of funding for roadway improvements (e.g., EDA, MassWorks, CDBG, I-Cubed for major development projects, etc.)	Infra	2	CDD, DPW
	T5-6:	Strive to increase the amount of general funds allocated to roadway maintenance, sidewalk repairs, and adding sidewalks in the CIP, in addition to the City's annual Chapter 90 allocation.	Infra	3	Mayor's Office, CDD, DPW
Sub-goal T6: Capitalize on city's many bridges as a visually distinctive element.					
	T6-1:	Use thematic lighting or painting of bridges as artistic statements and area attractions. If feasible, have lighting be able to change seasonally, if not on command. (ex. Zakim Bridge)	Infra	5	CDD, DPW
	T6-2:	Establish a regular maintenance schedule for long key roadway corridors and gateways into city (e.g., regularly removing trash, debris, and overgrowth, mowing, etc..) Report to the Mayor on monthly accomplishments.	Infra	2	DPW, CDD, neighborhood groups
	T6-3:	Remove overgrown vegetation, especially along roadsides, that obscure view of Nashua River, after consultation with the Conservation Commission.	Infra	3	DPW, CDD, ConsCom

Citizen Opinions from the Economic Development Strategic Planning Meeting, 02.22.18

Top Areas by Vote

Goal	Description	Votes
Downtown	<i>Make Fitchburg's Downtown a vibrant, attractive, mixed-use destination that is active throughout the week and into the evening.</i>	11
Education	<i>Embrace Fitchburg's role as a university town and continue to grow the city's strong educational sector in order to provide residents and students of all ages with the skills to compete successfully for today's jobs and those of the future</i>	10
Quality	Maintain an attractive, high quality housing stock .	6
Outdoor Recreation	Highlight and build upon the city's natural amenities and local events to become known as a center of outdoor recreational and cultural activity	3
Sub Goal	Description	Votes
E2	Embrace Fitchburg's identity as a university town .	24
D3	Encourage the creation of a mix of uses in the downtown that bring residents and workers into the downtown, and contribute to an active streetscape.	9
D1	Engage in consistent, coordinated efforts to enhance the safety, cleanliness, attractiveness, and livability of downtown Fitchburg.	7
F2	Market a positive image of the City that highlights the amenities Fitchburg has to offer.	7
D2	Implement and maintain of a series of diverse events and activities that will bring local residents and visitors into downtown Fitchburg throughout the year.	6
E1	Increase the connection between Fitchburg State University, the downtown, and the city at large.	6
E3	Encourage FSU and Mount Wachusett Community College graduates to remain in Fitchburg after graduation.	6
N3	Develop cohesive directional signage program to guide visitors to Fitchburg's strongest amenities/assets.	5
Action Item	Description	Votes
RC4-4	Formalize the Fitchburg "Rock Walk" (from Upper Common to top of Rollstone Hill) with mapping, wayfinding signage, and trail improvements.	21

Citizen Opinions from the Economic Development Strategic Planning Meeting, 02.22.18

Top Areas by Vote

RC6-1	Provide advocacy and technical assistance in support of the renovation of City Hall , development of the Theater Block , and the redevelopment of the former BF Brown School into an artist live/work space (see also D3-13).	13
F1-1	Increase the number of family-friendly restaurants in the downtown and neighborhood commercial districts. Review parking requirements for restaurants to ensure they are not prohibitive, encourage restaurants to provide some separation between dining and bar areas.	13
E2-3	Cultivate student leaders to serve on various planning committees (e.g. events planning, place-making, etc.)	12
E4-1	Meet with leadership of Montachusett Tech's School of Continuing Education to gather lessons learned from the school's extensive adult learning curriculum and determine how offerings can be further expanded in Fitchburg and enrollment increased. Identify and address barriers impeding low income residents from accessing the educational offerings, i.e. consider access to daycare and MART during class hours.	12
E1-1	Make the 1 mile route between the FSU and the Public Library one of the most pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets in the city. Study vehicular and pedestrian safety at high crash locations in the area (i.e., intersection of Main Street and North Street), and identify options to improve safety.	10
E1-5	Encourage the creation of gathering places in the downtown that are friendly to families and patrons under 21 years of age (ex., video arcade, live theater, comic book store, indoor play spaces, cafés, etc.). Review parking requirements to ensure they are not prohibitive. (see also F1-3)	10
H1-1	Identify locations in the downtown and vicinity of the commuter rail stations for construction of multi-family and mixed use housing. Consider amending zoning to: a) increase allowable FAR; b) increase number of units; and c) decrease parking requirements to promote construction.	9
RC2-5	Meet with coordinators of the Longsjo Classic bicycle to discuss what has been learned from prior events, gather feedback on City permitting and operations, and gather ideas into future recreational events. (ex. Lowell kinetic sculpture race)	9

