

BUILDING AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

The Pioneer Valley Region's
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2029



Pioneer Valley
Planning Commission

BUILDING AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

THE PIONEER VALLEY'S COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

2024-2029

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
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JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2029

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Pioneer Valley of 2024 reflects many of the economic trends that are occurring at the national level: a changing workforce; challenges in available and affordable housing options; and a gradual shift away from “knowledge-based” professions toward skilled-based careers, including jobs that require certificate training or license-degrees. While the Pioneer Valley’s top three industries continue to be in healthcare/ social assistance, educational services, and advanced manufacturing, the region’s future economy will likely broaden to encompass more technology-based industries. We are seeing emerging opportunities in quantum and quantum-adjacent fields, Artificial Intelligence, financial technology, new technologies to generate power and reduce emissions, and food science.

Although the Pioneer Valley’s economy was hit hard by the global pandemic during 2020-2021, the region has shown signs of sustained recovery since mid-2022. Unemployment rates have been steadily declining and new industries are eyeing the region for investment and growth. From the perspective of leadership in several key sectors, the Pioneer Valley looks ripe for new development and redevelopment.

There are, however, areas of serious concern which will require cross-sectoral action. The region’s population is stagnant and, in many areas, becoming older. Springfield, the largest city in the Pioneer Valley, is one of the most segregated communities in the United States;

recent data analysis confirms that minority and ethnicity status continue to determine economic opportunities and outcomes for too many of the Pioneer Valley’s residents. And although the area is home to 13 highly ranked colleges and universities, the region is not “sticky” – many graduates do not remain here to start their professional careers and families.

The 2024-2029 Pioneer Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is titled Building an Economy that Works for Everyone because it is intended to address both poles of this economic reality. It outlines goals and objectives that address social and economic mobility, leverage opportunities, build capacity, and recognize the need for increased regional collaboration. As part of the plan, Building an Economy that Works for Everyone sets forth performance measures that can measure the region’s progress – or lack of progress – toward attaining these goals. Great care was given to craft performance measures that were specific and meaningful to our region. Our hope is that the CEDS is a practical and tactical tool that can support the Pioneer Valley in maximizing the opportunities that lie ahead while ensuring that such opportunities benefit all of our residents.

RESEARCH AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) designed a broad-based CEDS process to gather a wide range of quantitative and qualitative inputs.

Many of our regional stakeholders have been involved in previous CEDS or other economic developments plans, but we wanted our 2024-2029 inputs to include the voices of people who brought other levels of professional or lived experiences.

Quantitatively we analyzed regional, state, and national data, and incorporated relevant studies and reports:

1. On the regional and state level, we analyzed and integrated the results of more than two dozen reports that studied the region's infrastructure, housing, transportation, workforce, education, broadband, public health, and climate resiliency.
2. Nationally, we used data from the American Community Survey, the Census Bureau, Argon National Labs, and ESRI.
3. We conducted original data analyses of the Pioneer Valley's demographic and socio-economic trends, and incorporated the results of internal research that was conducted through the CARES Act in the immediate post-COVID period. Much of that research is presented in Attachments A.
4. We included economic analyses conducted by allied agencies, such as Governor Healey's office, the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council, and the CEDS from neighboring regions, in particular Berkshire County, Franklin County, and the Capital Region Council of Governments in Hartford, Connecticut. The reports and studies that we integrated are listed in Attachment D.

Qualitatively, we gathered inputs from one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and surveys:

1. We spoke individually with 28 leaders in local government, state government, higher education, the private sector, and real estate. In the interviews, we obtained the leaders' candid feedback about the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (S-W-O-T). The list of interviewees is presented in Attachment C.
2. We conducted S-W-O-T-based focus groups on six specific topics that directly tie to the region's economic capacity and potential, including the gamut of education from pre-K to higher education; housing, spanning low-income public housing authorities to private developers in residential and commercial properties; current and developing workforce and training programs; economic conditions faced by smaller and rural communities; and future opportunities.

Our aim was to engage the professionals and practitioners who are actively involved in both executive leadership and the on-the-ground implementation. One of the more interesting focus groups we convened was called, "The Future Economy." This panel of cross-sector thought leaders shared their insights on how the Pioneer Valley's strengths could be creatively leveraged into new opportunities.

3. We conducted surveys with local governments throughout the region to understand their perspectives. The Pioneer Valley encompasses 43 separate communities ranging in size from the smallest rural town of Middlefield with 385 residents to the largest urban center of Springfield with more than 155,000 people. Of the 43 communities, 24 have populations of less than 10,000, 14 have populations of 10,000-40,000, and 5 have populations of more than 40,000. The economic challenges faced by smaller and rural communities are very different than those faced by their urban neighbors.

PVPV convened a cross-sector CEDS Strategy Committee to oversee and guide the process. The Committee was comprised of leaders in education, economic development, workforce development, government, housing, and private foundations. The Committee provided input to the S-W-O-T process as well as the identification of the priority areas, goals and objectives, and the metrics that would be used to monitor and track the implementation of the CEDS.

Snapshot of Economic Conditions in the Pioneer Valley

Using this approach, we identified current and emerging trends in the region. The following two sections, Current Conditions and Findings, provide more detailed information. Some highlights of what we learned from the data and other reports and plans included:

- The region's population in 2024 has grown by less than 1% since 2019. In fact, it has grown by less than 1% since 2010.
- The region's major employers in 2024 are substantially unchanged from 2019.
- The region's infrastructure (roadways, municipal buildings, and broadband) has had inadequate support because of constrained local resources.
- In addition to the region's established strengths in healthcare/social assistance, educational services, and manufacturing, we are seeing emerging strengths in technology fields, in particular quantum and quantum-adjacent fields, alternative technologies that reduce dependence on fossil fuels, financial technology, food science, and applied materials manufacturing.
- In Springfield, the largest city in the Pioneer Valley, 46 % of the population is Latino and 21% is Black. Ten years ago, Springfield was ranked by the University of Michigan as the most segregated city in the United States for White/Hispanic separation. Segregation remains a serious factor in the city's current economic conditions, and for the region, because one in four Pioneer Valley residents' lives in Springfield.

Some highlights of what we learned from the stakeholders included:

- Our ethnic and cultural pluralism are economic assets, differentiating the region from other areas and appealing to a broader demographic.
- Our location in the Knowledge Corridor that straddles Western Massachusetts and Connecticut is a major asset. The Pioneer Valley is home to 13 highly ranked colleges and universities, including the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, the flagship of the "U Mass" system, and a center for world-class research and development.
- There are exciting opportunities emerging in applied technologies that could re-energize the regional economy and attract new investments and residents.
- With shrinking populations resulting in shrinking tax revenues, many smaller communities report significant challenges in maintaining public services, especially with respect to K-12 education.
- Based on educational attainment, labor force participation, and small business formation, many minorities face barriers that impact their access to economic opportunity.

Synthesizing the quantitative and qualitative inputs, some issues that will require regional action to address include:

- The Pioneer Valley has persistent poverty among people of color.
- The labor force is not matching industrial demand in key sectors (e.g., healthcare) and public service (e.g., government, education)
- Housing is not matching regional needs, especially with respect to affordability and keeping pace with new household formation.
- The population growth is stagnant, and, in some areas, declining. If not for in-migration, primarily from immigrants and refugees, the region's population would have shrunk.
- The region's infrastructure, which is vital to all of the communities in the Pioneer Valley, needs investment to continue functioning effectively.
- There are more than 50 spoken languages in the region, including in the smaller communities. While this is an asset with respect to the region's pluralism, limited English proficiency is impacting K-12 education and workforce development.

Strategic Direction and Goals

Using the inputs gathered through our data analysis and stakeholder engagement, the Pioneer Valley Strategy Committee formed a vision for the Pioneer Valley of 2034:

Our vision for the future is to build an economy that works for everyone who lives and works in the Pioneer Valley. We will build on the Pioneer Valley's regional assets and many strengths, as well as set our sights on new areas for success, in order to build a robust and thriving economy in which all our residents have access to prosperity.

Sustainable, fair and substantive economic development will not be easy, but it is necessary. It will require a range of strategies tailored to the unique and varied needs of the 43 communities in the Pioneer Valley. There is no easy solution for some of our weaknesses and no single approach that will overcome issues such as deep-seated lack of access to opportunity or the region's housing shortages. Many of the strategies we are recommending may require years, if not decades, to mature. We are, however, committed to addressing these weaknesses and moving toward the realization of our vision.

We recognize that desiring different outcomes means doing things differently. We must work together to shift mindsets so that we don't merely create access to opportunity, but address structural inequities in economic, social and public policies. To catalyze this change, we propose to be guided by the following:

- ***Establishing a learning community where stakeholders, including residents, share their experience and build capacity to implement strategies that result in an economy that encompasses all our residents.***
- ***Recognizing that immigrants to our region are a unique and valuable resource, not only adding to the Pioneer Valley's population but contributing talent, experience, and vibrancy to the regional economy.***
- ***Proactively developing collaborative partnerships with a range of stakeholders from the public, non-profit, and private sectors, in urban and rural communities, with a focus on coalition-building to improve economic opportunities for all our residents throughout the region.***
- ***Shifting the paradigm in access to capital for underserved populations from philanthropic giving and lending to investing in people and communities.***
- ***Building the capacity of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and our partners to acquire tools and address barriers to advance social mobility, economic resilience, and disaster preparedness in the region.***
- ***Conducting analyses of both traditional data sources and alternative ones, such as data gathered through storytelling, focus groups, lived experiences, and annual evaluation of the CEDS implementation process.***

In order to achieve this vision, bold action will be required during the next five years. The Strategy Committee identified eight strategic priorities that will be implemented through the CEDS' goals and actions.

Strategic Priorities

- Social and economic mobility
- High-growth and emerging opportunities
- Workforce development
- Urban and rural strategies

- Business environment
- Population
- Infrastructure
- Economic investment

Goals:

- **Prioritize social and economic mobility**, acknowledging that poverty and lack of access continue to determine economic opportunities and outcomes for too many of the Pioneer Valley's residents.
- **Pursue high-growth and new opportunities**, adding new applied technologies, e.g. quantum and quantum-adjacent technologies, alternative technologies to generate power and reduce emissions, Artificial Intelligence (AI), financial technology, food science, and advanced materials to the region's existing strengths in healthcare/social assistance, educational services, and manufacturing.
- Recognize that urban and **rural communities** need different and complementary economic development strategies tailored to their needs.
- **Support small and mid-sized businesses** (SMEs) and entrepreneurs.
- Increase the number of people who make the Pioneer Valley their home, **reversing long-standing stagnant population growth**.
- Strengthen the region's **infrastructure**, both "hard" (e.g., water systems, broadband) and "soft" (e.g., access to childcare) to enable communities small and large, urban, suburban and rural alike, to pursue development opportunities and related investment, attract newcomers, and promote equity. This goal recognizes that deferred maintenance and lack of investment in these forms of infrastructure are threats that will continue to inhibit the region's growth if not addressed.
- Increase **economic investment** from the Commonwealth, the federal government, and the private sector to facilitate development in the region and grow jobs that provide sustainable wages by developing a strong, effective regional voice to advocate for the Pioneer Valley.

Future Opportunities

The next five years offer an array of unique opportunities to expand and broaden the region's economy. There is consensus that the Pioneer Valley has the resources and assets to excel in key areas that could improve many of the current economic conditions by creating good-paying jobs, reducing unemployment rates, improving workforce participation rates, increasing the regional Gross Regional Product, and helping to reverse flat population trends. Done thoughtfully, these opportunities will be environmentally compatible with the region's natural resources and quality of life, strengths that were identified by stakeholders across the board. Some of these include:

1. The technologies of tomorrow, including financial technology, life sciences, AI, quantum and quantum-adjacent technologies, food science, and specialized engineering, e.g., aeronautics, have the potential to spin off new companies, attract new talent, and grow the regional workforce.
2. There are existing sectors with high-growth potential, including food science, non-pharmaceutical biomanufacturing, advanced materials, and alternative technologies to generate power and reduce emissions.
3. Increased collaboration between institutions of higher education and communities they are in or near could establish the Pioneer Valley as a successful research and entrepreneurial environment.
4. A new coalition of 68 stakeholder organizations are collaborating with the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative to reposition Western Massachusetts as a leader in quantum technologies. The Pioneer Valley Quantum Innovation Hub will leverage research centers, businesses, and entrepreneurs and will expand workforce pipelines, including the minority workforce.

Evaluation Framework

Building an Economy that Works for Everyone will be evaluated using two sets of benchmarks. The first set consists of quantitative metrics of key socio-economic indicators that will allow PVPC to identify economic trends and measure progress toward implementing the priority areas and their accompanying goals and objectives. The second set consists of qualitative measures that will assess the progress of the programs and initiatives that support the goals. Both sets are presented in the Action Plan Matrix, Attachment B.

Each key indicator is assigned a rating of positive, negative, or neutral based on the most recent available data. An improvement of at least 1% is considered a positive trend; a decrease of least 1% is considered a negative trend; and trends between 1% positive and 1% negative are considered neutral. This will be effective in understanding regional changes over time. Rather than evaluating current-year statistics in isolation, this method will look at changes over a broader period, indicating whether trends are increasing or decreasing.

The qualitative benchmarks measure progress toward implementing projects and programs that are collaborative in nature. The CEDS will be the common agenda used by PVPC and participating stakeholder organizations to activate the strategies that will enable the Pioneer Valley to meet its goals of becoming more equitable, more robust, and more economically resilient.



WHAT IS A CEDS?

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy – or CEDS – is a tool to organize and coordinate a region’s economic development goals for the next five years. Built with the direct input from leaders and community members, the CEDS is a living document that increases a region’s access to funding resources, including those through the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) is the federally designated Economic Development District for Hampden and Hampshire Counties – the Pioneer Valley in Western Massachusetts – and is responsible for developing the Pioneer Valley CEDS. Using an inclusive and analytical process, the Pioneer Valley CEDS identifies the region’s economic development goals for 2024-2029 and lays out a suite of realistic, tactical actions to achieve them.

A CEDS is not meant to compete with, replace, or modify a region’s other economic development planning efforts. Rather, it is intended to comprehend them, incorporating their research, findings, and recommendations in the formulation of a region’s overarching economic development goals. In PVPC’s case, we incorporated more than two dozen other plans and reports that had a nexus to economic development, the most recent of which, *Accelerating Growth in the Pioneer Valley: A Prospectus for Transformative Economic Investment* and *The Pioneer Valley Labor Market Blueprint 2024-2025*, were completed, respectively, by the Western Mass Economic Development Council in March 2024 and the MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board in April 2024. We also incorporated information from PVPC’s *Redlines, Black Neighborhoods* report, completed in June 2024.



INTRODUCTION

In June 2019, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), the Economic Development District for the Pioneer Valley, released the Pioneer Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2019-2024. Titled *The Plan for Progress*, it presented goals and opportunities for prosperity and expansion that would create jobs and improve the entire region's economic outlook. Hopes were high.

By June 2020, the world's economy had shuddered to a halt.

As the dust was settling from the global pandemic, PVPC took a hard look at COVID-19's impact on the Pioneer Valley. In late 2020, with grant funding from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) through the CARES Act, PVPC began a project to identify factors affecting regional economic recovery. The work was multi-pronged. PVPC evaluated conditions in small and rural towns; undertook evidence-based economic-development scenario planning to identify industrial opportunities; convened a 35-member task force of cross-sector economic leaders to gather input and feedback; and canvassed 20 key members of underserved and BIPOC communities to align our efforts with these communities' needs.

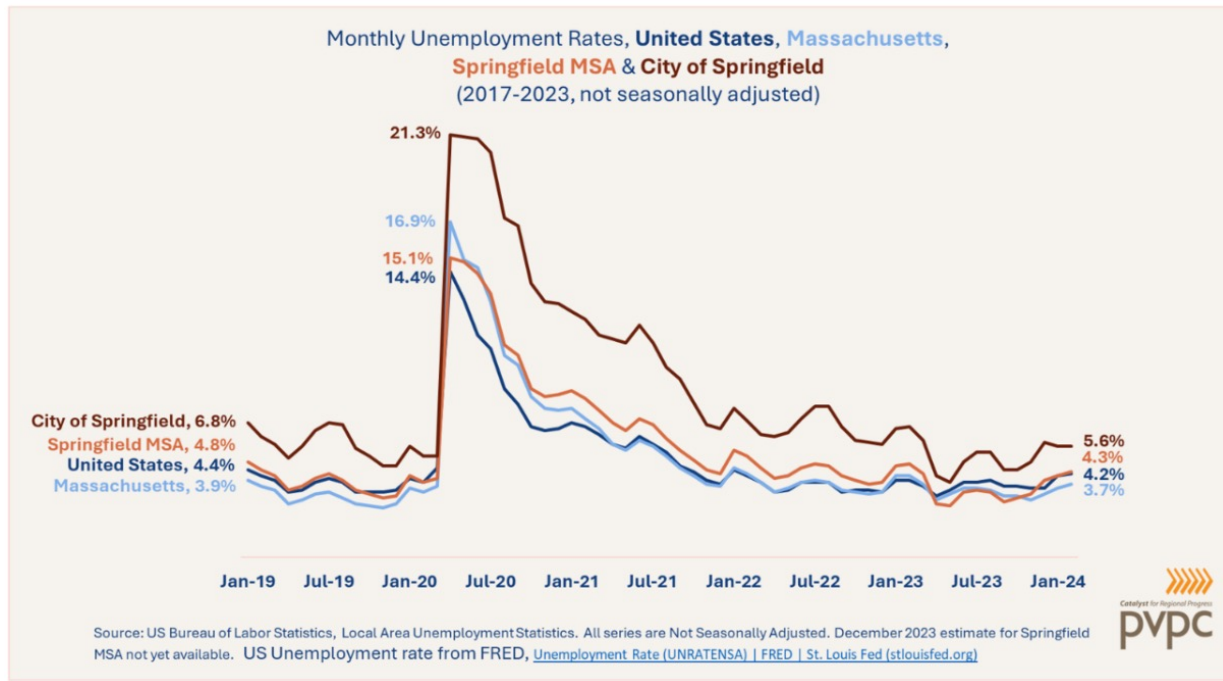
A central question that threaded through the work was the extent to which aspects of the pre-COVID economy had exacerbated the impacts of the pandemic. For example, in the year leading up to the pandemic, unemployment rates in

the Pioneer Valley were higher than the rest of the Commonwealth and the United States as a whole. The graph below shows the overall unemployment rates from January 2019 to January 2024 across all demographics in the City of Springfield compared to the Springfield MSA (Hampshire, Hampden and Franklin Counties), the Commonwealth, and the United States.

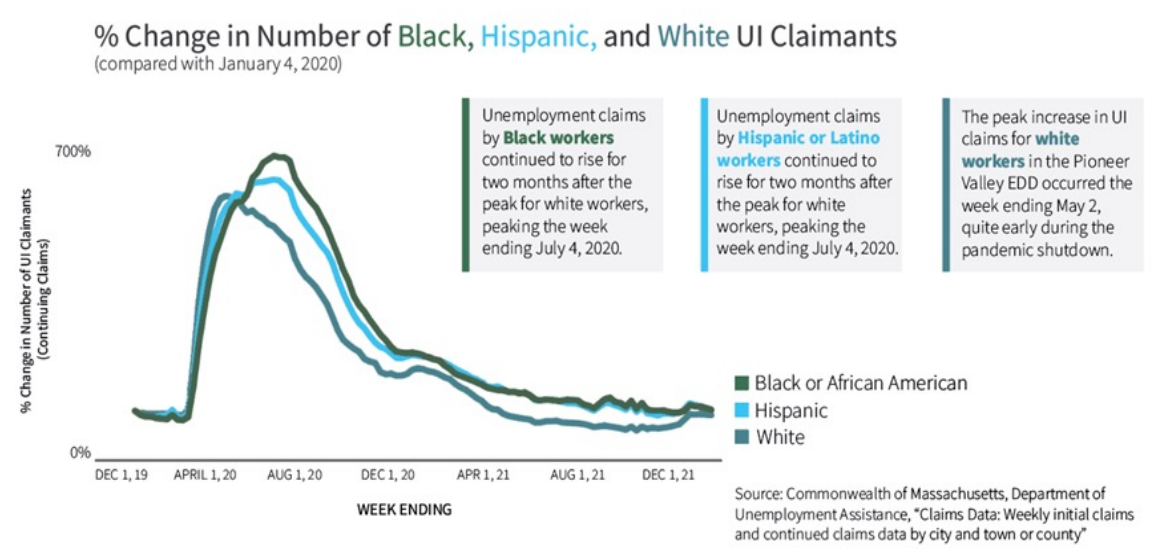
At the beginning of the pandemic, unemployment rates in Springfield peaked at a whopping 21.3%. This was 4.4 percentage points higher than Massachusetts, and 6.9 percentage points higher than the US. The bigger disparity, however, was the difference between Springfield and the Springfield MSA. At the beginning of the pandemic, the city's unemployment rate was 6.2% higher than the overall MSA in which it resides. This large difference continued through approximately January 2023, but even now, Springfield consistently has a higher unemployment rate. Springfield also has the highest percentage of people in the Pioneer Valley who identify as members of a minority. Is there a correlation?

Looking "underneath" the unemployment data in the graph below, a disaggregated comparison across Black, Hispanic and White unemployment insurance claims during the pandemic illustrates the differences experienced by each of these groups. The disaggregation of data helps to paint a truer picture of who was unemployed and for how long. Unemployment claims for White workers peaked the week of May 2, 2020, while

claims for Black and Hispanic peaked almost two months later. Additionally, claims were at a higher rate across Black and Hispanic populations throughout this timeframe.



Our data told us that the very people who had been hit hardest by COVID were the people who had historically been excluded from fully participating in the creation and distribution of the region’s wealth. Underserved communities, encompassing low-income and minority households, including the growing Hispanic and Latino population, have not had full access to wealth-building opportunities, including well-paying jobs and the resources that facilitate homeownership and successful small business creation.



While this reality would not have struck anyone in the region as new information prior to 2020 – and, indeed, was highlighted as a weakness in the previous CEDS from 2019 – COVID forced a reckoning with the ramifications of these inequities. These ramifications became even more urgent – and more incontrovertible – through analyses similar to the examples above. In summary, the work conducted through the CARES Act grant has led to a new understanding of the dynamics of the local economy and has provided a solid foundation for the new CEDS.

The many community leaders and organizational representatives who participated in the creation of the 2024-2029 CEDS echoed and reinforced the findings of the CARES Act work. The inequities and poverty caused by restricted economic mobility are significant factors in the region's current economic resiliency and will be limiting factors in its future growth. The CEDS Strategy Committee agreed that as we frame the region's goals and priorities for the next five years, we need to address these disparities and acknowledge them as a threat to our economic future. We need to build the regional economy to be as opportunity-rich, robust and resilient as it has the potential to become.

The 2024-2029 CEDS charts strategies for the region to leverage current and emerging opportunities while incorporating the inescapable lessons we learned from the global pandemic. The 2024-2029 CEDS is titled Building an Economy that Works for Everyone because the glaring reality is that the Pioneer Valley's economy has not worked for everyone – in fact, it has systematically excluded a significant percentage of its residents. The time has come for that to change. This region cannot become more resilient or move forward economically without policies and strategies that increase opportunities for all our residents. This year's Pioneer Valley CEDS has goals and strategies that directly address and promote this objective. Increasing economic opportunity is not merely the focus of the Pioneer Valley's new CEDS, it is the cornerstone.