Citizen Opinions from the Economic Development Strategic Planning Meeting, 02.22.18

Top Areas by Vote

RC1-1	Engage the Fitchburg Trails Committee in plans to connect and promote trails and open spaces.	9
F1-3	Encourage the creation of gathering places in the downtown that are friendly to families and patrons under 21 years of age (ex., video arcade, live theater, comic book store, indoor play spaces, cafés, etc.). Review parking requirements to ensure they are not prohibitive. (see also E1-5)	8
F1-5	Identify multiple locations for potential construction of new hotels/motels proximate to significant attractions, such as Great Wolf Lodge and Game On . Establish zoning to facilitate development, and work with property owners to market sites to hotel developers.	8
RC5-1	Visit other communities with strong artist communities to learn how were created and what types of amenities artists look for in a community. (ex. Lowell, North Adams, ArtsUnion in Somerville)	7
D1-3	Establish a well-funded façade improvement program to help property owners partially offset the cost of improvements to the exteriors of their buildings. Include signage as an allowable use of funds. (ex. RNoM Storefront Improvement Grant)	7
D4-5	Ensure the Twin Cities Rail Trail is well connected to the downtown and FSU, including a shared use path along the Nashua River.	7
E1-6	Facilitate the use of vacant spaces by “Pop Up” restaurants and shops by minimizing permitting requirements. Encourage pop ups of potential interest to students (ex. used clothing). (see also D2-7)	7
RC1-5	Consider expanding the Fitchburg Riverfront Park so that it has land area on both sides of the river and determine how the park could be used as a significant community gathering space. (see also D1-7)	6
RC1-2	Revisit past plans to identify short-term projects for enhancing parks and open spaces .	6

Citizen Opinions from the Economic Development Strategic Planning Meeting, 02.22.18

Top Areas by Vote

N3-1	Create an aesthetically pleasing sign aesthetic to be used to inform visitors about local attractions. Establish: • Historic district signage (i.e. entering...District) in addition to being on specific buildings. • Place-naming signs at key spots (i.e. Upper Common, Monument Park, Rollstone Boulder). • Wayfinding along main thoroughfares and at key junctions where travelers may need to turn or may get confused.	6
D3-6	Encourage the establishment of one or more co-working spaces in the Downtown to provide a location where start-ups, remote workers, free lancers, etc. can have a professional space from which to work. Review zoning to ensure co-working space is allowed and that parking requirements are not prohibitive. (ex. FSU Idea Lab, Workbar in Cambridge, Impact Hub Boston, We Work Boston and Cambridge.) (see also M3-2.)	6
F2-5	Create a pamphlet listing of local venues and activities with a focus on family-friendly locations attractive to family members of all ages. Make available on-line and hard copy. Include information on local parks, bicycle paths, Fitchburg museum, etc.	6
H3-4	Consider creating a series of community building events in each neighborhood (ex. "open streets", where several blocks of a street are closed to vehicle traffic and an event is held). (see also N4-4)	6
RC1-4	Highlight parks and recreation amenities in City's marketing plan and materials.	6
D2-2	Meet with local downtown business persons to gather feedback into their experiences with how events are coordinated, with a goal to developing event protocols that allow local businesses to remain open and benefit from the downtown activity.	5
D3-5	Facilitate and encourage the creation of outdoor dining opportunities in the downtown.	5
E3-2	In partnership with FSU, establish a City internship program for students to work within City offices. Work with the Art Museum to provide/increase internships.	5
H2-1	Determine target market(s) of potential new residents (ex. retirees, young adults, graduate students, families) and the type of housing and amenities that would be attractive to each of the potential groups.	5
H2-4	Market the quality of Fitchburg's schools. Develop marketing materials and provide to local realtors for distribution to potential buyers.	5

**Citizen Opinions from the Economic Development Strategic Planning Meeting,
02.22.18**

Top Areas by Vote

H3-3	Create a parking plan to effectively manage parking challenges in the City’s innermost neighborhoods. Consider the provision of additional public parking lots and shared use agreements at businesses with daytime parking use only.	5
N2-3	Assign DPW to remove old City-owned signs that are no longer relevant (i.e. “Fitchburg Rocks” campaign), and to regularly remove signs posted on telephone poles, trees, bus stop, etc.	5
N4-1	Consider installing gateway signage or artwork at entrance to each commercial district to reinforce sense of place.	5
RC2-3	Identify infrastructure needs to support ongoing/annual festival events (ex., temporary or permanent parking areas, restroom facilities in City parks, etc.)	5