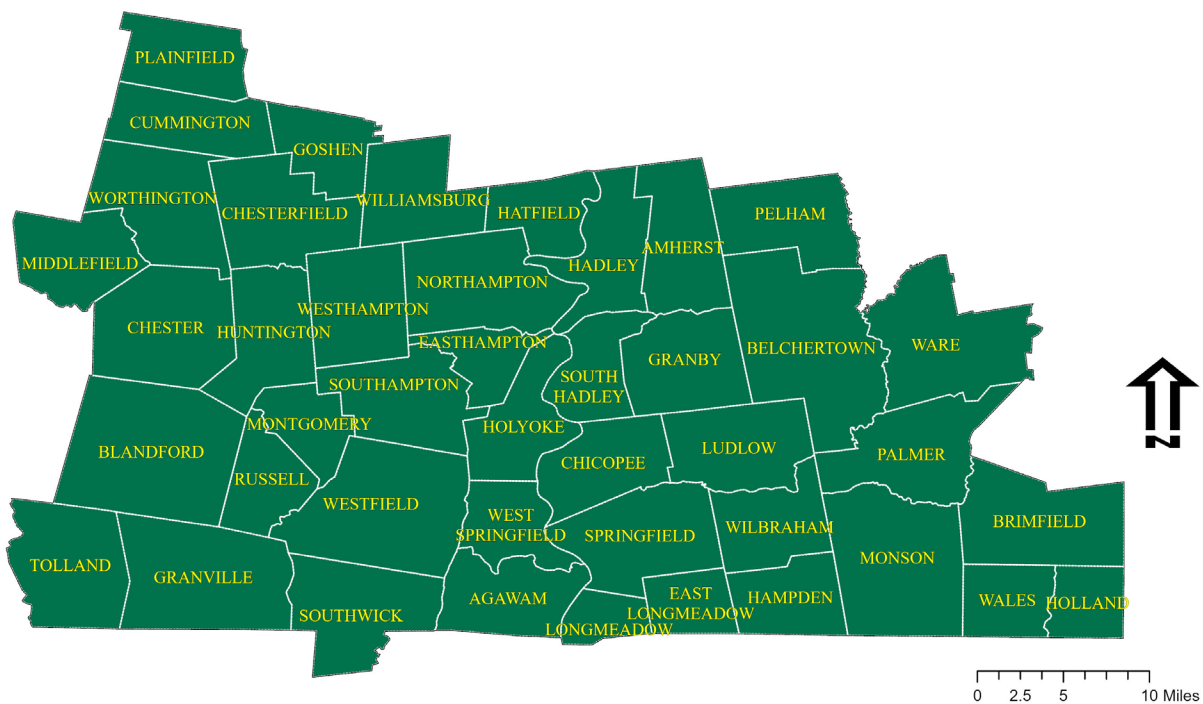


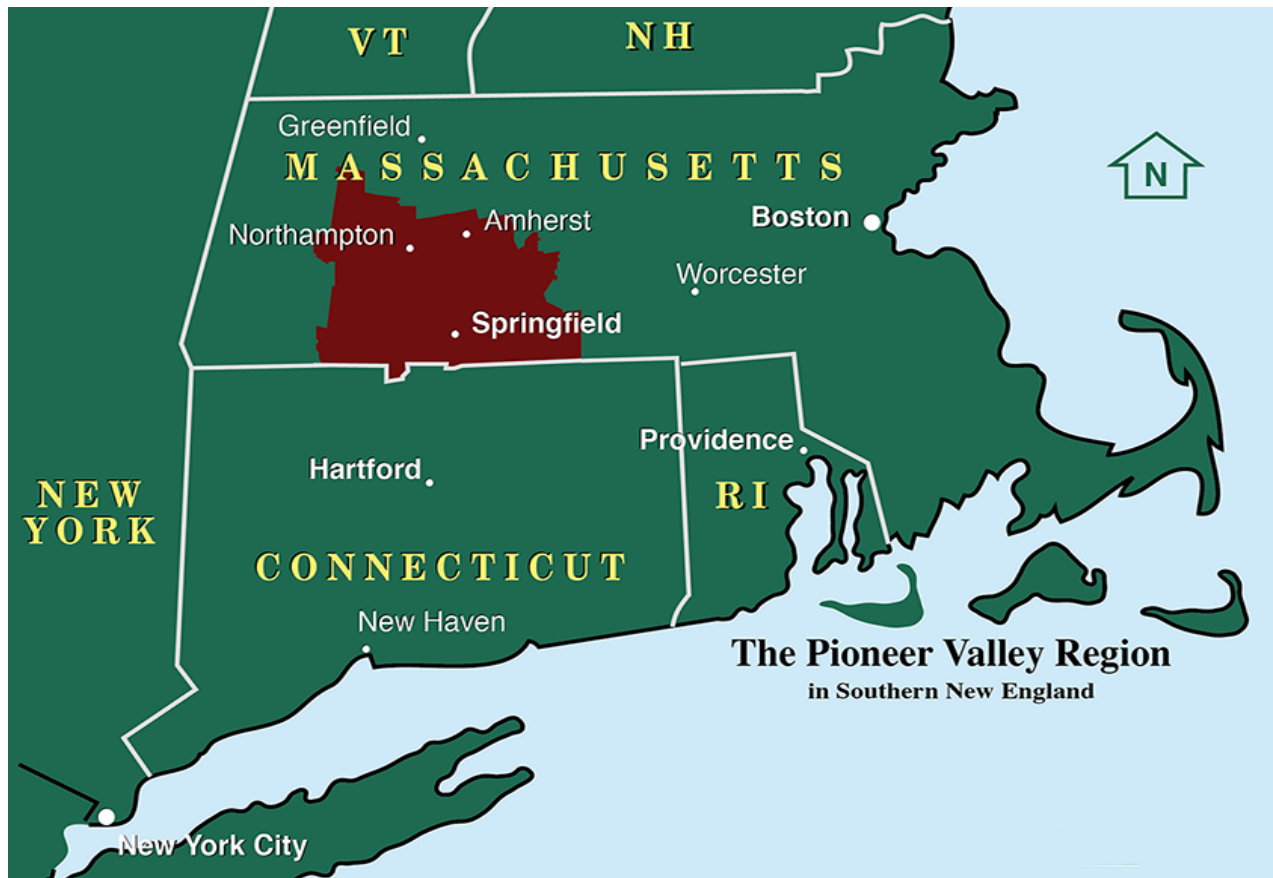
CURRENT CONDITIONS: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

A full presentation of the Pioneer Valley's current conditions and economic indicators, including demographics, income levels, industry sector activity, labor force, educational attainment, natural resources, and transportation is provided in the Summary Background (Attachment A) of this report.

The Pioneer Valley has many strengths and opportunities in its future, but the region's overall economic resilience shows vulnerabilities in several key areas: 1) stagnant population growth and poverty; 2) an overreliance on two primary sectors that are experiencing challenges in workforce recruitment and retention, and 3) the labor force, including labor force

The Pioneer Valley Region





participation rates, unemployment, and educational attainment. The following section provides the context for these conditions, with a discussion of some highlights, and a “deep dive” into the status of the Pioneer Valley’s disaster preparedness and economic resiliency planning, broadband implementation, workforce development programs, and new projects aimed at increasing social mobility and economic opportunity.

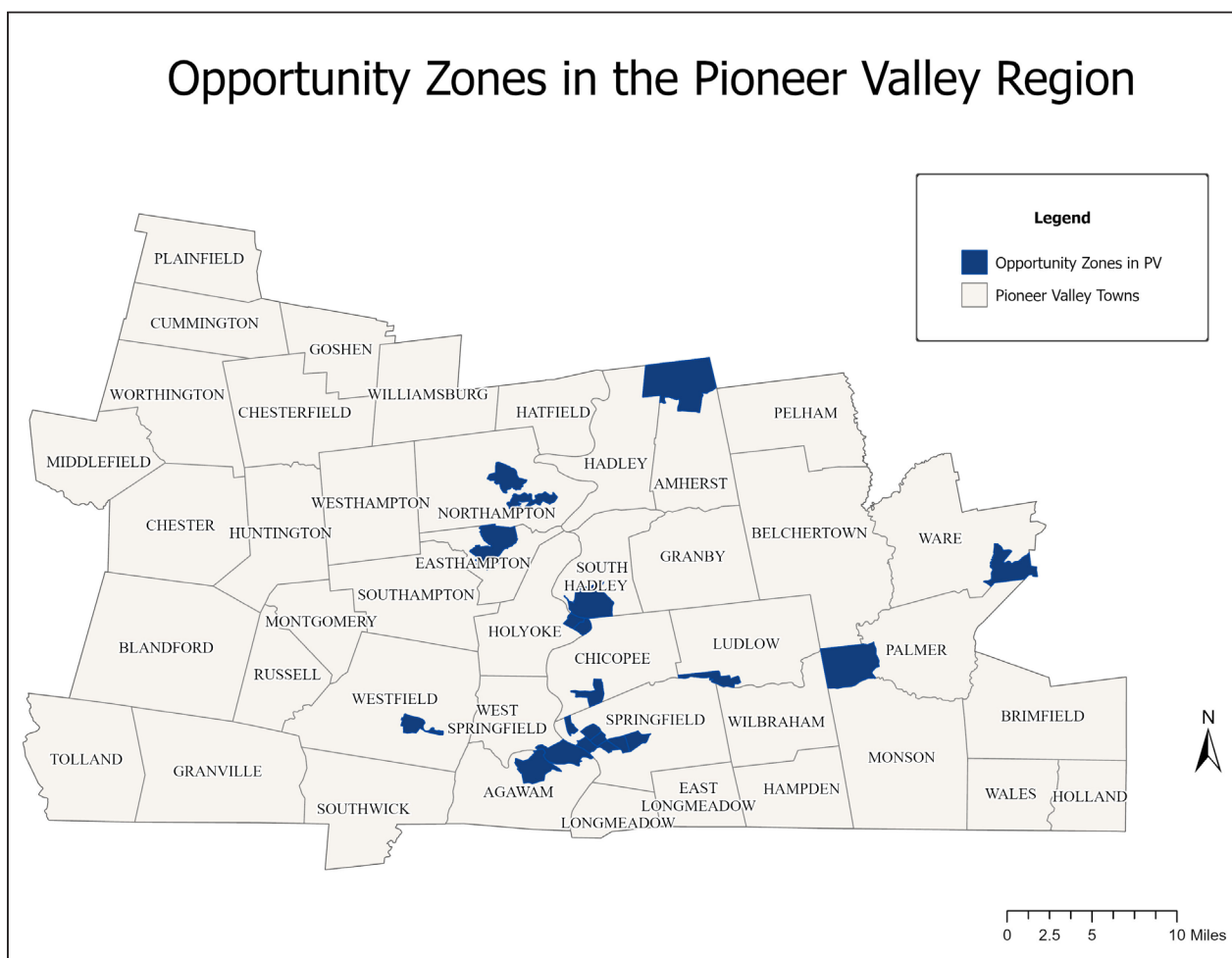
GEOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The Pioneer Valley region, comprised of Hampden and Hampshire Counties in Western Massachusetts, is nestled between Berkshire County to the west, Franklin County to the north, and Worcester County to the east. Its southern boundary is formed by the state line between Massachusetts and Connecticut. The region’s most prominent geographic feature is the Connecticut River, which bisects both counties on its way south from Canada into Connecticut and ultimately Long Island Sound. The region also includes significant areas of prime farmland, some of the most fertile in the nation, due to the richness of the glacial soils along the river.

The Pioneer Valley’s strategic location is an important regional asset. It sits at the crossroads of Interstates 90 and 91, providing excellent east-west and north-south connectivity. Bradley International Airport, the 2nd largest airport in New England, is within an hour of most of the Pioneer Valley’s communities. The region is connected by rail to points south, into Hartford, Connecticut, and the New York metro area; east, into the Boston metro area; and west into Albany, New York. Expansion of the east-west rail system is underway.

The region contains a mix of 43 urban, small, and rural communities, ranging in size from smallest rural town of Middlefield with 385 residents to the largest urban center of Springfield with more than 155,000 people. Of the 43 communities, 24 have populations of less than 10,000, 14 have populations of 10,000-40,000, and 5 have populations of more than 40,000.¹

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 created Opportunity Zones in 15 of the Pioneer Valley's 43 communities. Seven of the Zones are in the City of Springfield, with the balance distributed among Northampton (2), Chicopee (1), North Amherst (1), South Hadley (1), Ware (1), West Springfield (1), and Westfield (1). The Act provides a variety of tax incentives for the reinvestment of capital gains into businesses and development projects within the Zones. In Springfield, for example, the Zones are clustered in the downtown and north end of the city, encompassing the neighborhoods of Memorial Square, Old Hill, Liberty Hights and the Metro Center. In Westfield and Holyoke, the Zones are in the downtown districts, serving as a financing tool to bolster the cities' urban revitalization efforts.



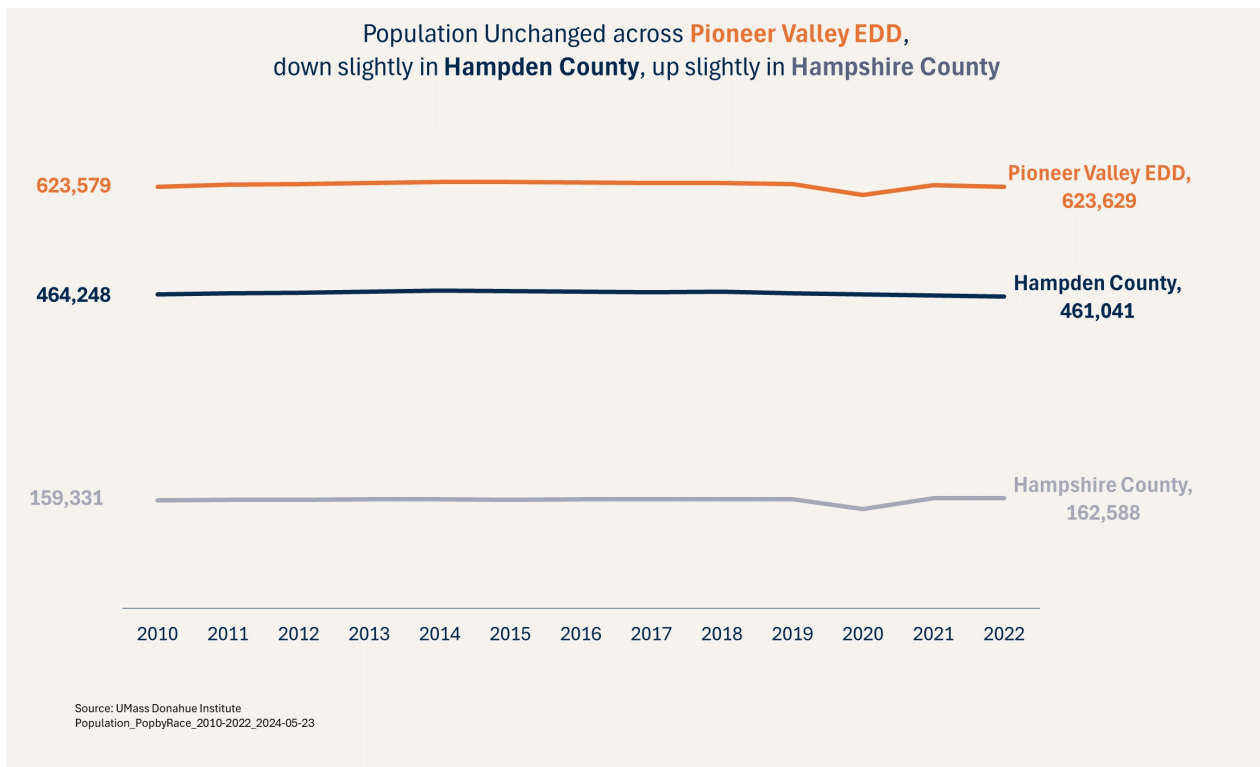
¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The most recent census data show that 623,629 people live in the Pioneer Valley, but the population is not spread evenly throughout the region. Hampden County's population at 461,041 is almost three times the size of Hampshire County's at 162,588. The majority of the population, approximately 57%, live in the region's five most populous communities. Hampden County has four of those communities – Springfield, Chicopee, Westfield, and Holyoke – while Hampshire County has one – Amherst. Hampshire County is the home of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and multiple private “name” colleges, including Smith, Mt. Holyoke, and Amherst; the presence of so many institutions of higher education is a factor in Hampshire County's demographic make-up as well as its economy.

POPULATION GROWTH

The Pioneer Valley's overall population growth is stagnant. It has been stagnant for more than ten years. Almost every year since the late 1990s has seen an out-migration of population; if not for immigration from a range of countries, the local population would have dropped to the point where it impacted state and federal funding.



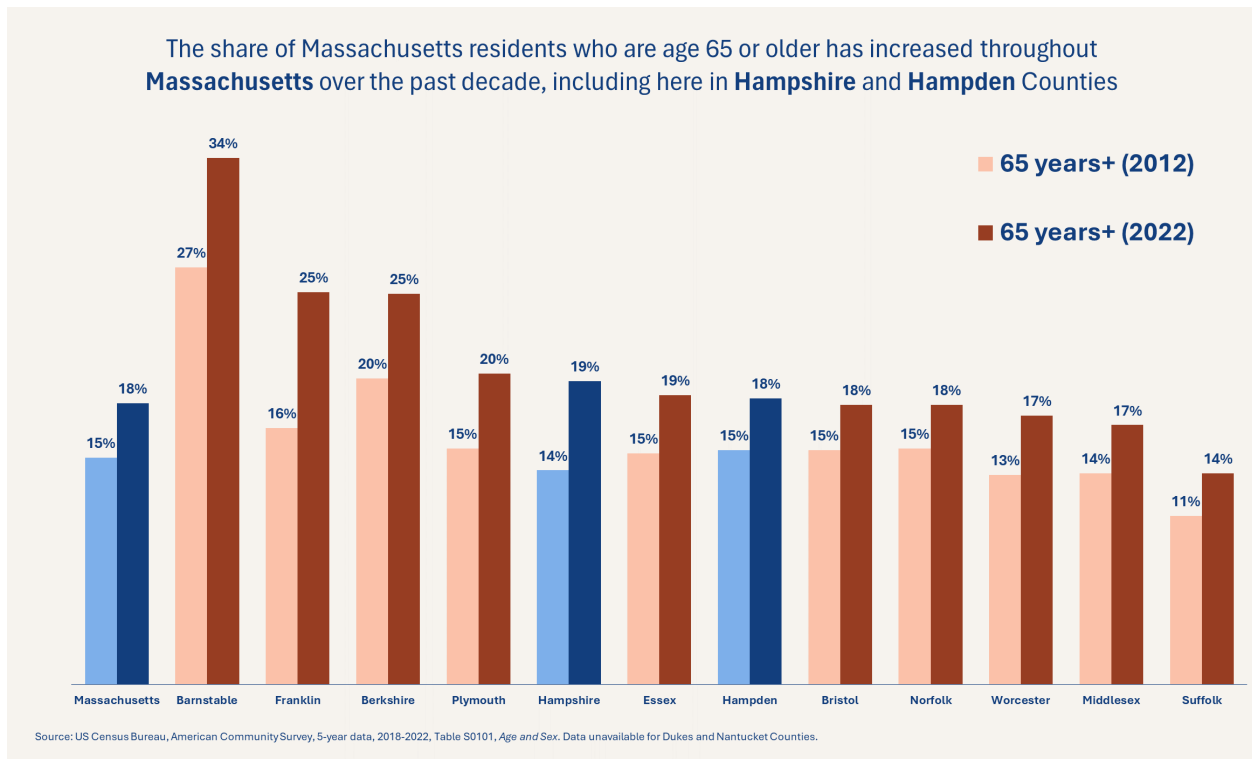
In some of the region's smaller and rural communities, the population has actually declined. The chart below shows select smaller communities which have lost population during the last twelve years. Within these communities, the population is also trending older, discussed in greater detail under Age.

Town	2010	2022	Change 2010-2022	% Change 2010-2022
Blandford	1,227	1,210	-17	-1.4%
Chester	1,339	1,220	-119	-8.9%
Huntington	2,184	2,069	-115	-5.3%
Montgomery	846	818	-28	-3.3%
Russell	1,784	1,631	-153	-8.6%

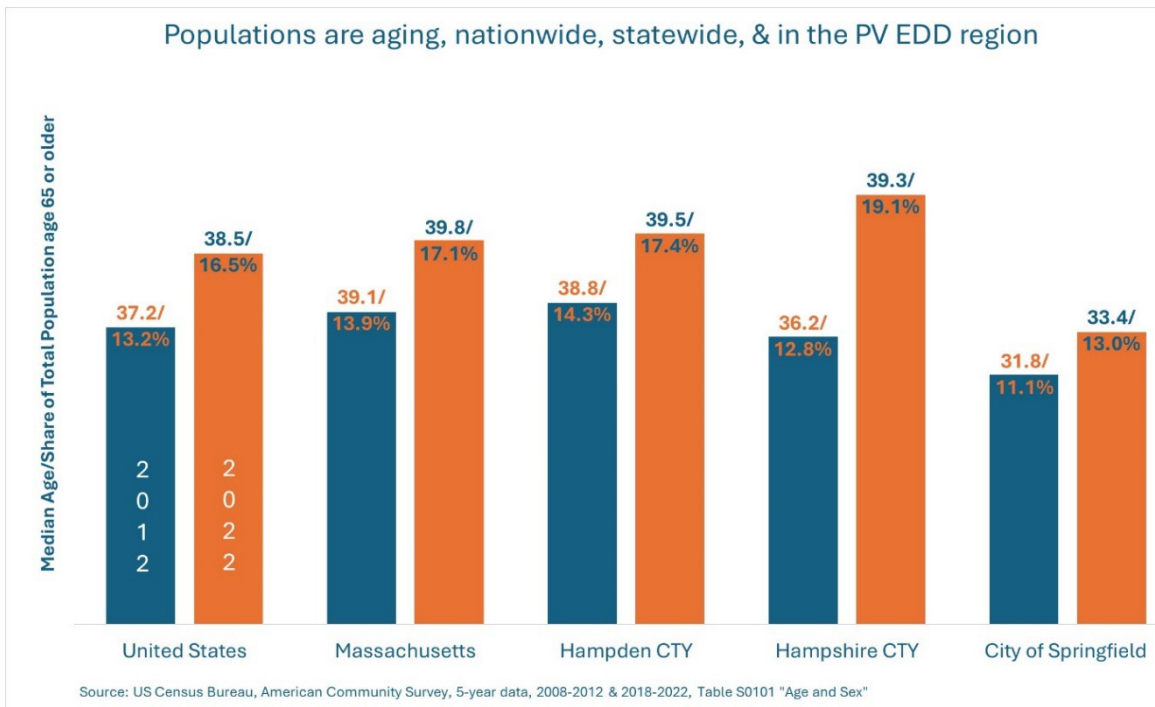
AGE

In addition to stagnant growth, the Pioneer Valley’s population has a higher percentage of older adults than Massachusetts averages. This is especially true for smaller and rural communities, where over 13% of the population is 75 and over.

A “graying” population has immediate impacts for K-12 education and long-term impacts for workforce development and labor force participation. With fewer families with children coupled with an increasing number of retirees and empty-nesters, the character of some of the smaller and rural communities is changing. The chart below shows the percentage of persons aged 65 and over in Hampden and Hampshire Counties compared with other counties in the Commonwealth.

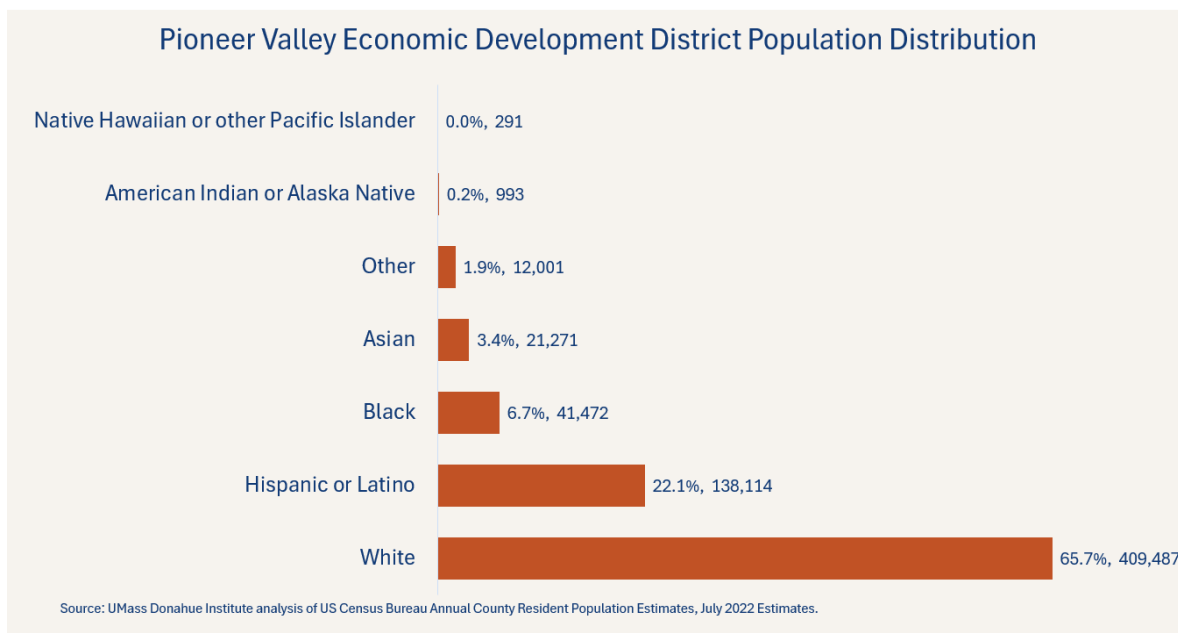


Except for the City of Springfield, the overall population of the Pioneer Valley is also aging at a greater rate than either the Massachusetts or United States averages. The chart below shows that Hampshire County has become progressively “gray” in the ten-year period between 2012-2022..



DEMOGRAPHICS AND ETHNICITY

More than 34% of the region’s residents identify as members of a minority, with the majority of these individuals identifying as Hispanic/Latino or Black. Geographically, the smaller and rural communities in both counties are overwhelmingly White while the urban centers are far less homogeneous, with two cities in Hampden County – Springfield and Holyoke – having a majority of minority residents. In Hampshire County, approximately 19% of the residents are members of a minority and in Hampden County, approximately 40%.



POVERTY

Poverty in the Pioneer Valley is largely tied to minority status and ethnicity. Springfield, Massachusetts, the region’s largest city, is in the top third of the most segregated cities in the United States. Data from the five years leading up to the pandemic show that poverty rates for communities of color were double the poverty rates for Whites in the same area and more than triple the rates of Whites in the Commonwealth overall. For persons who identified as Hispanic/Latino, the poverty rates were even higher.

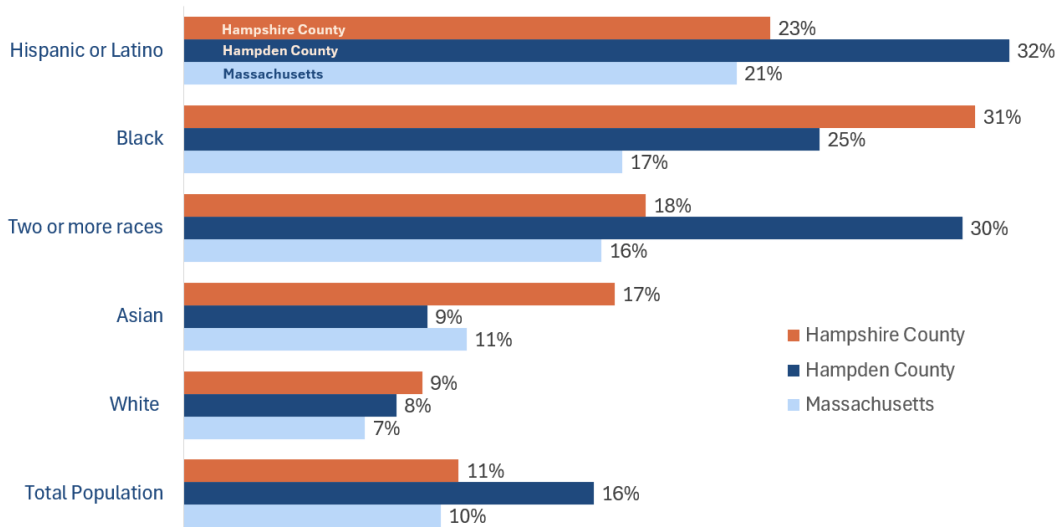
City/County/Region	Overall Poverty Rate	Black	Two or more groups	Hispanic or Latino	White
Springfield	25.5%	24.3%	29.5%	35.2%	12.5%
Massachusetts	9.8%	17.6%	15.5%	23.0%	6.7%
Hampden County	15.7%	24.1%	26.2%	33.5%	7.6%
Hampshire County	10.6%	20.2%	16.8%	17.9%	9.4%

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020

Additional research revealed that these disparities have been long-standing. The Census Bureau released a report on May 9, 2023, (<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2023/persistent-poverty.html>) which listed census tracts with persistent levels of poverty from 1989-2019. PVPC overlaid these tracts with demographic data regarding minority populations to gain a better sense of disadvantaged communities in Springfield. This analysis revealed that census tracts with persistent levels of poverty correlated 1:1 with areas where most residents were members of a minority.

The most recent data available show that five-year regional poverty trends continue to show significant disparities. Compared to Massachusetts averages the Asian community, current poverty rates in the Pioneer Valley are higher across all demographics. In Hampden County, poverty rates for people who identify as Hispanic/Latino are four times higher than the rates of people who identify as White; in Hampshire County, poverty rates for people who identify as Blacks were more than three times higher than people who identify as White.

Poverty Rates Across Hampshire County, Hampden County, and Massachusetts (2018-2022)



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year data, 2018-2022, Table S1701, Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months

Although masked by statistical averages, there are pockets of poverty in some of the Pioneer Valley's smaller and rural communities, which are predominantly White. Based on income levels which establish eligibility to receive Community Development Block Grant funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the communities of Ware and Chester have a number of households which are at or below 60% of the Area Median Income.

Business and Industry Overview

The Pioneer Valley region has been a hub of industrial activity since the 18th century. Today, the area is served by the Connecticut River – a navigable inland waterway – an international airport, an excellent road network, and an extensive east-west and north-south rail system that is slated for investment and expansion.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the power of the Connecticut River was harnessed for mills of all varieties. A skilled labor force developed, leading to technological advancements, particularly in metal crafting, that in turn supported industries such as machine manufacturing and printing. Starting in 1839, Springfield – the largest city in the Pioneer Valley then and now – was connected by rail to other cities and additional strengths in insurance and finance took hold.

The 19th century saw two industrial concentrations emerge which gained momentum during the 20th century and remain major players today: healthcare and education. Baystate Health is the largest healthcare provider in Western Massachusetts and is consistently one of the region's top employers. The Pioneer Valley is home to 13 highly ranked colleges and universities, the largest of which is the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, the "flagship" of the UMass system. At this writing, "meds and eds" are key sectors of the Pioneer Valley's economic identity.

In 2018, a new industry sector arrived in the region: casino gaming, including a new sports book. Originally slated to employ 3,000 workers, MGM Springfield employed 1,500 as of 2024. Although currently much smaller than other sectors, it was the first of its kind in the Pioneer Valley and represented a change in the region's leisure hospitality and entertainment capacity.

The regional economy also includes agriculture and food production. Although this sector employs only 1,935 people, approximately .6% of the region's workforce, the Pioneer Valley accounts for 57% of statewide agricultural productivity. One of the largest food distribution centers in Massachusetts in Springfield and supplies consumers throughout the Commonwealth. Pioneer Valley farmers produce vegetables, dairy products, meat, maple syrup, tobacco, and fiber. At the present day, many of them are still small family-run enterprises that sell direct to the consumer via farm stands, farmers markets and CSAs (community supported agriculture), as well as directly to food banks and restaurants. There has also been some development of value-added facilities to process local foods to create additional products.

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Currently, the region's top three industries by employment are healthcare and social assistance, educational services, and manufacturing. People across all demographics are employed in these sectors, but there are key differences in employment rates when viewed through the lens of disaggregated data, discussed below. Multiple stakeholders, including members of the Strategy Committee, expressed concern that there was an overreliance on two of the industries – meds and eds – and that this overreliance could be detrimental to the region's future economic resiliency. The data bear this out. Meds and eds account for 66.83% of the Pioneer Valley's total employment – 35.33% in meds, and 31.5% in eds. The manufacturing sector, by comparison, accounts for 10.35% of the region's total employment.

1. Health and social assistance

The healthcare/social assistance sector is the largest employer across all demographic groups in Hampden County and the second largest across all demographic groups in Hampshire County. In Hampden County, approximately 18.94% of all people who are employed work in this sector; in Hampshire County, the percentage is 16.39. Recent statistics from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development show that in Hampden County, which is 40% minority, 36.2% of workers in this sector are minority while in Hampshire County, which is 19% minority, 10.73% are.

Healthcare administrators report that there are concerning shortages in this sector. Recent specialized hiring programs have not attracted a sufficient number of applicants and retention of existing workers has been problematic. In order to increase workforce participation in this sector, Baystate Health and a consortium of partner agencies submitted a grant application in April 2024 to the EDA's Recompete Program; more information about the EDA proposal can be found in the **Workforce Development in Hampden and Hampshire Counties section**.

2. Educational services

The educational services sector is larger in Hampshire County, but is one of the prime industries across the region. In Hampshire County, approximately 19.5% of all people who are employed work in this sector, while in Hampden County, the percentage is almost 12. Recent statistics from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development show that the sector is predominantly White: in Hampden County, which is 40% minority, 23.7% of workers in this sector are minority, while in Hampshire County, which is 19% minority, 14.6% are. In smaller and rural communities in both counties, administrators in K-12 education report that they are experiencing workforce shortages, both in terms of qualified teachers and support staff.

UMass Amherst as an Economic Engine

According to a recent report from the Donahue Institute, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst contributed \$2.8 billion in economic activity to the region's economy in FY2022. As the report indicates: "UMass not only makes a direct contribution to the Massachusetts economy through the spending and jobs supported by its academic, administration, and construction activities, but also generates a 'ripple effect' that leads to an even larger impact in the economy as a result of demand on suppliers of goods and services as well as employee spending."

How does this look in our communities? The impact can be as specific as students revisioning the architecture of the Hampshire Mall, or as broad as thousands of students hitting the streets to volunteer in our region. One-third of the University's alumni stay in the region, bringing their talents, knowledge and skills to bear as members of our extended community.

UMass Amherst is the flagship and largest university in the system and has a unique role serving as a unifying convener, providing spaces and resources across Hampshire and Hampden Counties. The school is a magnet for talent both in and outside of the region, marked by an entrepreneurial spirit guided by UMass Amherst's research.

In addition to being the second-largest employer in the region, the institution is a major contributor to the innovation economy through leadership in advanced materials and manufacturing, applied life and health sciences, data and computational science, and the arts and creative economy.

The partnerships among UMass Amherst and regional organizations like chambers of commerce and economic development councils inform the work done across the region, supported by the intellectual capital drawn to UMass Amherst, are critical to the success of this region's economy, present and future.

3. Manufacturing

The manufacturing cluster, encompassing materials, precision, and advanced manufacturing, is one of the Pioneer Valley's long-standing strengths. Today, the sector employs approximately 11.15% of the workforce in Hampden County and 8.37% in Hampshire County. Recent statistics from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development show that in Hampden County, which is 40% minority, 29.8% of workers in this sector are minority, while in Hampshire County, which is 19% minority, 7.65% are. The manufacturing sector, in particular advanced materials, was identified in the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council's March 2024 "white paper" as ripe for investment and growth.

RETAIL AND SMALLER EMPLOYERS

Retail, encompassing mom-and-pop storefront businesses up to and including big-box national chain stores, is present throughout the Pioneer Valley. Many of the smaller and rural communities which participated in our stakeholder input hoped to increase retail activity in their local economies. Approximately 11.3% of all people who are employed in Hampden County work in retail. In Hampshire County, it is 10.4%. Recent statistics from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development show that in Hampden County, which is 40% minority, 25.9% of workers in retail are minority, while in Hampshire County, which is 19% minority, 11.2% are minority, while in Hampshire County, which is 19% minority, 11.2% are.

The small business sector plays an important role in the national economy.² Small businesses have accounted for approximately 66% of all job growth during the past 25 years and 50% of the national GDP.³ In general, small businesses have not been one of the Pioneer Valley's strong suits. In 2012, compared to the U.S. average of 30%, the percentage of small- and micro-businesses in the Pioneer Valley was 15%, approximately half. The percentage of minority-owned small- and micro-businesses, however, was even lower than the overall regional average; PVPC's research showed that in 2012 only 14.0% of small businesses in the Pioneer Valley were minority owned.⁴ Research is currently underway to assess the status of small businesses, including minority-owned small businesses, in the post-COVID regional economy.

WORKFORCE OVERVIEW

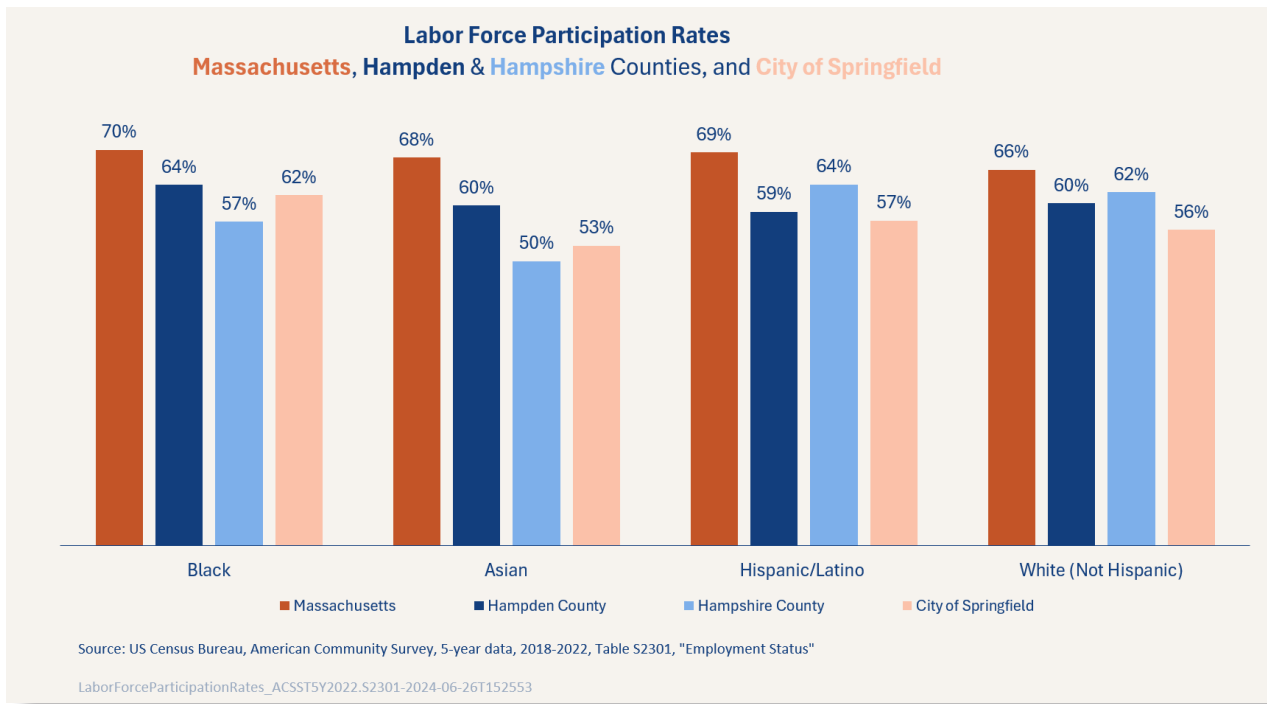
Labor Force Participation Trends

The Industry Overview section above describes overall differences in employment between the number of White and minority workers in the region's major industrial sectors. The chart below provides a disaggregated comparison of labor force participation rates within the minority population. Compared to Massachusetts, the Pioneer Valley's overall labor force participation is lower, possibly due to the increasing number of older persons and retirees, but it is markedly lower for persons who identify as Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian, and it is the lowest for persons who identify as two or more groups. Notably, within each region, labor force participation rates are fairly consistent across all demographic groups. In most geographies participation rates for Black and Hispanic/Latino workers slightly surpass rates for non-Hispanic white workers.

² PVPC is using the Small Business Administration's criteria to define the size of micro and small businesses.

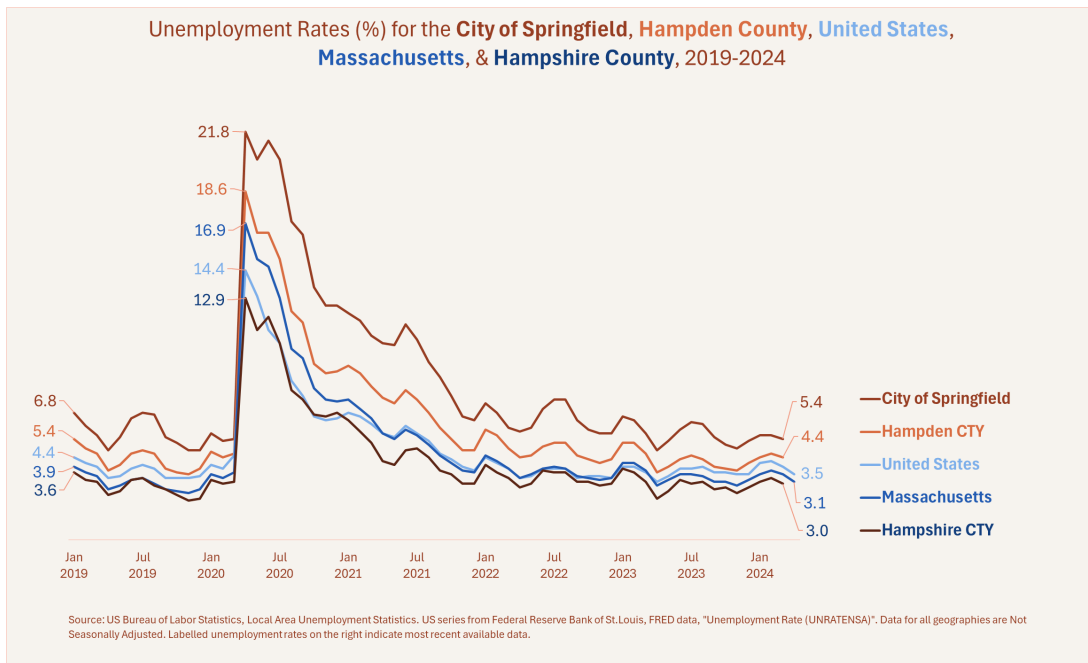
³ "Exploring Business," University of Minnesota (2016) at <https://open.lib.umn.edu/exploringbusiness/front-matter/publisher-information/>

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

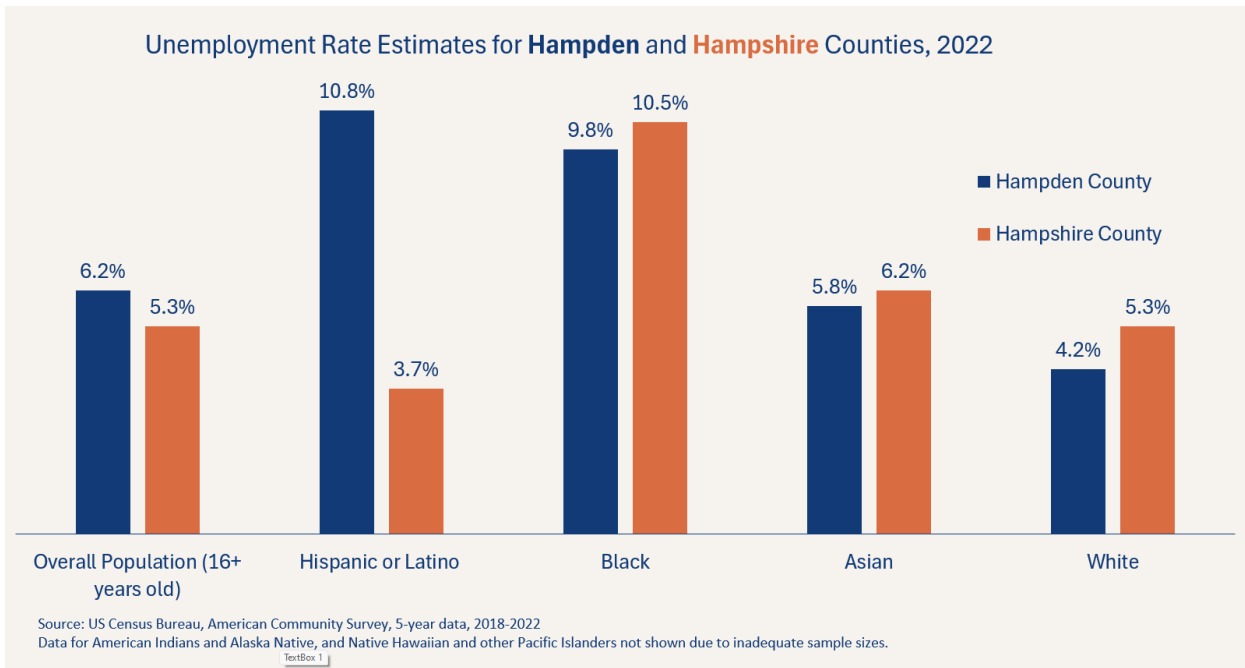


UNEMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Although the region’s current unemployment rates are lower than the period that preceded COVID-19, and certainly during COVID-19, the rates for the City of Springfield and Hampden County are still stubbornly higher than both Massachusetts and United States rates. The chart below shows unemployment rates for the five-year period 2019-2024. Markedly higher across all periods are the rates for the City of Springfield. Hampshire County’s rates are lower than Massachusetts and United States rates for the five-year period, again likely reflecting the higher-than-average percentage of persons who are not in the labor force due to age.



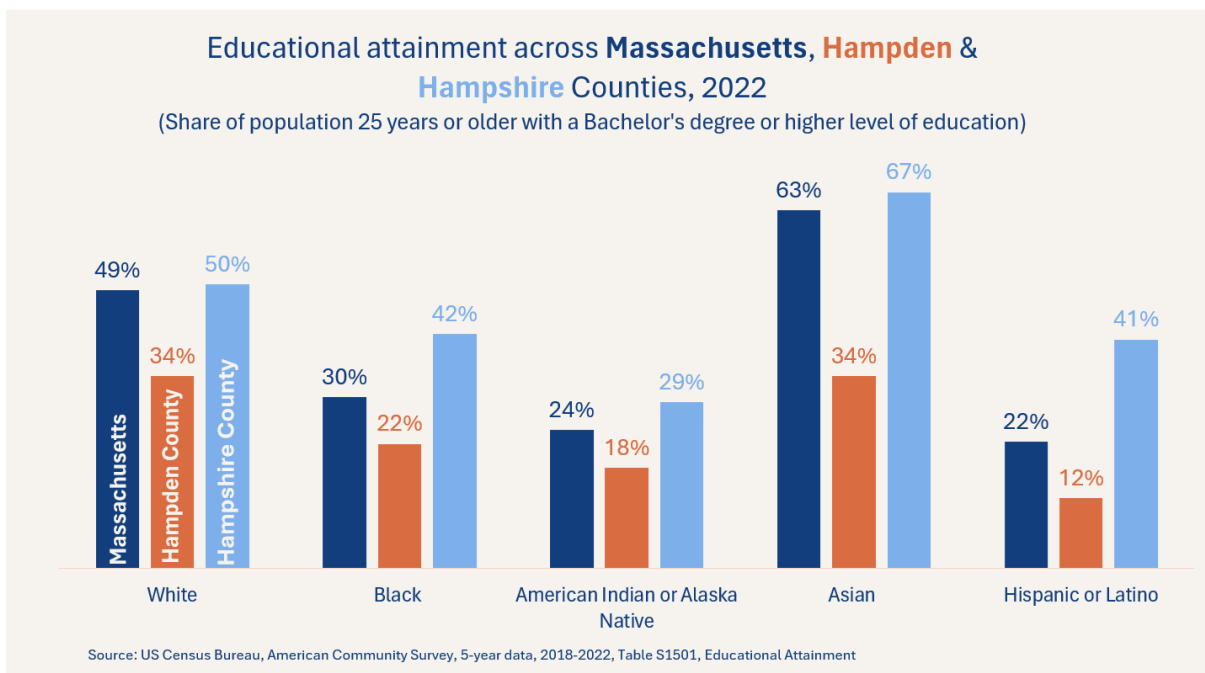
In reviewing the most recent disaggregated data for unemployment in the two Pioneer Valley counties alone, rates in Hampden County, where 40% of the residents identify as minority, are 2-3 times higher for Blacks, Hispanic/Latino, and two or more groups than for Whites.



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

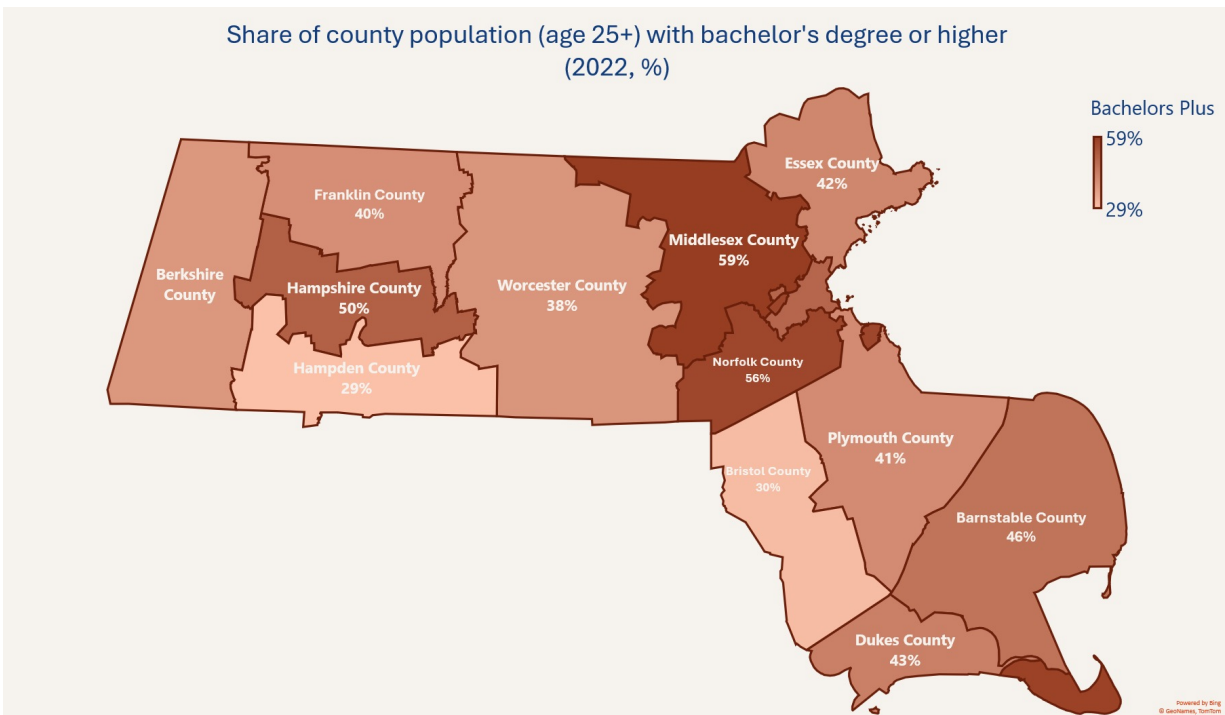
The overall educational attainment percentages of the Pioneer Valley’s population lags Massachusetts’ percentages. Hampshire County, whose population is almost 1/3 the size of Hampden’s, has more than double the percentage of people who obtain graduate or professional degrees. The disparity between the two counties is due to the presence of the University of Massachusetts and multiple private colleges in Hampshire County. In aggregate, the institutions of higher education in the Pioneer Valley generate more than 10,000 undergraduate and advanced degrees each year.

The City of Springfield has the highest percentage of persons with less than a 9th grade education and the lowest percentage of persons who obtain a graduate or professional degree. It exceeds Massachusetts averages in the percentage of persons whose attainment level ends with a high school degree.



Disaggregated data for persons who obtain a bachelor's degree or higher show that Hampshire County's statistics across all demographic groups are higher than Hampden County and Massachusetts averages, but they soar for students who identify as Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Black, or identify in two or more groups.

Looking more broadly at counties across the Commonwealth, Hampden County has the lowest percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher.



The majority of the stakeholders who participated in this year's CEDS community engagement were aware of the population, industrial, and workforce conditions described above. They were equally aware of the conditions' ramifications on the long-term economic health of the Pioneer Valley. In particular, the ramifications of the unemployment and educational attainment trends are on the radar of the region's community colleges, business leaders, workforce development providers, local elected officials, and wraparound service providers.

Collaborative efforts are underway to create innovative educational and workforce programs that will focus on the specific needs of the minority populations and other underserved communities. Those efforts are discussed in detail in the section on **Workforce Development in Hampden and Hampshire Counties** later in this document. Other efforts to address these communities' unequal access to wealth-building opportunities, especially with respect to resources for successful small business creation, are discussed in the section on **Creating an Economy that Supports Social and Economic Mobility**. Lastly, this collective awareness formed the basis for many of the regional goals and objectives that are identified in the **Strategic Direction** section.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE PRE-DISASTER MITIGATION PLANNING

The PVPC has connected sustainability and disaster preparedness planning to economic development for the last 25 years. Beginning in the early 2000's, the Pioneer Valley region has been working to adapt to changing conditions. From 2012 to 2014 the PVPC collaborated with the Capitol Region Council of Governments in Hartford to secure \$4.4 million in regional sustainability planning funds which advanced catalytic projects in our core cities and funded updates to our existing regional plans as well as supporting developments of missing plans including our award-winning regional housing plan. This level of planning contributes to community resilience by creating an environment for regional economic prosperity by managing risk and anticipating the future.

Our region has been experiencing extreme temperatures and flooding inland, with extreme heat recently overtaking concerns about extreme cold. Changes in precipitation patterns, and consequent changes in the patterns of river flows, particularly in the Connecticut River and its network of tributaries are the major causes of flooding. Changes in temperatures can have impacts on the rural beauty that drives seasonal tourism and characterizes this region. Summer season temperature changes may threaten the attractiveness of the region as both a haven from urban heat and an area with pristine recreational lakes (as elevated lake temperatures increase the risk of algal blooms).

Thanks to our forward-thinking regional plans that have effectively catalyzed regional and local action, our municipalities have agreed to actively pursue siting new technologies for non-fossil-fuel-based power generation in our region. We have been proactive in a state initiative that incentivizes reductions of CO₂ and certain gases in Massachusetts municipalities and have assisted our member municipalities to apply for millions of dollars of federal funds to take further action.

Unintended Consequences of Colliding Policies

Investing in new tools and technology can often result in conflicting policies that have both short-term and long-term implications. While the goal of modernization and sustainability is crucial for future generations, the immediate economic impact on local businesses can be significant. This delicate balance between progressive environmental policies and economic development is a challenge many cities face today.

A prime example of this complex dynamic can be seen in Northampton, Massachusetts. The city has imposed a moratorium on expanding its natural gas infrastructure to align with its smart energy policies and reduce fossil fuel dependency. While this initiative is commendable for its long-term environmental benefits, it has inadvertently created substantial short-term economic challenges.

Alan Wolf, Chief of Staff to Northampton Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, noted the downtown's empty storefronts, many without any natural gas hookups or with hookups of the wrong size. Every dollar counts for small startup shops and businesses, and they often cannot afford the significant costs associated with a full energy upgrade before they can even start operating. The decision to stop expanding natural gas infrastructure means no new investments are being made, leaving potential business owners facing the daunting prospect of substantial initial costs to retrofit their spaces with alternative energy sources.

The financial burden of these upgrades can be overwhelming, discouraging new business ventures and causing prime downtown storefronts to remain vacant. This lack of vibrant business activity affects the local economy and undermines the city's overall economic health. Northampton's experience underscores the need for new policy to be implemented incrementally and with careful navigation. Providing incentives or financial support for energy upgrades could

help mitigate these unintended consequences, ensuring that the push for sustainability does not come at the expense of economic vitality. The experience in Northampton serves as a valuable lesson in the complexities of policy planning, emphasizing the importance of supporting a green and thriving local economy.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

A decrease in agricultural productivity and reduction in the availability of affordably priced housing are two of the most urgent economic concerns for the region. The Greater Connecticut River Valley is home to the most farmland in any region of the Commonwealth, coming in at 130,000 acres. Farming and agricultural revenues are important parts of the economy and identity of the region. Temperature and precipitation pattern changes may make it difficult to continue the cultivation of crops historically grown in the area while creating the opportunity to transition toward new crops. Pressures such as loss of pollinators, extreme storms, and invasive species and pests introduce further uncertainty into the agriculture industry, which is already facing economic pressures. An increase in demand for housing and a decrease in supply negatively impact housing affordability. Relocation due to direct damage to existing housing or other economic pressures drives increasing demand. Direct physical damage from weather events and higher construction costs needed to increase resilience may limit the availability of affordably priced housing. This region has a high potential inland flood risk to housing. Both demand and supply effects raise rental and ownership prices, which can effectively limit options for affordably priced housing, particularly for low-income populations.

PVPC is working to mitigate risks and build the capacity of our member municipalities and collaborators in the private sector. We worked with the city of Northampton and the town of Longmeadow to integrate reductions of CO₂ and certain gases into their capital improvement planning process and are collaborating with the Emerald Cities Collaborative and the Western Mass Economic Development Council to train minority and women owned business enterprises to take advantage of the work related to implementing new technologies in these fields.

With respect to human vulnerability, reduction in food safety and security and health effects of extreme storms and power outages are the most urgent impacts in the Greater Connecticut River Valley region. Here, local agricultural supplies and economies are more heavily dependent on local food production. The region accounts for 57 percent of statewide agricultural productivity and could see key commodity crop yields decline by eight percent by 2030 and 20 percent by 2070. Food safety concerns such as spoilage and bacterial contamination are also associated with high temperature events and risk of power outages.

As mentioned previously, one of the largest food distribution centers in Massachusetts is located in Springfield and supplies consumers throughout the Commonwealth. It is located within the 100-year floodplain of the Connecticut River, making it vulnerable to flooding and potentially leading to interruption of food supply chains. Flood risks also directly threaten human health through increased risk of injury and disease both during and after the event. These impacts are also disproportionately distributed in the region. Linguistically isolated populations and minority populations are respectively 20 percent and 21 percent more likely to experience health effects of extreme storms and power outages in the region compared to the rest of the population. This disproportionality comparatively elevates the urgency of these impacts when compared with others in the Human sector.⁵

⁵ Top Impacts in the Greater Connecticut River Valley Region | Mass.gov

With respect to environmental vulnerability, the region's natural resources are expected to face significant pressure. The most urgent natural environment sector risks are shifting distribution of native and invasive species, freshwater ecosystem degradation, and forest health degradation. The three are closely related—shifts in precipitation and temperature will alter existing biogeochemical cycles that support viable forest and freshwater habitats for native species to thrive and may consequently make it viable for invasive flora and fauna to thrive. Changes to temperature and precipitation regimes will shift growing seasons and impact nutrient availability, forcing forest ecosystems to transition and potentially diminishing the ecosystem services they provide. Changing flow patterns of waterways due to seasonal shifts, increased nutrient loading and harmful algal bloom growth, and increased contaminant concentrations during drought conditions threaten freshwater ecosystems. All of these ecosystem impacts could shift the competitive balance of native and invasive species, and extreme weather events could make ecosystems more vulnerable to pests and disease, weakening the ability of native flora and fauna to adapt to new conditions.

Natural resources play an important role in this region in terms of the abundance of natural areas compared to the rest of the Commonwealth, and connection of natural resources to the economy through tourism and agriculture. Berkshire County and parts of the Pioneer Valley region are home to the most miles of cold-water fisheries streams of any region in the Commonwealth. Coldwater species occurrence probability may decrease 42 to 77 percent by 2070. Forests cover over one million acres in the region. Other threats include the degradation of ecosystem service flows from forests through habitat transition (driven by different temperature and precipitation regimes) and increased mortality from pests, pathogens, and invasive species as well as more extreme weather (e.g., ice and windstorms). Adaptation to these impacts is ongoing, however the scale of resources in the region requires significant attention to adequately address these risks.⁶

With respect to governance, the key impacts will be an increase in the costs of responding to weather-related migration and a reduction in state and municipal revenues. Such migration is an emerging risk for Massachusetts, but the Pioneer Valley has direct experience with this impact in the region. In 2017 and 2018, Holyoke—the Massachusetts city with the highest concentration of people of Puerto Rican descent in the contiguous U.S.—welcomed 142 Puerto Rican households permanently displaced and hundreds more temporarily displaced by Hurricane Maria.

Impacts on governance are exacerbated in portions of our region by the relatively small municipal operating budgets. Regional cooperation will be important for facing the challenges posed by new and changing conditions. The region could face significant costs as receivers of migrants from other areas of the Commonwealth (particularly areas at risk of sea level rise) and beyond. While new populations can bring benefits to receiving communities, the potential costs of such migration include specialized housing provision, both short-term and medium-term; social services; increased educational costs to school systems; and pressure on existing public infrastructure related to potentially abrupt population increases. Increase in demand for State and Municipal Government Services, even for the existing population, is another impact with projected major consequences, with the potential for disproportionate exposure. For this region there could be increased need for MassHealth, food security support, and emergency response. Many of these impacts can be expected to be concentrated among those residing in low-income block groups.⁷

⁶MA Assessment

⁷MA Assessment

PRE-DISASTER MITIGATION PLANNING

While western Massachusetts is not prone to natural disasters, we are a region well-known for our commitment to regional planning because we want to understand threats and mitigate and manage risks. In the early 2000's the Commonwealth of Massachusetts committed to hazard mitigation planning, and the PVPC has worked with our member municipalities to assure that all 43 cities and towns have up to date Hazard Mitigation plans. A review of these plans, as well as the Massachusetts Assessment, shows that localized flooding due to increased and unpredictable precipitation events, temperature extremes, including slow but steady increases in extreme heat, and snow and ice storms are the most common natural hazards in our region.

PVPC, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and each municipality is working to mitigate these risks. When Massachusetts launched the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) initiative, PVPC was once again out front assisting our member municipalities to apply for certification to understand local risks and make the cities and towns eligible to apply for MVP Action grants. Our region has secured more than \$18.7 million in MVP Action grant funding, specifically designed to mitigate risks and assist municipal officials and collaborators to plan for recovery before disasters happen. We are continuing to lead with work on the Commonwealth Resilience Handbook as well as facilitating several MVP 2.0 processes on behalf of our member municipalities and neighboring communities.

BROADBAND

Identifying the Telecommunication Needs of the Pioneer Valley

In 2023, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), the state's broadband agency, engaged in a community engagement process to gather information to inform the state's digital plan. As part of this process, stakeholders and residents in Hampden and Hampshire counties provided information through online surveys and in-person focus groups regarding the digital needs of the region. The needs identified in the state's digital report accurately reflect the needs of the region.

In its state digital plan, Massachusetts established a framework to provide context for these needs. Similarly, this framework also applies to the needs of the region. For residents of Hampden and Hampshire counties, the following conditions must exist:

- Availability – every location has high-speed internet that is available.
- Adoption – every resident can utilize and afford the internet.
- Quality of Service – every location has reliable service.

The lack of these conditions directly maps to five specific categories of digital needs for the Pioneer Valley region:

1. Broadband availability and affordability – the need for availability and affordable access to fixed and wireless broadband technology.
 - Availability: A significant number of residents do not have internet at home. 45% of respondents access the internet at libraries or community centers; 43% access the internet from a friend or family member's home.
 - Affordability: Statewide, 61% of respondents without internet subscriptions cited cost as a reason for not having an internet subscription at home. The regional average in western Massachusetts for an internet plan is \$72/month. Statewide, 52% of respondents shared that it was either somewhat hard or very hard to pay their internet bill.
 - Quality: Of those respondents with internet service at home, only 72% indicated that the service is good enough to meet their households' needs. This is likely higher in certain neighborhoods in urban areas and in rural areas of Hampden and Hampshire counties.

2. Device availability and affordability – the need for availability and affordability of consumer devices and technical support for these devices.
 - Devices: 15% of survey respondents reported having insufficient devices at home to meet all the needs of their households. 33% of respondents statewide cited a lack of devices as a reason for not having an internet subscription at home. Only 57% of respondents can pay for a laptop or desktop computer that costs at least \$250; 14% of respondents indicated they can afford a device exceeding \$1,000. Of those with devices, respondents identified the inability to keep up with technical developments regarding their devices as significant.
3. Digital literacy – the need for skills and knowledge to use the internet and devices.
 - Digital Literacy/Skills: Respondents reported an interest in a broad range of digital skills support. There is frustration with the lack of digital skills and many respondents, especially older adults, reported relying on family and friends for help. There is a need for more classes and opportunities to learn digital skills and effectively use the internet, including in formats and languages appropriate to different demographic groups.
4. Online privacy and cybersecurity – the need for awareness and use of measures on the part of individuals to maintain online privacy and maximize cybersecurity.
 - Privacy and cyber security: Statewide, 86% of respondents were somewhat or very concerned about internet safety. Fear of stolen data ranked highest as the cause for concern over internet safety, with 91% of respondents citing this concern. Statewide, 27% of respondents reported that they are unaware of ways to stay safe online.
5. Online accessibility – the need for online access to public resources and services.
 - Accessibility of Public Resources: 85% of respondents reported poor performance while accessing online government services.

The marginalized populations in the Pioneer Valley disproportionately experience digital barriers. These include older adults, low-income residents, veterans, individuals with disabilities, residents with limited English or low levels of literacy, residents of rural areas, religious minority groups, and residents adversely affected by persistent poverty, including unhoused individuals. While these digital needs might present differently for different people given their situation or the profile of their community, it is important to recognize that digital needs exist throughout the Pioneer Valley region.

Leveraging High-Speed Broadband to Support Economic Growth and Development

Since 2020 there has been active discussion and action taken to leverage broadband infrastructure more broadly. The primary entities advancing this work are the regional coalition comprised of a non-profit and its backbone organization, Baystate Health, and the PVPC, which has worked independently and as a member of the broader coalition. Similarly, in a variety of forums, an array of community-based organizations, municipalities, school districts, libraries, and others have discussed ways to enhance broadband infrastructure since the pandemic in 2020.

Digital access profoundly impacts the quality of life of residents; as such, it is understood to be a “super social determinant of health”. Creating digital solutions and addressing digital needs will support economic growth and development by enabling residents’ access to health services, education, workforce training, transportation, finances, and other functions essential for a healthy and thriving community.

This understanding is best reflected by the hosting of the regional coalition at Baystate Health, the region’s largest health care provider. Similarly, the broad membership in the coalition demonstrates the cross-sector understanding of the importance of digital access for the vibrancy of the region. Active participating organizations include higher education, the workforce board, K-12 education, libraries, Councils on

Aging, the Community Action Program (CAP) agency, disability service organizations, immigrant service organizations, private and public housing agencies, and many others. Similarly, the interest in municipal digital planning by the three largest municipalities in the region, as well as smaller towns, demonstrate a municipal appreciation for the need to identify needs and promote and implement solutions.

The primary resources that have been leveraged are federal funds distributed through MBI. These funds resulted in two state funding streams focused on regional capacity building and implementation, and municipal planning and implementation. Taken together, digital access work has been significantly advanced in the Pioneer Valley region.

Intersection of Regional Broadband Needs with State-Level Plans for Vulnerable Communities

In both vision and implementation of programs, MBI and entities in the Pioneer Valley region are fully in sync. The stated digital vision for Massachusetts is that “Every resident in Massachusetts has high-speed, high-quality internet availability and can confidently adopt and use the internet regardless of who they are or where they live. This universal connectivity will ensure that everyone has the support they need to enjoy full personal, civic, and economic digital participation throughout their lives with safety and security.” This vision holds true for Hampden and Hampshire Counties.

The work toward digital access in the Pioneer Valley preceded the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and its digital access funding. This initial work occurred with support from local philanthropy. It included a 2020-21 assessment of the region’s digital access needs, released by the regional coalition. Subsequently, organized pilot interventions were implemented in 2021 and 2022. This included understanding the need for devices, affordable internet connectivity, and digital skills.

With federal funding through legislation in 2021 and 2022, the state and the region gained additional tools and funding to take greater tangible steps to promote digital access. In winter 2022, the Pioneer Valley region expanded its efforts to promote and enroll residents into the Affordable Connectivity Program. This involved the regional coalition and multiple partner organizations in the region’s larger cities, including Springfield Partners in Springfield, Center for New Americans in Northampton, New North Citizens Council in Springfield, Tech Foundry in Holyoke, and Way Finders in both Springfield and Holyoke. These organizations assisted residents in these and surrounding communities to obtain federally subsidized internet plans. This work addressed one of the region’s core barriers to the internet – affordability. In 2023, MBI launched two parallel initiatives funded by ARPA in the Pioneer Valley region. These were a Regional Partnership grant which the regional coalition received and a Municipal Planning grant for which PVPC was designated as a consultant for municipalities. The Regional Partnership grant significantly advanced the work of providing digital skills training, device distribution, enrollment assistance into the Affordable Connectivity Program, and the expansion of Wi-Fi for community access. In addition, the regional coalition launched organized networks to support the digital work occurring at the region’s libraries and Councils on Aging, as well as to support and enhance the digital work of these key community-based entities. ARPA funds were also directed to Tech Foundry to launch the Tech Hub in Holyoke in 2023, a physical location to provide a digital workspace and training opportunities for residents. Similarly, Boston-based Tech Goes Home received ARPA funds to expand digital skills training in Springfield.

PVPC used ARPA funds to provide municipal digital planning work. In 2023, these planning services were provided to the cities of Springfield and Holyoke and the town of Wilbraham. In 2024, this work continues with additional municipalities queued up for digital planning, including Chicopee, Hampden, Hadley, and Westfield.

Looking ahead to 2024 and beyond, the region is poised to leverage additional federal funds that will be used to build out remaining broadband connectivity infrastructure to locations that are unserved or underserved.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN HAMPDEN AND HAMPSHIRE COUNTIES

Hampden and Hampshire Counties have a long list of state, federal, and local workforce development funding and programs. At the center of workforce development efforts in each county are the workforce boards. The MassHire Hampden County and Franklin Hampshire Workforce Boards were established by Federal and State legislation and are business-led, non-profit corporations that engage their members from business, education, labor, and community-based agencies to set public policies that will build a better workforce. Each has a one-stop career center and provides Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programming throughout their services areas.

The area has a well-established Job Corps program, and many nonprofits have Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or welfare-to-work programs as part of their comprehensive service delivery. In addition, there are several after-incarceration programs addressing the workforce needs of residents reentering their communities. The Western Mass Economic Development Council oversees SpringfieldWorks, a workforce program funded by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. Dress for Success works exclusively with women entering or re-entering the workforce and each public school district has an established workforce training department. Public and quasi-public institutions like the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission also have established workforce development projects designed to increase the demographic reach of their workforce. Each sheriff's department and Roca, Inc., a regional nonprofit, provide workforce training to formerly incarcerated individuals. Lastly, the local community colleges work closely with employers to help meet sector-specific workforce needs.

These efforts all include technical training combined with wraparound services that address clients' needs, including resume writing, childcare, transportation, food insecurity, and housing. However, only a few work closely with employers. Some provide access to mental health treatment and others include emotional intelligence skillset building. Success among these and other programs varies. Yet, to date, they collectively have not succeeded in moving the needle in workforce participation or made a considerable difference in socio-economic indicators, including measures of poverty. This could be attributed to the fragmentation among and at times within organizations providing workforce development services.

EDA 2023 Recompete Pilot Program Finalist and Strategic Development Grant Recipient

The MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board (WFB) is an EDA 2023 Recompete Pilot Program Finalist and Strategic Development Grant Recipient. The WFB and its partners proposed the formation of a Workforce Training System in which schools, training institutions, and employers mutually equip, commit to, and credential one another and create an ecosystem in which partners are using the same approaches, systems, and practices that most effectively recruit, promote, and retain historically excluded prime-age adults. This cross-sector collaboration aspires to mitigate the fragmentation of programming to ensure positive results for program participants.

The Workforce Training System will include three interrelated components that will provide a single point of entry that harnesses our efforts and provides a fixed point of responsibility across administrative and organizational boundaries. Each component integrates with and across each other to ensure that people's needs will be met, and they get the training and support they need toward good employment and growing into career jobs, moving away from a transactional approach to a transitional and transformational solution:

- Shared Services HUB will provide needed services for all marginalized prime-age adults with the focus to get them employed. Services include outreach, intake, and recruitment; wraparound supports; career counseling and life planning; case management and coaching/mentoring/therapist support; and a cliff effect mitigation action plan.

- Anchor Collaborative will expand employer commitments around hiring and pathway development and integration with WFD partners, grow career opportunities, and provide worker-friendly policies to remove barriers to employment and create worker-friendly workplaces.
- Workforce Development and Training will seamlessly integrate all workforce training for community members, so they get the shared services needed to assimilate with Anchor Collaborative hiring structures.
- Data tracking and management system that shares information among partners including shared metrics, indicators, outputs, and outcomes and assimilates with state/federal data and local systems.⁸

Addressing Gaps in Services

In 2024, PVPC was awarded funding to address the need for quantum and quantum adjacent workforce training among residents in the Springfield area by the Innovation Institute at MassTech Collaborative. The MassTech Collaborative is a public agency that supports business formation and growth in the state's technology sector. Its Innovation Institute is charged with creating conditions for growth in the Massachusetts innovation economy. The Pioneer Valley Quantum Training Academy (Training Academy) developed by PVPC to prepare for the emerging quantum sector addresses two gaps in regional workforce development programming: skills gaps and learned helplessness.

In Springfield, only 32% of high school graduates enroll in college or university. This is indicative of a lack of college readiness or even interest. The result is a skills gap that hinders the expansion of emerging sectors. The Training Academy program model includes skillset enhancement curriculum developed by community college faculty designed on entry level job descriptions at quantum and quantum adjacent employers. This reverse engineering of the job descriptions provides job seekers with job-specific, skillset remediation necessary for successful early college participation, college enrollment, or direct-to industry job placement.

The Training Academy model utilizes positive psychology to address the persistence of learned helplessness experienced by individuals living in generational poverty. Learned Helplessness is a state that occurs after a person has experienced a stressful situation repeatedly. They believe that they are unable to control or change the situation, so they do not try, even when opportunities for change are available. Positive psychology focuses on fostering positive emotions, strengths, and virtues to improve overall well-being and quality of life. By integrating positive psychology into workforce development, individuals can learn to cultivate resilience, optimism, and a sense of purpose, which are crucial for overcoming challenges associated with poverty. A series of training modules designed to introduce the effects of generational poverty on one's decision-making process will be provided to all program participants. The corresponding activities will outline a new vocabulary and the application of those concepts to everyday life. Those concepts include growth mindset, proactivity, optimism, and social emotional intelligence.

The Pioneer Valley Quantum Training Academy is a 12-week program designed to address the skills gap (80 hours of instruction) and learned helplessness (24 hours of instruction) among students living in poverty in Springfield by integrating these services into existing workforce development programs. By doing so, we hypothesize that at-risk youth and young adults will experience an increase in their chances of success in obtaining living wages within the quantum sector. We anticipate that these integrated interventions will not only enhance academic proficiency but also foster resilient mindsets and positive

⁸ MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board. Springfield-Holyoke Recompete Narrative https://www.eda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/MassHire_Hampden_County_Workforce_Development_Board_Inc_Recompete.pdf (accessed May 29, 2024).

attitudes, thereby equipping participants with the skills and psychological resources necessary to navigate challenges and thrive in the quantum industry. PVPC will work collaboratively with employers, local community colleges, and workforce development partners to prepare program participants for either early college participation, college enrollment, or direct-to-industry job placement.

Human-Centric Approach in Workforce Development

The PV Quantum Training Academy proposed by PVPC and the Workforce Training System proposed by the MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board are examples of local initiatives adopting a human-centered approach. This is a shift from the employer-centered stance embraced by the region for generations. Workforce development is a critical element in ensuring that individuals and communities thrive in a rapidly changing economic landscape. Adopting a human-centered approach in workforce development focuses on designing and implementing programs that meet the actual needs and aspirations of people, rather than imposing top-down solutions. This approach emphasizes empathy and adaptability, making the development efforts more effective and sustainable. Embracing this approach can transform workforce development from a series of programs into a dynamic and responsive ecosystem that supports lifelong learning and growth.

CREATING AN ECONOMY THAT SUPPORTS SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY

The creation of a robust and resilient economy in the Pioneer Valley is a significant multi-year undertaking that will require aligning the efforts of numerous regional agencies and organizations whose work is directed at benefiting underserved and marginalized communities, in particular minority communities. The PVPC will help facilitate the ongoing alignment of community efforts and investments to benefit these communities, especially with respect to expanding the number and growth of minority owned small businesses and increasing workforce participation rates through targeted training programs.

These efforts are meant to address and overcome the Pioneer Valley's long history of economic exclusion directed at communities of color. Underserved communities, including the region's growing Hispanic/Latino population, have historically had unequal access to wealth-building opportunities, including good-paying jobs or the resources that facilitate homeownership and successful small business creation. The impacts of that exclusion became even more obvious during and after the economic crisis created by COVID-19. A significant percentage of minority residents struggled to recover economically from the pandemic. Unemployment insurance claims data from that period showed that women and minority workers had shouldered a disproportionate share of the unemployment burden.

Community Engagement

In 2022, PVPC partnered a consultant to conduct twenty personal, one-on-one interviews with leading members of minority and other underserved communities ("Community Connectors"). Through these interviews, we solicited and obtained the Connectors' direct feedback on how to improve economic outcomes for all the residents in our region, including specific strategies for wealth-building. These conversations included a frank discussion of the structural changes which need to be made in order to break down barriers and overcome existing imbalances.

These are the primary challenges the Community Connectors identified:

- Barriers to access to capital.
- A lack of information about available resources.
- Disproportionate unemployment.
- Skills, education and training gaps.
- Barriers to creating and growing small businesses.
- Barriers to homeownership/wealth building.
- Unequal access to transportation.

- Affordable and market rate housing challenges
- Child-care needs and challenges

These are the recommendations the Community Connectors proposed to address the challenges:

To Support Workforce Development

- *Use a skillset development outlook and a corresponding assessment as part of job training.*
- *Design and scale short-term, employer-specific programming for skillsets that lead to immediate employment or higher-wage opportunities.*
- *Establish apprenticeship programs in industries with high-earning potential.*
- *Develop pathways into unions.*
- *Undertake intentional recruitment and succession planning at the executive level.*

To Increase Minority Homeownership

- Provide financial literacy education in high school or sooner.
- Implement housing initiatives that create equity or income for first-time homeowners; advocate for funding and policy at the State and local level that make these attractive opportunities for developers.
- Work with banks and lenders so that rental history is part of the criteria for first-time homeowners.

To Increase Minority Micro and Small Business Development

- Develop micro-business specific initiatives and funding opportunities.
- Advocate for specific policy changes that provide minority micro and small businesses entry into the market.
- Provide technical assistance so that minority micro and small businesses can successfully compete for municipal RFPs for contracts.
- Enforce legislation regarding participation of minority/woman/veteran-owned businesses at the State and local level.
- Provide more comprehensive dissemination of information regarding funding and other opportunities.
- Assist with building social capital through networking opportunities.
- Create opportunities to engage investors or other avenues for capital.

The Community Connectors also urged the region to explore the feasibility and benefit of creating an ongoing consortium to ensure a mechanism for cross-sector communication and coordination. Such a forum will be helpful in developing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships where economic growth is at the center of the effort.

Regional Benefits of an Economy that Works for Everyone

It is important to recognize that in the Pioneer Valley, the Black and Hispanic/Latino poverty rates range between 24% and 46% in the larger cities of Springfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee. (For more information on poverty, please see Attachment A.) These rates are disproportionately higher than the rest of the region and disproportionately higher than the poverty rates for Whites. Furthermore, people of color are the majority of residents in Springfield, which notably is in the top 33% of the most racially segregated cities across the United States. Creating a more robust and resilient economy will help to reduce the poverty rates for these populations and will improve economic conditions in the larger cities.

Efforts Currently Underway

In order to rebuild a more resilient and sustainable regional economy there needs to be a collaborative, targeted effort which will provide specific assistance to address systemic issues affecting the minority communities. We need to bring agencies together to cooperate, move forward, and overcome fragmentation. Based on the leaders' input, it is essential that we formally establish a permanent mechanism for access to information and to facilitate robust regional communication. This can only be

done by breaking down silos in both the public and private sectors and by encouraging existing programs and organizations to communicate and cooperate with one another.

PVPC

PVPC is currently implementing five initiatives that address the needs of the underserved business community, the need for short-term, specific workforce training, and the need for increased access to capital for micro and small businesses, especially access for minority and marginalized communities. The initiatives were formulated based on the input from the Community Connectors, PVPC's research into existing programs developed by other organizations, most notably Global Detroit, and in coordination with other regional organizations so as not to duplicate efforts. The five initiatives are being funded by grants from new resources.

- 1. Gap Analysis:** PVPC is conducting a gap analysis and evaluation of the small business landscape to assess the impact of the new MGM hotel/casino in Springfield on the region's minority and underserved business community, including small businesses. This work is being funded through a \$485,600 grant from the Massachusetts Gaming Commission Community Mitigation Fund program.
- 2. Disaggregated Data:** With a second grant of \$98,400 from the Massachusetts Gaming Commission Community Mitigation Fund, PVPC is digging deeper into the data to gain a clearer understanding of the current status of minority- and women-owned small businesses in the region, and to identify the unique systemic barriers that they face.
- 3. Community Fund:** As part of the \$485,600 award listed above, PVPC will use some of that funding to create a new Community Fund for the Pioneer Valley. Using the technical assistance provided by Ascendant Global through a grant from the New Growth Innovation Network and the EDA, the Fund will provide small businesses with access to capital, overcoming a barrier identified by the Community Connectors, and shifting the paradigm from "lending" to "investing." The work is being supported by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.
- 4. Quantum Workforce Development Program:** PVPC is partnering with the Massachusetts Innovation Institute, part of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, to create the Pioneer Valley Quantum Training Academy, a new high-tech training academy for people from low-income households (described in the previous section on **Workforce Development**). The goal is to train workers for future high-tech jobs which will be ushered in by the growing number of companies which use quantum and quantum adjacent technologies. The Academy is supported by a two-year grant of \$500,000 from the Innovation Institute.
- 5. Emerald Cities Program:** Funded by a grant from the Massachusetts CEC, the program trains local trades people on the installation and activation of technologies that improve efficiencies and reduce reliance on fossil fuels, including window retrofits, insulation, etc. The program has a training academy component and a database creation component.

There are many regional community-based groups which touch specific aspects of this work. Organizations that are working on separate but interrelated programs include:

Black Economic Council of Massachusetts (BECMA)

Among other efforts, BECMA is involved with the BSC initiative which was born from the realization that people of color often receive more than their fair share of "environmental bads" like brownfields, pollution, and asthma while they receive less than their fair share of "environmental goods" like jobs in emerging technologies, water, and urban farming. The initiative operates at the intersection of economic and social issues.

CEE

Created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the mission of CEE is to, “cultivate a highly collaborative, inventive and effective small business ecosystem that assures access to capital, business networks, education, technical support, and other resources to start, stabilize and grow Black, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, and other underserved small businesses in Massachusetts.” The organization is headed up by Tracye Whitfield, who is a member of the Pioneer Valley CEDS Strategy Committee and serves as Councilor-at-Large for the City of Springfield. The CEE has been working with several small businesses in the region to support investment and growth in minority communities.

Latino Economic Development Corporation (LEDC)

The Latino Economic Development Corporation has created a one-stop location in Springfield where small businesses from the minority community can get assistance with loan applications, completing and filing tax forms, creating business plans and obtaining technical support with how to run a business.

MassDevelopment

MassDevelopment is working on the implementation of an SSCBI (State Small Business Credit Investment) program. SSBCI is a \$10 billion federally funded program through the U.S. Department of the Treasury that provides capital and technical assistance to small businesses and entrepreneurs in underserved communities.



FINDINGS

PVPC reviewed numerous plans, reports, and data sets, and received a wide range of qualitative inputs that have been used to formulate a CEDS that truly addresses both the Pioneer Valley's needs and opportunities. This process entailed research, analysis, reflection, and a willingness to face some uncomfortable truths. The findings from this process were synthesized and used to inform the priority areas in the new CEDS that are presented in the following section, Strategic Direction.

Some of the issues that our process identified are not unique to the Pioneer Valley and are beyond the scope of economic development planning alone. The availability and affordability of appropriate housing, for example, is a national challenge impacting communities in every quadrant of the country. The same is true for increases in the rates of crime and violence. Virtually all large and mid-sized cities are grappling with solutions to homelessness, and virtually all local and state governments are aware of needed but costly infrastructure improvements. PVPC acknowledges these challenges in our region and partners with our communities to assist in the multi-year efforts to address them through proactive and ongoing planning and collaboration.

The first part of our analysis encompassed a review of regional, state, and national data, and incorporated relevant studies and reports:

1. On the regional and state level, we analyzed and integrated the results of more than two dozen reports that studied the region's infrastructure, housing, transportation, workforce, education, broadband, public health, and resiliency.
2. Nationally, we used data from the American Community Survey, the Census Bureau, Argon National Labs, and ESRI.
3. We conducted original data analyses of the Pioneer Valley's demographic and socio-economic trends and incorporated the results of internal research that was conducted through the CARES Act in the immediate post-COVID period. This information is presented in Attachment A.
4. We included economic analyses conducted by allied agencies, such as the Healey-Driscoll Administration's Economic Development Plan, the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council, and the CEDS from neighboring regions, in particular Berkshire County, Franklin County, and the Capital Region Council of Governments in Hartford, Connecticut. The full list of reports and studies that we integrated are listed in Attachment D.

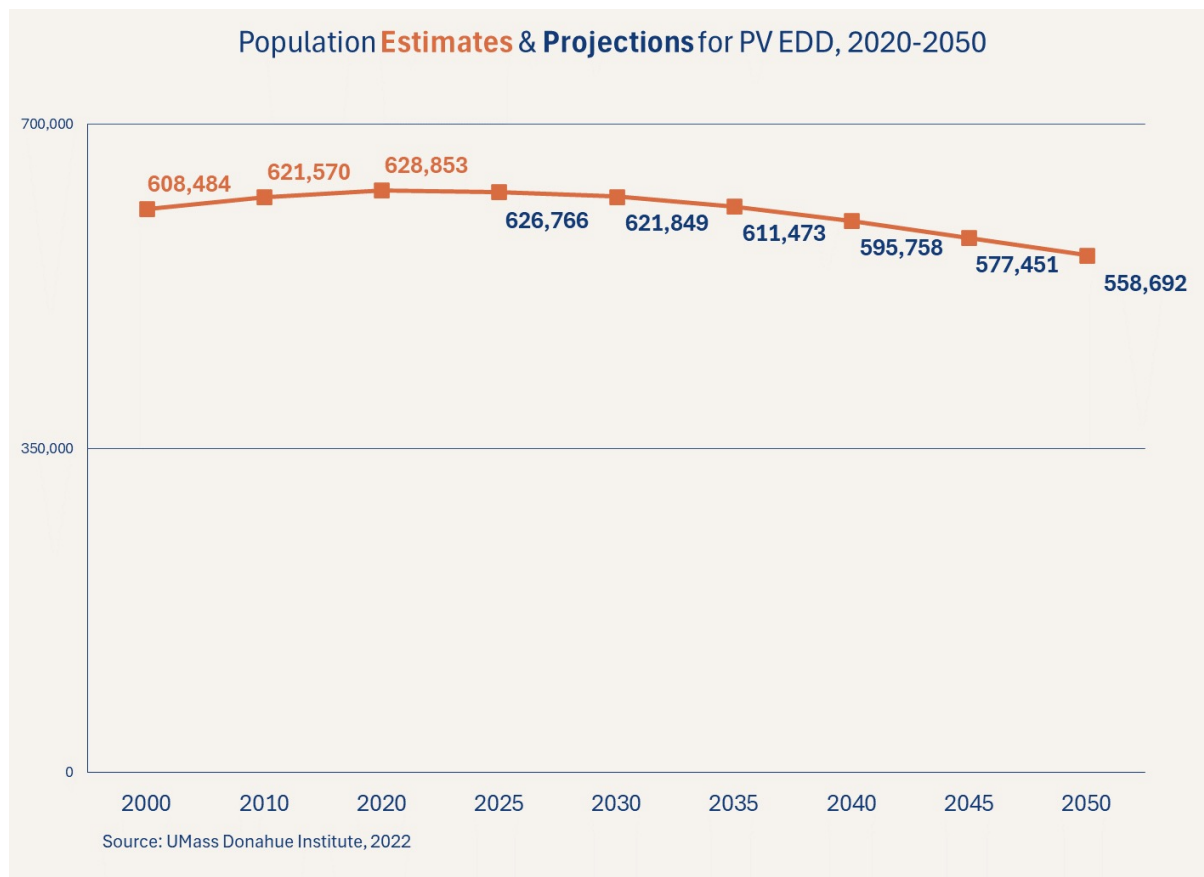
WHAT THE DATA SHOWED US

The previous section discussed some of the region's current economic trends. Putting these trends into larger contexts and looking at their long-term implications, we can see how five key aspects of the Pioneer Valley's economy are faring in comparison to the Commonwealth and the nation:

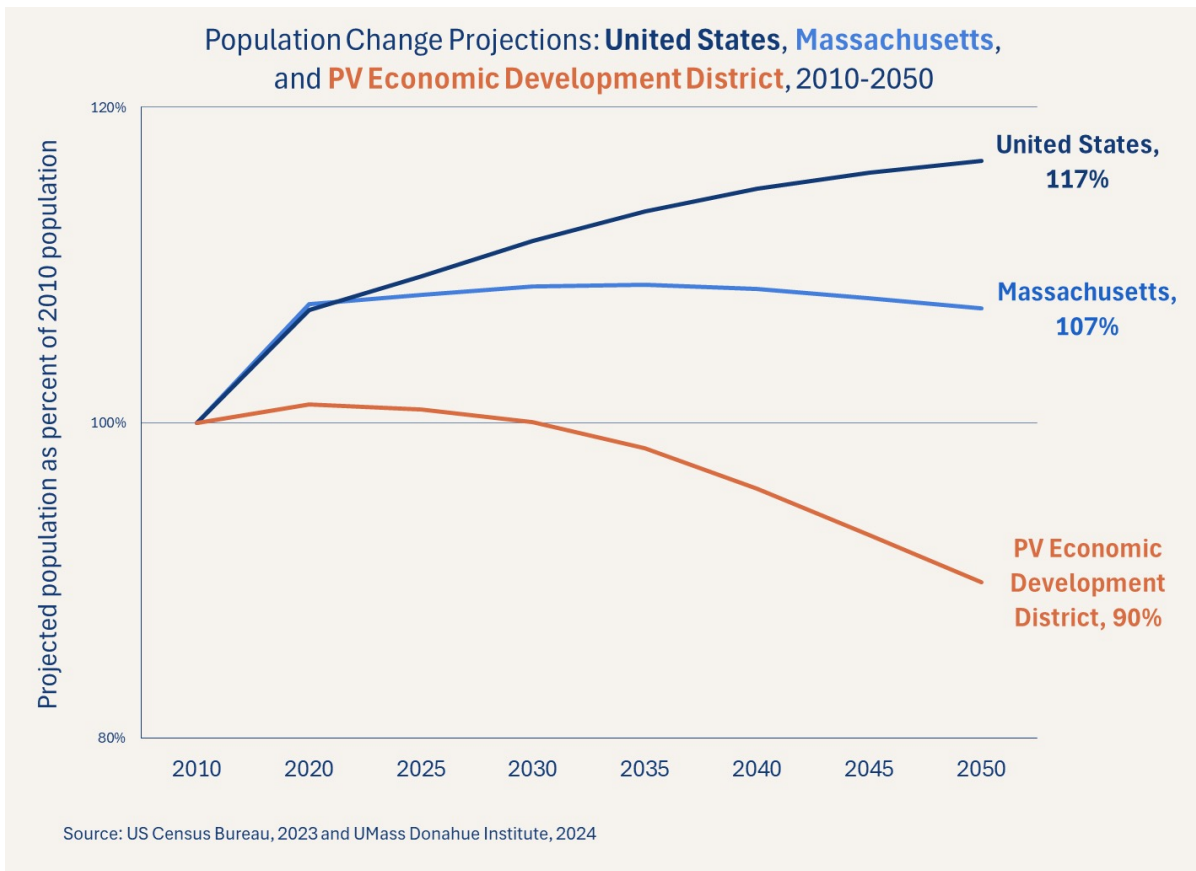
1. Population
2. Immigration
3. Income disparity
4. Disadvantaged communities
5. Small business ecosystem

1. The Pioneer Valley's overall population is projected to decline.

The previous section provided data showing that the region's population has been flat for more than ten years. Projections for the next 25 years show that the population will start declining by 2025 and by 2050 will be approximately 10% less than current levels.



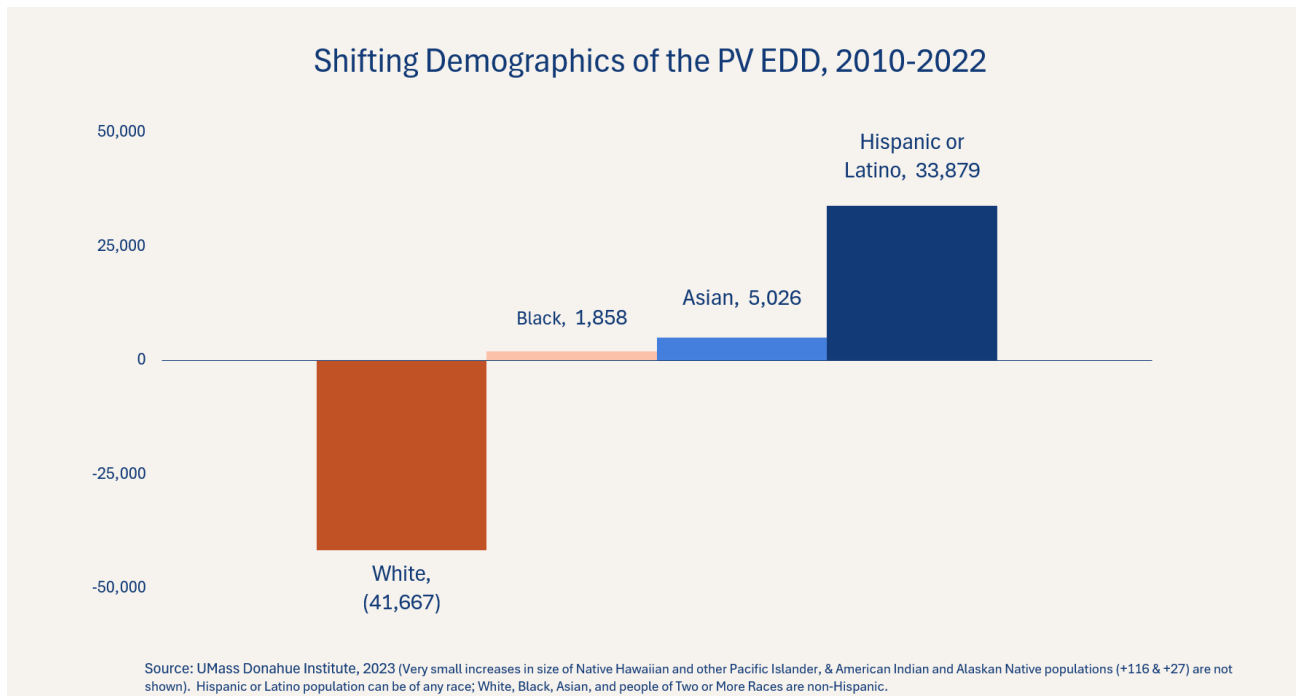
The Pioneer Valley's population decline is more extreme than what is projected for Massachusetts and is distinct from the rest of the United States, which is projected to increase its population by 17% during the same period.

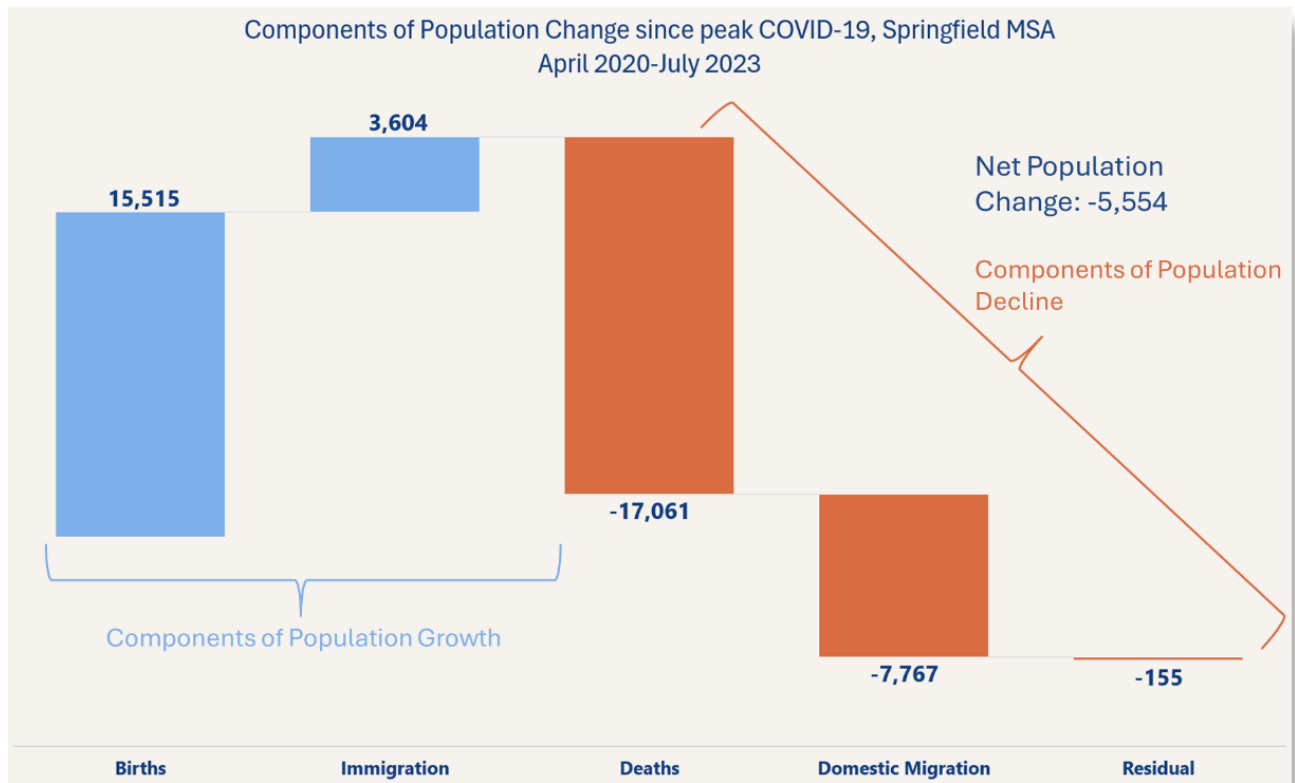


For our region, less population will have serious economic implications. A shrinking population will lead to shrinking local revenues, affecting local governments, the labor force, and the educational system. Fewer people will also lead to reduced funding levels from the state and federal government and may impact industrial interest from potential employers.

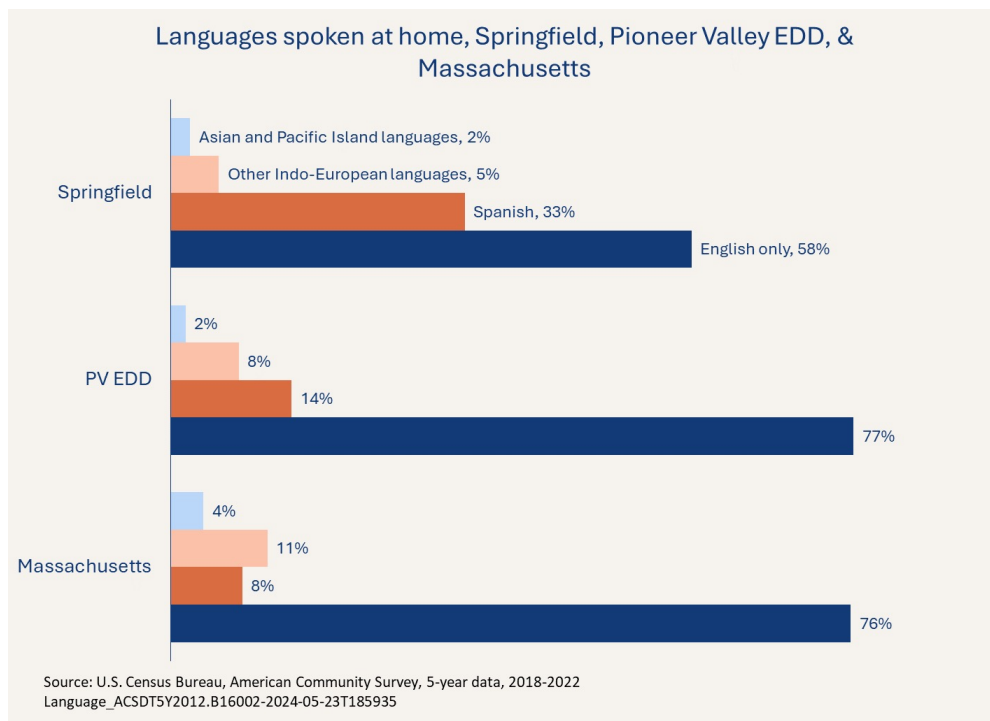
2. Minority and immigrant communities are the source of the Pioneer Valley's population growth since 2010.

The charts below show that all the population growth in the region has been from minority and immigrant communities. The White population during the same period declined by nearly 15,000 people. The region is home to a large and growing Puerto Rican community. In fact, Hampden County is ranked 3rd/4th of all 3,143 U.S. counties for persons with Puerto Rican heritage. In Hampden County, 16% of the population is foreign-born and in Hampshire County, 11%. The fastest-growing immigrant segment is the Hispanic/Latino community, primarily from the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico, and Guatemala, followed by the Asian community, primarily from China and Vietnam. Other immigrant groups arriving include East African and Eastern Europeans.

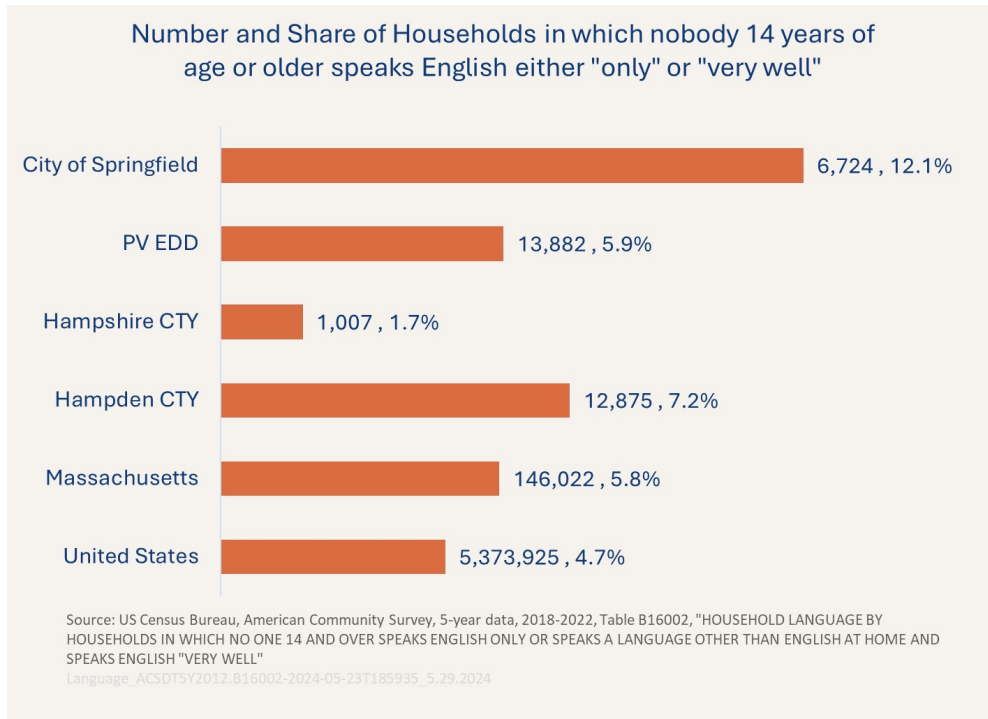




In the City of Springfield, 39.7% of the population speak a language other than English in their homes. Spanish is the most spoken language – more than double the percentage spoken in the full Pioneer Valley Economic Development District and three times the percentage in the Commonwealth as a whole.

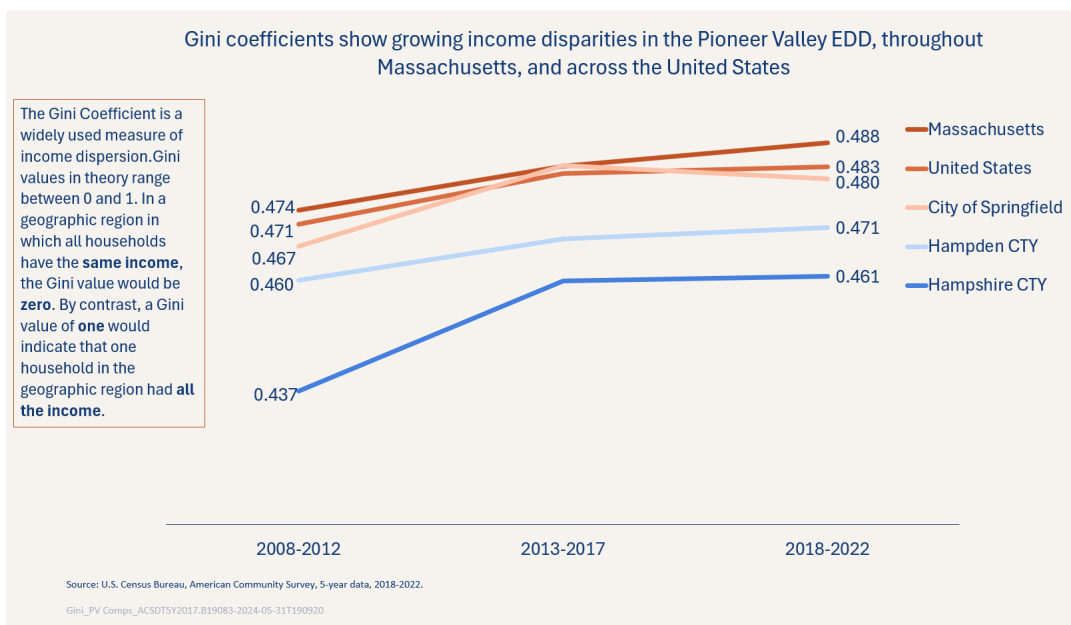


In many cases Spanish is the only language spoken; lack of English language fluency affects 12% of the population in Springfield. This percentage is higher than both the Commonwealth and the nation. The high percentage of persons who are not fluent in English is affecting outcomes in K-12 education, workforce development, and labor force participation.

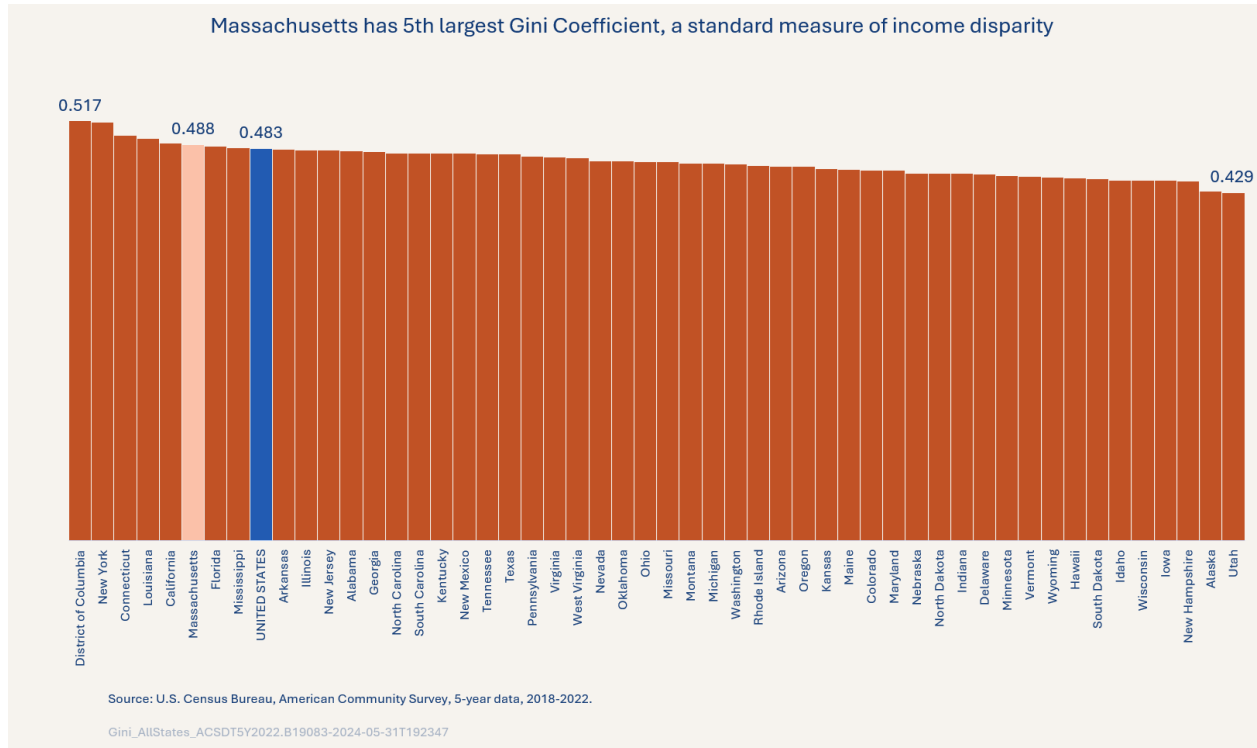


3. The Pioneer Valley has significant levels of income disparity.

The Gini Coefficient measures how income is distributed throughout a population; the less even the distribution, the greater the income disparity. As the chart below shows, income disparity is increasing statewide and nationally. In the Pioneer Valley, income disparity in Hampshire County, which has generally been an area of higher incomes, has risen sharply since 2008. Of the indicators shown below, income disparity is worst in Massachusetts as a whole, closely followed by the United States and the City of Springfield.

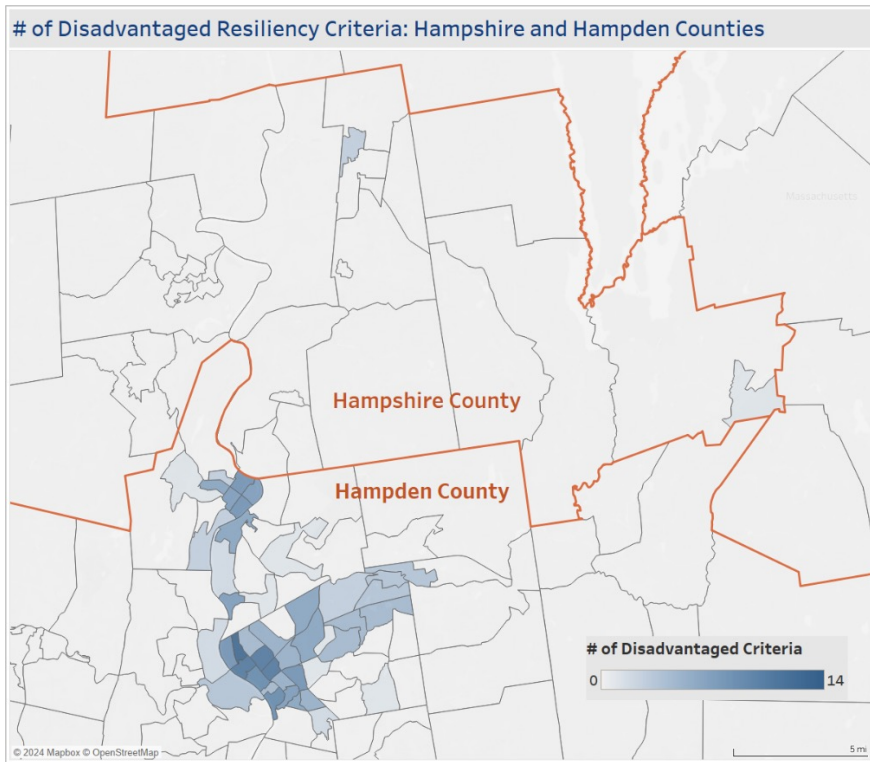


In the state-by-state chart below, Massachusetts’s Gini Coefficient is the fifth highest in the United States. Thus, Springfield, which at 0.48 is just below Massachusetts’s income level (see chart above), would also have one of the highest Gini Coefficients in the country.

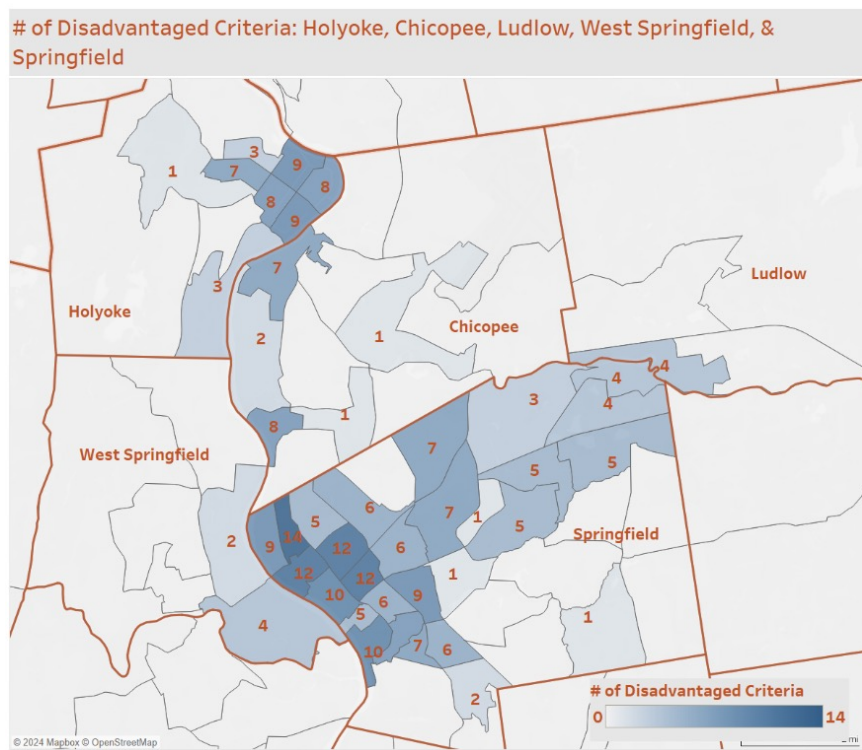


4. More than 40% of the tracts in Hampden County, home to approximately 2/3 the Pioneer Valley’s population, are economically disadvantaged compared to the rest of the Commonwealth and the nation.

Looking at national data on key indicators that include housing, health, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development, 46 of the Pioneer Valley’s 139 census tracts experience economic disadvantages. Two of the tracts are in Hampshire County and correlate to areas in the city of Amherst (to the north), a city of approximately 40,000 people, where many students at the University of Massachusetts live, and Ware (to the east), a town of less than 10,000 people.



Within Hampden County, the 44 other disadvantaged tracts in the Pioneer Valley are located in the cities of Springfield, Chicopee, Holyoke, and Ludlow, with the most deeply disadvantaged tract in Springfield's north end. The map below provides more detail about these areas of need.



The most disadvantaged tracts in Springfield and Holyoke are also areas with the region’s highest percentages of people of color. In addition, these tracts correlate to areas of persistent poverty from 1989-2019 as identified by the Census Bureau (<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2023/persistent-poverty.html>). The disparities the data reveal in the Pioneer Valley are not new; these disadvantages have been present for decades.

How does this level of disadvantage compare to other parts of the Commonwealth? Hampden County has the second highest percentage of disadvantaged tracts in Massachusetts, while Hampshire County is close to the bottom.

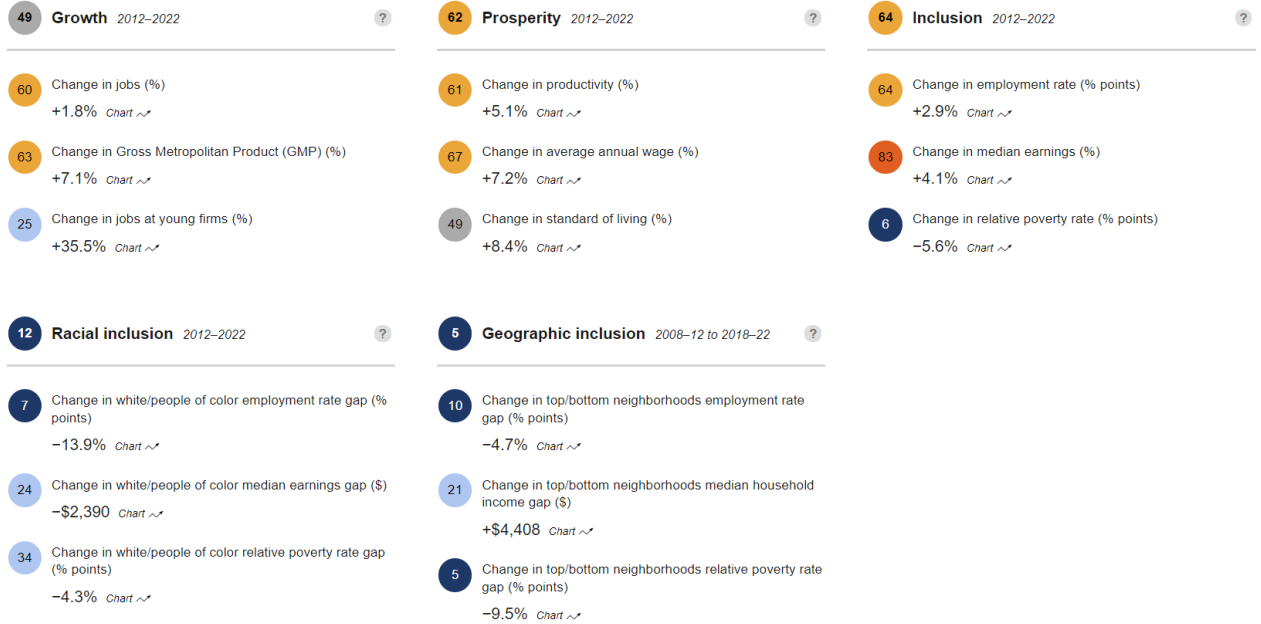
County	Tract Count	Count of disadvantaged tracts	% of tracts that are disadvantaged
Suffolk	204	93	46%
Hampden	103	44	43%
Bristol	126	45	36%
Essex	163	43	26%
Berkshire	39	9	23%
Worcester	172	37	22%
Franklin	18	3	17%
Middlesex	318	38	12%
Plymouth	101	10	10%
Norfolk	130	8	6%
Hampshire	36	2	6%
Barnstable	57	3	5%
Dukes	5	0	0%
Nantucket	6	0	0%

The **Prosperity Index** is another gauge of the region’s economic health. The Springfield Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) encompasses the three counties of Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin, and is the 88th largest MSA nationally. The chart below, from the Brookings Institute, ranks the region nationally for growth, prosperity, etc. The chart shows that the Springfield MSA’s overall prosperity ranks in the second to last quintile of 85 mid-sized metro areas.

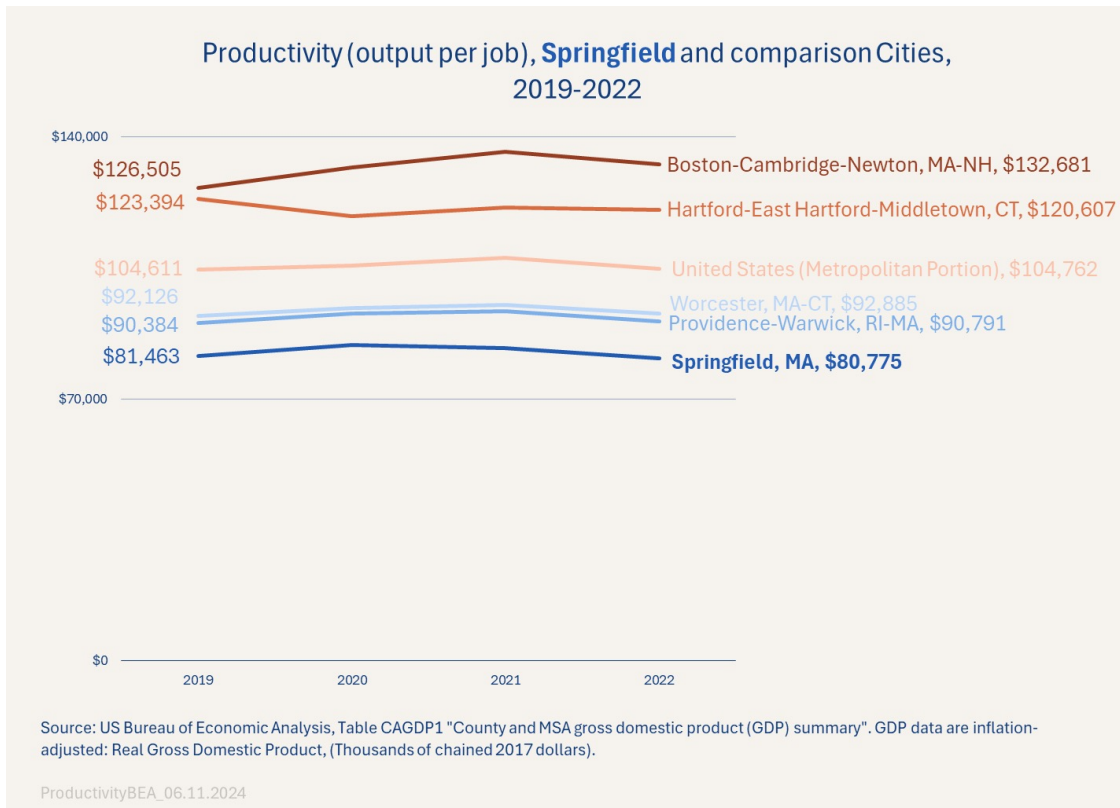
Springfield, MA Metropolitan Statistical Area

Population: 461,041 | One of 85 **mid-sized** metro areas with 250,000–500,000 residents

Ranks* ● 1–17 ● 18–34 ● 35–51 ● 52–68 ● 69–85



Looking more closely at the productivity of the region’s economy, the Pioneer Valley ranks lower than other cities in New England and below the U.S. average.



5. There needs to be a deeper understanding of Pioneer Valley’s small business ecosystem, including entrepreneurs and minority owned micro and small businesses, to better support their growth and success. This sector of the regional economy has enormous potential to increase jobs, reduce poverty, and enhance wealth-building in marginalized communities.

The Pioneer Valley does not have current information on the number and type of micro and small businesses in the region, let alone the ownership of those businesses. In 2012, census data show that 14% of the Pioneer Valley’s small businesses were minority-owned, which was lower than Massachusetts and United States averages at that time. In 2017, census data for all employer firms, small and large, show that a regional average of 11.8% were minority-owned. It is not known how many of the employer firms were small businesses or how many of the small businesses were minority-owned. It is also not known how many of these businesses survived the pandemic.

	Total Population	% Minority Population	Total All Employer Firms	Total Minority-Owned Employer Firms	% Minority-Owned Employer Firms
Springfield	153,672	53.9	2,094	339	16.2
Chicopee	54,838	23.5	687	66	9.6
Holyoke	37,628	32.5	652	63	9.7
Massachusetts	7,001,399	20.6	138,829	15,015	10.8
United States	334,914,895	24.5	5,744,643	1,014,958	17.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017

We know from other sources that minority-owned small businesses were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. A national study in June 2020 found that while the overall decline in small businesses during the height of COVID-19 was 22%, Black-owned businesses dropped by 41%, Hispanic/Latino-owned businesses dropped by 32%, Asian-owned businesses dropped by 26%, and immigrant-owned businesses dropped by 36%.¹ In the first months of the pandemic, Black-owned businesses declined at approximately three times the rate of other demographic groups.² It is likely that similar impacts were experienced by minority-owned small businesses in the Pioneer Valley.

CEE, a Massachusetts-based initiative started in the immediate post-COVID period, is focused on growing the minority-owned small business ecosystem and has identified needed resources. Given that small businesses account for most of the job creation in the United States, bolstering this part of the regional economy could be effective in reducing the unemployment rate, increasing workforce participation, and enabling BIPOC households to amass wealth. PVPC is currently undertaking an assessment and gap analysis of the current, post-COVID-19 small business landscape to inform the region’s understanding of this sector, especially with respect to minority-owned small businesses. Additionally, the U.S. Census Bureau is scheduled to release updated 2022 data on this issue at the end of 2024.

¹ Robert Fairlie, “The Impact of COVID-19 on Small Business Owners: Evidence of Early-Stage Losses from the April 2020 Current Population Survey,” National Bureau of Economic Research (June 2020) found at https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w27309/w27309.pdf

² Daniel Wilmoth “Black Business Owners Hit Hard by Pandemic,” U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy, (August 2020) <https://cameonetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Black-Business-Owners-Hit-Hard-By-Pandemic.pdf>

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM OTHER PLANS AND REPORTS

PVPC analyzed and incorporated the research, findings, and recommendations of more than two dozen reports and plans from the Pioneer Valley region and the Commonwealth to inform the new Pioneer Valley CEDS (Full list in Attachment E). Some of these included:

1. Team Massachusetts: Leading Future Generations by the Healey-Driscoll Administration, 2023

The Pioneer Valley CEDS priorities align with the Administration's priorities of increased housing production, improved public transportation, investments in infrastructure, the attraction and retention of talent, and growing the advanced manufacturing and technology sectors.

2. 2023 Massachusetts CEC Industry Report by the Massachusetts CEC

PVPC analyzed how the Massachusetts CEC's focal areas supporting early-stage clean technologies, decarbonization, offshore wind, and workforce training could be integrated into the region's economic development plans, in particular the CEC's interest in creating new clean industrial centers using repurposed facilities.

3. Pioneer Valley Labor Market Blueprint 2024-2025 by the Hampden County Workforce Board and Franklin/Hampshire County Workforce Board

PVPC relied on the Boards' "Blueprint" report for the most recent and accurate assessments regarding regional labor force participation rates, particularly participation rates by demographic group. This information factored heavily into the formulation of several CEDS objectives.

4. Public Infrastructure in Western Massachusetts: A Critical Need for Regional Investment and Revitalization by the Massachusetts State Auditor, 2021

The findings of this report echoed many of the inputs PVPC received during the S-W-O-T phase of the Pioneer Valley CEDS. There is an urgent need for investment in the region's transportation systems, including roads, bridges, and culverts; broadband; and municipal facilities, including public safety facilities. Infrastructure needs affect all the Pioneer Valley's communities alike, urban, rural, large, and small. Both the CEDS focus groups and the CEDS Strategy Committee prioritized infrastructure as a key economic development issue.

5. Unleashing the Potential of Entrepreneurs of Color in Massachusetts: A Blueprint for Economic Growth and Recovery and The Color of Capital by, respectively, MassInc and the Boston Indicators, in partnership with the CEE, 2021

In light of the Pioneer Valley's income inequalities and small business ecosystem, especially with respect to communities of color, PVPC integrated the recommendations of these two reports that support the creation of a more equitable economy.

6. Accelerating Growth in the Pioneer Valley: A Prospectus for Transformative Economic Investment by the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council, 2024

The recommendations on opportunities for growth and job creation that could be achieved through targeted investments into the region were incorporated into the Pioneer Valley CEDS goals and objectives.

7. Redlines, Black Neighborhoods by PVPC, 2024

PVPC used the historical context for Springfield's communities of color to have a deeper understanding of the impacts of decades of disinvestment, and to frame some of the Pioneer Valley CEDS strategies to improve equitable access to wealth-building opportunities.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE STAKEHOLDERS

Qualitatively, we cast a wide net. Many of our regional stakeholders had contributed to previous CEDS or other economic development plans, but we wanted our 2024-2029 inputs to include the voices from new people who brought other levels of professional insight or lived experiences. Attachment C lists all the individuals who participated in our stakeholder engagement.

Focus Groups

PVPC convened six focus groups on topics with a nexus to the regional economy, including housing; workforce development; education; small and rural towns; local funders; and future directions. The groups were eclectic and spanned different organizational levels. For example, our education group had local administrators in K-12 as well as a Provost from the University of Massachusetts.

Interviews

PVPC conducted 28 one-on-one interviews with the Presidents and CEOs of the region's major employers, state and local government elected and appointed officials, philanthropic leaders representatives from leading minority businesses and organizations, key service providers, and experts with specialized knowledge on new technologies.

Community Surveys

PVPC surveyed the communities within the region to gauge their perspective on their economic assets, challenges, and future opportunities, especially as they are losing access to one-time federal resources that became available during and immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic.

CEDS Strategy Committee

PVPC assembled a diverse CEDS Strategy Committee with members who had deep subject-matter knowledge on equity, workforce development and employment, higher education, healthcare, industrial strengths, and regional funding resources. Fifty percent of the members were women, and forty percent were Hispanic/Latino and Black. All the members had experience working collaboratively throughout the service region.

The four types of stakeholder engagement resulted in the following assessment of the Pioneer Valley's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). The majority of the stakeholders pointed out that today's weaknesses, if not adequately addressed, had the potential to blossom into tomorrow's threats. The findings provided below represent consensus from at least five points of input.

Strengths

- Location in the Knowledge Corridor. Region's higher education ecosystem is a major asset: 13 highly ranked institutions, including U Mass and world-class R&D.
- Proximity to large metropolitan areas, including Albany, New York; Hartford, Connecticut; and Boston, Massachusetts.
- Excellent macro-transportation infrastructure, e.g. airport access, interstate highways, rail.
- Established industrial strengths in healthcare/social assistance, education, and manufacturing.
- "Coalition-of-the-willing" mindset. Multiple sectors are forging successful and effective cross-sector collaborations and partnerships, including education, social services, workforce development, and economic development.
- Relatively lower costs of living and doing business.

- Availability of developable land.
- Availability of buildings that can be re-purposed with existing infrastructure.
- Assets for increased tourism.
- Quality of life.
- Pluralism.
- Regional planning in hazard mitigation, sustainability, and resiliency has been effective and has positioned the region to withstand the impacts of natural disasters and unexpected weather events.

Weaknesses

- Lack of access to opportunities for all residents.
- Labor force is not keeping pace with industrial demand, especially in healthcare and education.
- ✓ Fastest growing jobs in the region are low wage.
- Small and medium-sized (SME) business development issues
 - ✓ Post-COVID decline in number of small businesses.
 - ✓ Lack of an effective mechanism to include SMEs in conversations about regional issues that affect them, e.g., access to lending, difficulties in hiring.
 - ✓ The small business model for retail is being impacted by the larger trend toward online sales. Affects viability of “main street” small business model in downtown revitalization.
- Housing is mismatched to area needs.
- Infrastructure, in particular water and sewer systems.
- Limited or declining funding in key sectors, especially education.
- Limited English proficiency is impacting K-12 education and workforce development.
- Lack of local transit/transportation, especially in rural areas.
- Lack of investment by the Commonwealth– state has focused its investments on Eastern Mass and the Boston area.
- Lack of visionary/strategic leadership to advocate for the region.
 - ✓ Need for a single, strong, regional voice to overcome fragmentation across multiple entities.
 - ✓ Need for a realistic, coordinated, “backbone,” economic development plan for region.
 - ✓ Need for a high-level “convener” to facilitate ongoing cross-sector communication and coordination to execute the plan.
 - ✓ Established relationships and organizations exclude “new blood;” not open to new members.
- Different levels of need among communities and different types of governance throughout the region require the development of different strategies that are tailored more specifically. Will call for different tools and potentially proportional investments.

Opportunities

Across the Region

- Time to create a sharper toolset – a tailored set of new strategies because previous strategies have not succeeded.
- Pursue high-growth and new opportunities.
 - ✓ Opportunities for growth and investment in technology, including quantum and quantum adjacent, fintech, AI, biotech, life sciences, cybersecurity, specialized engineering, e.g. aeronautics.
 - ✓ Opportunities for growth and investment cited by EDC, including food science; non-pharmaceutical biomanufacturing and food ecosystem; new technologies to generate power and reduce emissions; and advanced materials and R&D manufacturing.
 - ✓ Align workforce development with new and/or expanding industrial strengths.
- Identify turnkey opportunities that will facilitate investment.
 - ✓ Develop an array of shovel-ready locations to site new businesses, e.g., food science, applied smart materials, quantum.
 - ✓ Become location for branches or “second sites” for major companies.

- Reverse long-standing stagnant population growth.
 - ✓ Lead with our pluralism: our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural identity differentiates our urban areas from many others in New England. Could attract a younger demographic, especially recent university graduates. Marketing opportunity for tourism.
- Establish stronger connections between educational institutions and the communities that they are located in to leverage opportunities coming out of higher education, e.g., siting for companies or technologies they incubated.
- Support SME business development.
 - ✓ Harness the enthusiasm and skills of immigrants in small business development and workforce.
 - ✓ Work with SMEs to identify their needs and explore creative strategies to meet those needs, e.g. pathways to work for justice-involved individuals.
- Develop additional data sources and analysis to better tell the story of poverty and economic development in the region.
 - ✓ Develop a more robust and innovative data management system which disaggregates key data points and is broadly available.
 - ✓ Maximize technical expertise of Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center.
- Grow collaborations.
 - ✓ Continue pursuing Knowledge Corridor relationships.
 - ✓ Collaborate with neighboring Economic Development Districts, in particular Franklin County, Berkshire County, and the Capital Region Council of Governments, on issues that straddle our service regions and require cooperative strategic solutions.
- Reuse underutilized buildings for housing or industrial purposes.
- Improve access to
 - ✓ Childcare.
 - ✓ Transportation, especially in rural areas and within cities.
 - ✓ Broadband.
- Address shortage of available, affordable housing.
 - ✓ Develop alternatives to single-family residences.
 - ✓ Address needed changes to local zoning.
 - ✓ Explore multi-generational housing options.
 - ✓ Explore ADU options.

In Urban Areas

- Revitalize downtowns, especially Springfield: will better serve existing residents and will attract investment, younger workforce, and residents.
 - ✓ Leverage existing assets, such as the Basketball Hall of Fame, Volleyball Hall of Fame.
 - ✓ Strengthen ties between institutions of higher education and the communities they are in or near to facilitate a successful research and entrepreneurial environment.
 - ✓ Create Arts and Culture programs to attract a younger demographic.
 - ✓ Provide spaces for young entrepreneurs to work and connect with peers.
- Address poverty differently.
 - ✓ Develop a way to measure social and economic mobility; consider bringing in new players.

In Smaller and/or Rural Communities

- Pursue travel and tourism opportunities for regional marketing and small-town revitalization, especially heritage, recreational, and/or eco-tourism.
- Expand shared-services model in smaller communities to meet local service needs and improve efficiencies, potentially including partnerships between systems, e.g., school districts and local governments.

Threats

- Persistent poverty in Springfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee.
 - ✓ The intersection of poverty/housing/opioid crisis.
 - ✓ Changes in precipitation patterns and temperature will have disproportionate impact on poor people.
- Continued barriers to social and economic opportunity for minorities.
- Stagnant population/depopulation/outmigration.
 - ✓ Workforce is aging and retiring.
 - ✓ Fewer families with children.
 - ✓ Shortages in educational staff, both teachers and support staff.
 - ✓ Declining enrollments in schools.
- Aging infrastructure.
- Continued loss of small businesses – impacts jobs, vibrant downtowns.
- Continued shortage of childcare.
- Continued shortage of available and appropriate housing.
- Continued lack of priority investment/support from the Commonwealth.
- Continued lack of private investment.
- Overreliance on healthcare industry.
- Potential reduced funding at federal and state levels in next few years.
- Parochialism of communities.
- Social networks are disintegrating and polarization is increasing. Increased pressure on schools, police, and employers to provide supportive services.

PROMISING OPPORTUNITIES

The data and stakeholder comments point to some daunting challenges that face the Pioneer Valley. The next five years, however, also offer an array of unique opportunities to expand and broaden the region's economy. There is consensus that the Pioneer Valley has the resources and assets to excel in key areas that could improve many of the current economic conditions by creating good-paying jobs, reducing unemployment rates, improving workforce participation rates, increasing the regional Gross Regional Product, and helping to reverse flat population trends. Done thoughtfully, these opportunities will be environmentally compatible with the region's natural resources and quality of life, strengths that were identified by stakeholders across the board.

Focus on Improving Social and Economic Opportunity

- There are opportunities for regional and statewide organizations to collaborate on various initiatives. For example, PVPC received technical assistance through the New Growth Innovation Network on strategies to start a successful community fund to increase access to capital for marginalized communities. The CEE, the Small Business Development Center Network, and others throughout the Commonwealth are working on parallel programs.
- There is an opportunity to create a new network of Trusted Community Connectors to facilitate effective engagement with marginalized communities, including minority and immigrant communities, to increase access to and utilization of economic resources.
- There are new workforce development programs in the pipeline that will provide pathways for low-income and minority households to participate in the future economy.

Increase Micro and Small Business Development

- Continued assessment of the micro- and small business ecosystem, especially minority and immigrant-owned businesses, will enable the region to develop and deliver targeted programs that meet these businesses' needs.
- We can create new mechanisms for micro and small businesses to access capital.
- We can grow and support the micro- and small business ecosystem by creating spaces for entrepreneurs to work and connect with peers.

Revitalize Downtown Springfield

- There is a widespread interest in repurposing existing buildings and facilities to meet housing demand and potential industrial needs.
- There is the potential to increase marketing of existing assets, including the Basketball Hall of Fame and the city's many unique restaurants, to attract visitors, tourists, and a younger demographic.
- New initiatives, such as an Arts and Culture program or riverfront improvements, have the potential to improve the appearance of downtown and draw new businesses and residents into the city.

Seize Opportunities in New and Emerging Technologies

Clean Crop Technologies

Recognizing the global challenge of roughly 30% (1.3 billion tons) of crops being lost to pathogens, toxins, and pests, Clean Crop Technologies ("Clean Crop") is on a mission to reduce food waste and improve food safety with their innovative Clean Current technology. Located in Holyoke, Massachusetts, Clean Crop leverages the power of electricity to treat seeds and food surfaces, eliminating pathogens, toxins, and mold without compromising quality. Thus, they are offering a crucial advantage: effective decontamination that preserves food integrity. Their novel cold plasma treatment, "Clean Current," a rapid process using food-grade gasses and electricity, immediately eliminates contaminants without leaving harmful residues. This translates to several key benefits:

- *Enhanced Crop Yields: Clean Current safeguards seeds from pathogens, leading to improved germination rates and overall crop health.*
- *Improved Food Safety: Clean Current neutralizes harmful bacteria and contaminants, ensuring safer food for consumers.*
- *Reduced Food Waste: Clean Current extends shelf life, minimizing food spoilage and waste throughout the supply chain.*

Clean Crop's decision to locate in Holyoke was driven by strategic considerations. The Pioneer Valley offered several advantages:

- *Cost-Effective Expansion: Affordable space allowed Clean Crop to construct a comprehensive, 14,000+-square-foot facility with dedicated research and development labs, a prototyping machine shop, and the world's first cold plasma Seed Tolling Facility.*
- *Skilled Workforce: The region boasts a strong talent pool with expertise relevant to Clean Crop's operations.*
- *Advanced Manufacturing Ecosystem: The established network of engineering, materials science, and machine shops in Holyoke prove invaluable for building and maintaining Clean Crop's technology and ambitious scale plans.*
- *Partnership with Holyoke Gas & Electric (HG&E): Local utility HG&E provides financial incentives and access to affordable electricity.*

With a focus on sustainability, Clean Crop is helping to reduce food waste with a minimal environmental footprint.

Increase Regional Collaboration

- There is an appetite for more collaboration between higher education and local governments to establish the Pioneer Valley as a successful research and entrepreneurial environment.
- The small and rural towns support the creation of regularly scheduled roundtables to share information, challenges, and trends, and brainstorm potential partnerships that could advance their economic goals.

FinTech Incubator (FTI)

Hosted by Western New England University's College of Business, the FinTech Incubator (FTI) focuses on Financial Technology and Artificial Intelligence to improve the competitiveness and economic growth of the Massachusetts economy.

The FTI offers the first affordable state-of-the-art resource in the Western Massachusetts region that supports integrated resources for entrepreneurs and existing businesses developing AI-driven FinTech solutions and serves as a training ground for students and current employees in finance-related fields through enhanced coursework and experiential learning enabled by the FTI's infrastructure.

The FTI acts as a matchmaker by bringing together enterprises, entrepreneurs, students, data services, training and consulting services, and AI/ML processing services in a way that benefits students, entrepreneurs, and the local and state FinTech ecosystem. The FTI:

1. Assists in the growth of the FinTech talent pool in Massachusetts through a two-fold approach that prepares students to enter the workforce as well-qualified FinTech professionals, while also upskilling the existing labor force.
2. Maximizes the economic impact of a healthy, thriving, and growing business sector. This can be achieved by:
 - o Helping local enterprises improve their financial and operational performance through AI/ML-based FinTech applications.
 - o Developing and supporting strategies for Small and Mid-size Enterprises (SMEs) for business transition and sustainability.
 - o Providing targeted support to SMEs, nonprofit organizations, and underserved businesses.
3. Incubates and hatches Massachusetts-based FinTech start-ups.

Explore New Ideas and Technical Assistance

- PVPC received crucial technical assistance from Ascendant Global regarding best practices to structure and launch a successful community-based fund. This assistance connected PVPC with existing programs and thought leadership in other parts of the country. PVPC is eager to continue bringing new and promising ideas that are being piloted in these areas to the Pioneer Valley for potential consideration.
- Outreach to successful economic-equity programs in other areas, e.g. Global Detroit's programming for immigrants, to explore the feasibility of starting similar programs in the Pioneer Valley.

Conduct New Economic Research

- An Industrial Lands Needs Analysis will provide the region with the ability to ensure that our industrial land-use is tracking with industrial capacity and future needs.

Support Strategic Investments in the Region

- Support the Healey-Driscoll administration's funding priorities for housing, infrastructure, technology, etc.
- Continue the region's coordination with the federal government and the Commonwealth on regional infrastructure improvements, including broadband implementation and transportation.
- Continue the investments that small and rural towns are making to their downtowns to increase walkability, grow tourism, and increase retail activity.
- Support the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council's investment recommendations to bolster and grow the Pioneer Valley's existing strengths in food science, production and processing; advanced manufacturing; and the transition to new technologies to generate power and reduce emissions.
- Support "Buy Local" initiatives as a way to strengthen the region's agricultural sector.

Blueprint Easthampton: Revitalizing a Mill Town's Entrepreneurial Spirit

In the heart of Pioneer Valley, Mayor Nicole LaChapelle is spearheading a transformative initiative called Blueprint Easthampton. This ambitious project aims to transform the City of Easthampton into a hotbed of entrepreneurship by leveraging the town's unique geography, resources, and history.

In early 2020, the National League of Cities selected Easthampton to be part of the City Innovation Ecosystems program, a joint effort by the National League of Cities and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, designed to drive regional entrepreneurship and innovation. Partnering with Kansas City-based firm SourceLink, they identified and cataloged each of the entrepreneurial support organizations in the region, making them easily accessible to the community through the central hub of Blueprint Easthampton.

Mayor LaChapelle says the "city needs to build supports other than just helping with a business plan. It needs to be on the ground; we need to give folks the opportunity and confidence to create and work in markets to generate wealth for the next generation.

One of LaChapelle's strengths is her ability to find external resources and financial support for city projects. A key component of Blueprint Easthampton is the Business Blueprint Program, launched in 2021 to provide personalized mentorship and training to small businesses in the Valley. Led by local entrepreneurs, the program has helped over 50 businesses build resilience in the face of the pandemic's economic challenges. "The Business Blueprint Program is a holistic approach to business building," says LaChapelle. "We are co-creating the experience. It's interactive because we want to create transformation." The Business Blueprint Program offers each qualifying business a \$2,500 grant. These funds can be used to improve or develop business infrastructure, a critical component for growth and efficiency.

Looking ahead, Blueprint Easthampton continues to seek new funding opportunities to expand economic development and help existing businesses succeed while preserving the city's historic charm. Easthampton is fostering a vibrant economy that serves as a model for other small cities.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION: BUILDING AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

Using the integrated results of the input process, the CEDS Strategy Committee developed a vision for the Pioneer Valley of 2034.

Our vision for the future is to build an economy that works for everyone who lives and works in the Pioneer Valley. We will build on the Pioneer Valley's regional assets and many strengths, as well as set our sights on new areas for success, in order to build a robust and thriving economy in which all our residents have access to prosperity.

Sustainable, fair, and substantive economic development will not be easy, but it is necessary. It will require a range of strategies tailored to the unique and varied needs of the 43 communities in the Pioneer Valley. There is no easy solution for some of our weaknesses and no single approach that will overcome issues such as deep-seated biases that prevent access to opportunity or the region's housing shortages. Many of the strategies we are recommending may require years, if not decades, to mature. We are, however, committed to addressing these weaknesses and moving toward the realization of our vision.

We recognize that desiring different outcomes means doing things differently. We must work together to shift mindsets so that we don't merely create access to opportunity, but address structural inequities in economic, social and public policies. To catalyze this change, we propose to be guided by the following:

- Establishing a learning community where stakeholders, including residents, share their experience and build capacity to implement strategies that result in an economy that encompasses all our residents.
- Recognizing that immigrants to our region are a unique and valuable resource, not only adding to the Pioneer Valley's population but contributing talent, experience, and vibrancy to the regional economy.
- Proactively developing collaborative partnerships with a range of stakeholders from the public, non-profit, and private sectors, in urban and rural communities, with a focus on coalition-building to improve economic opportunities for all our residents throughout the region.
- Shifting the paradigm in access to capital for underserved populations from philanthropic giving and lending to investing in people and communities.
- Building the capacity of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and our partners to acquire tools and address barriers to advance social mobility, economic resilience, and disaster preparedness in the region.
- Conducting analyses of both traditional data sources and alternative ones, such as data gathered through storytelling, focus groups, lived experiences, and annual evaluation of the CEDS implementation process.

Utilizing the input and consensus from the CEDS Strategy Committee, we believe that to realize this vision the Strategic Direction for the region will rely on eight priority themes to implement CEDS goals that we believe position the Pioneer Valley for increased economic growth and resiliency against future economic threats.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Social and economic mobility for all of Pioneer Valley's residents
- High-growth and emerging opportunities
- Workforce development
- Rural strategies
- Business environment
- Population
- Infrastructure
- Economic investment

Summary of Goals and Objectives

The Pioneer Valley's economic goals and objectives are summarized below. The Action Plan Matrix, Attachment B, provides information on the performance metrics and specific actions that will be used to measure and implement the goals and objectives, including descriptions, lead agencies, partner agencies, and desired results.

GOAL 1

Focus on social and economic mobility that benefits all the Pioneer Valley's residents, acknowledging that poverty and deep-seated biases continue to determine economic opportunities and outcomes for too many of the Pioneer Valley's residents.

Objective: Develop programs and initiatives that increase economic opportunities for minorities and other marginalized communities.

Actions:

- Establish a learning community around **an economy that encompasses all residents** and engage with national partners who successfully implement best practices, e.g., Global Detroit.
- Shift paradigm from lending to investing in creating **access to capital** for marginalized groups through establishing the Pioneer Valley Equity Fund to support small business development.
- Create **new workforce programs** that meet the needs of underserved communities.
- Develop and implement new mechanisms for direct communication with minorities, women, and other marginalized communities to ensure that resources are aligned with needs and will help overcome systemic economic challenges related to business **ownership and homeownership**.
- Develop a **new regional data management system** that disaggregates demographic data. Explore new collaboration with the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center to assist with data disaggregation.
- Develop mentoring program to **increase minority participation** in civic and government leadership roles.

GOAL 2

Pursue **high-growth and emerging opportunities**, adding emerging technologies, e.g. quantum and quantum-adjacent technologies, new non-fossil-fuel-based technologies to generate power and enhance air quality, AI, financial technology, food science, and advanced materials to the region's existing strengths in healthcare/social assistance, educational services, and manufacturing.

Objective:

- Leverage opportunities to grow the regional economy.
- Create sustainable jobs.

Actions:

- Support **opportunities in emerging applied-technology industries**, including but not limited to financial technology; AI; biotech; life sciences; quantum and quantum-adjacent technology; cybersecurity; food science; and specialized engineering, e.g. aeronautics.
- Undertake a regional industrial lands analysis in order to identify turnkey opportunities that will facilitate **economic investment** by developing an array of shovel-ready locations to site **new businesses**.
- Strengthen connections between educational institutions and the communities that they are located in by increasing collaboration, e.g. identifying community sites for companies or technologies incubated by higher education. One example would be creating centers of excellence tied to **emerging technologies**.
- Coordinate **workforce development** efforts with expanding and emerging industrial opportunities by collaborating with institutions of higher education and others.
- Support the **economic investment** recommendations of the Western Mass EDC, which include food science; non-pharmaceutical biomanufacturing and food ecosystem; new non-fossil-fuel-based technologies to generate power and enhance air quality; and advanced materials and R&D manufacturing.

GOAL 3

Recognize that **rural communities** need different and complementary economic development strategies tailored to their needs. As a region, the economic vitality of our urban centers impacts rural communities, which need their own set of strategies.

Objective: Create a set of unique, complementary strategies for rural communities.

Actions:

- Convene regularly scheduled regional round tables that focus on economic development opportunities, innovations, and ways to optimize interlocal cooperation.
- Work with smaller communities to expand shared-services model to meet local service needs and improve efficiencies.
- Pursue travel and tourism opportunities for regional marketing and small-town revitalization, especially heritage, recreational, and/or eco-tourism.
- Develop a regional housing plan that incorporates twenty-first century zoning, including a locally focused needs assessment and market analysis for each town.
- Develop basic permitting guides for each town that clarify and facilitate business and commercial development.

GOAL 4

Support small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs.

Objective: Strengthen the regional **business environment** by increasing the number of successful SMEs and entrepreneurs.

Actions:

- Map the existing micro- and small business, and entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Work with SMEs to identify their needs and explore creative strategies to meet those needs, e.g., hiring and retention, to help them open, stay open, and establish sustainable business practices.
- Harness the talents, work ethos and skills of immigrants in small business development through the use of the Community Connectors model.
- Identify spaces for young entrepreneurs to work and connect with peers.

GOAL 5

Reverse long-standing stagnant population growth to increase the regional workforce capacity.

Objective:

- **Increase the number of people who live and work in the Pioneer Valley.**

Actions:

- Provide jobs and professional opportunities for all, including residents and graduates from the region's institutions of higher education and training programs.
- Embrace the region's ethnic, demographic and cultural diversity and recognize its positive contributions to the quality of life in the Pioneer Valley.
- Showcase the region's relatively lower cost of living compared to other parts of the Commonwealth.
- Showcase the region's geographic centrality to major metropolitan areas, including Boston, Hartford, and New York, with proximity to major interstate highways.
- Revitalize downtown environments to attract people with jobs, entertainment, and housing opportunities.

GOAL 6

Strengthen the region's infrastructure to enable communities small and large, urban, suburban and rural alike, to pursue development opportunities and related investment, attract newcomers, and promote economic and social mobility. We are defining two types of infrastructure: "hard" (e.g., water systems, rail, broadband) and "soft" (e.g., services, programs). This goal recognizes that deferred maintenance and lack of investment in these forms of infrastructure are threats that will continue to inhibit the region's growth if not addressed.

Objective:

- Improve the hard infrastructure that enables communities to thrive.
- Strengthen the soft infrastructure programs and services that support residents and workers.

Actions:

Hard infrastructure:

- The region has been improving roads, water and sewer infrastructure for decades. These improvements are large, expensive, multi-year efforts and they need to remain a priority.
- Support the Compass Rail plan to increase rail connectivity.
- Complete a Drinking Water plan for the region.
- Continue supporting MBI's efforts across the Commonwealth to build out broadband.

Soft infrastructure:

- Assist with comprehensive and integrated service delivery to improve **workforce participation** rate.
- Advocate for increase in access to childcare.
- Continue coordinating transit schedules with local need/demand.

GOAL 7

Develop a strong, effective regional voice to advocate for the Pioneer Valley in order to communicate regional priorities and increase **economic investment** from the Commonwealth and the private sector.

Objective:

- Create and communicate regional economic priorities that are developed through a collaborative process.
- Increase economic investment in the Pioneer Valley.

Actions:

- Collectively identify regional priorities for economic investment that will benefit all the Pioneer Valley's residents.
- Coordinate the development of a single, strong regional voice at the state and federal level, and with the private sector, to advocate for and secure state, federal, and private **investments** in the regional priorities.
- Develop a mechanism for higher education, local governments, and regional planning agencies to communicate and collaborate on identifying and planning for **emerging opportunities**.
- Continue collaborating on the Knowledge Corridor initiative.



FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION

Building an Economy that Works for Everyone will be evaluated using two sets of benchmarks.

- The first set consists of quantitative metrics of key socio-economic indicators that will allow PVPC to track economic trends that measure progress toward implementing the priority areas and their accompanying goals and objectives.
- The second set consists of qualitative measures that will assess the progress of the collaborative programs and initiatives that support the goals.

Both sets are presented in the Action Plan Matrix, Attachment B.

Each key indicator is assigned a rating of positive, negative, or neutral based on the most recent available data. An improvement of at least 1% is considered a positive trend; a decrease of at least 1% is considered a negative trend; and trends between 1% positive and 1% negative are considered neutral. This will be effective in understanding regional changes over time. Rather than evaluating current-year statistics in isolation, this method will look at changes over a broader period, indicating whether trends are increasing or decreasing.

The qualitative benchmarks measure progress toward implementing projects and programs that are collaborative in nature. The CEDS will be the common agenda used by PVPC and participating stakeholder organizations during the next five years to activate the strategies that will enable the Pioneer Valley to meet its goal of becoming more robust and more economically resilient.

ATTACHMENT A: SUMMARY BACKGROUND

A BRIEF INDUSTRIAL HISTORY OF THE PIONEER VALLEY REGION

The Pioneer Valley Region in Western Massachusetts is comprised of Hampden and Hampshire Counties. Located in southern New England and bisected by the Connecticut River, the Pioneer Valley covers more than 1,179 square miles and is home to approximately 628,000 people living in 43 communities. Politically and economically, the region has long been in the shadow of Boston and eastern Massachusetts, the more populous parts of the Commonwealth.

The earliest known name for the region is the Kwinitekw (Connecticut River) Valley, as it was called by the Nipmuc peoples who inhabited it in the 17th century. Kwinitekw means “long river” in the local Nipmuc language and it is one of the most fertile river valleys in the world. European settlers Anglicized the name as the “Connecticut” River Valley, and it was not until the early 20th century that the name Pioneer Valley emerged. The term “Pioneer Valley” was developed by travel writers of the 1920s and 1930s for motorists who were the first generation to take a driving vacation. The Pioneer Valley Association in 1939 then used magazine advertisements to draw visitors to Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin counties as a travel destination.

In many ways, the Connecticut River has been the defining economic feature of the Pioneer Valley throughout its history. Its major urban centers lie along the river or within its watershed. The river served as an easier and economical means of transportation north and south for Native Americans, fur traders and early settlers in the 17th century, and in the 18th and 19th centuries its power was harnessed for mills of all varieties. A skilled labor force developed, leading to technological advancements, particularly in metal crafting, that in turn supported industries such as machine manufacturing and printing. Starting in 1839, Springfield – the largest city in the Pioneer Valley then and now – was connected by rail to other cities and additional strengths in insurance and finance took hold.

The 19th century saw two other industrial concentrations emerge which gained momentum during the 20th century and remain major players today: education and healthcare. The Pioneer Valley is home to 13 highly ranked colleges and universities, the largest of which is the University of Massachusetts (UMass) in Amherst, the “flagship” of the UMass system. Baystate Health is the largest healthcare provider in Western Massachusetts and is consistently one of the region’s top employers. At this writing, “eds and meds” are key sectors of the Pioneer Valley’s economic identity.

The region also includes significant areas of prime farmland, due to the richness of the glacial soils along the river, some of the most fertile in the nation. Pioneer Valley farmers have produced vegetables, dairy products, meat, maple syrup, tobacco, and fiber for centuries. At the present day, many of them are still small family-run enterprises that sell direct to the consumer via farm stands, farmers markets and CSAs (community supported agriculture), as well as directly to food banks and restaurants. There has also been some development of value-added facilities to process local foods to create additional products. opportunity, and oppression. These included Native Americans, Black people, European immigrants, and Latinos, including Puerto Ricans. In the present day, the dominant culture will need to work intentionally and persistently to overcome a legacy of distrust due to these actions.

EARLY YEARS OF THE CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY

Native Americans had been hunting, gathering, farming and trading in the Connecticut River Valley for at least 12,000 years, with the Agawams and the Nonotucks among the Indigenous groups that inhabited the area. Although many Native Americans succumbed to European diseases for which they had no immunity, those who remained saw that the fur trade with the English could provide new goods and secure new English allies. At the same time, William Pynchon and his son, John, negotiated a series of transactions with the native dwellers to secure desirable farming and settlement lands for English colonists, and this was the original town of Springfield, which then included what is now known as Agawam, Chicopee, East Longmeadow, Hampden, Holyoke, Longmeadow, Ludlow, West Springfield, and Wilbraham. The legacy of the Indigenous peoples of the Connecticut River Valley is still apparent, with tobacco and corn remaining as major crops in the area, and many locations named for the valley's earliest inhabitants.

When the Civil War began in April of 1861, both the Springfield Armory and the Smith & Wesson Company played a crucial role in providing arms for the Union Army. These wartime activities required an increased labor force, which led to population growth that continued into the 20th century.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND INFLUX OF SKILLED WORKERS

The Connecticut River Valley played a key role in the Industrial Revolution that changed economic and social life in the United States during the nineteenth century. The river itself provided transportation and power, and the Springfield Armory attracted skilled craftsmen and engineers and was the site of significant technological improvements in armaments, machinery, and metalwork. Rail lines to Boston and Albany, completed in 1841, made Springfield a regional hub of industry and innovation, in everything from ice skates to automobiles.

As industrialization in the United States increased the demand for workers, millions of people from abroad began to migrate into the country. They came for a variety of reasons — to seek better lives, new opportunities, and often to escape from oppression. The newly built canals of Holyoke diverted water from the Connecticut River to power numerous mills and factories, all of which needed laborers. Large numbers of residents from the South were also recruited by Holyoke factories to fill wartime labor shortages. The region's industries grew as the labor supply increased. The burgeoning industrial village at Hadley Falls, upriver from Springfield, attracted an influx of Irish immigrants in the wake of the potato famine that ravaged Ireland in 1845. Large numbers of Italian immigrants came to the region in successive waves starting in the 1860's and continuing until after World War II. During the late 19th century, Polish immigrants fleeing poverty and political repression arrived in the Pioneer Valley region to begin new lives as small farmers and factory workers. Beginning in the 1840s, famine prompted many French-Canadians to immigrate to the United States, as well.

Industrialization in the Connecticut River Valley spurred further technological innovations, and the region attracted creative, entrepreneurial individuals from around the country and around the world. Prominent examples include the Smith and Wesson Company on Stockbridge Street in Springfield, a company which grew into a world leader in the production of military and police firearms. Charles and Frank Duryea built the world's first gasoline-powered automobile in Springfield in 1893, and their second car won the first motor-car race in the U.S. in 1895. The following year, the Duryea brothers built thirteen identical motor-cars and were thus the first to bring "mass production" to the automobile industry. The number of innovations in technology and manufacturing processes that originated in Springfield attest to the city's leading role in industrial development in the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The region's agricultural economy also grew during this time. Workers became available when a sharp decline in Puerto Rico's agricultural economy during the Great Depression led to these citizens moving to the area during the 1940s and 1950s. New communities were established in Springfield and Holyoke, Massachusetts, as the new workers moved north and provided labor for seasonal agriculture, as well as numerous blue-collar industries.

The Pioneer Valley is also a popular, year-round tourist destination—a role that it has played historically. Travelers are drawn to the Pioneer Valley by its lively college towns, such as Northampton and Amherst; the resurgent city of Springfield; its unspoiled nature, numerous parks, and recreational facilities, including New England's largest and most popular amusement park, Six Flags New England in Agawam; its cultural and historical sites, such as the Emily Dickinson House in Amherst, the Springfield Armory National Historical Site, and the Basketball Hall of Fame.

Springfield attest to the city's leading role in industrial development in the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

European Immigration

The 19th and 20th centuries saw significant immigration from Europe, the Caribbean, and Central America. Most of these immigrants were fleeing famine, poverty, persecution, and political repression in their home countries and sought economic opportunity and a new life in America. As they generally encountered racism and bigotry in the United States, including the Pioneer Valley, immigrants from similar regions tended to settle together in concentrated areas and form their own relatively self-sufficient communities.

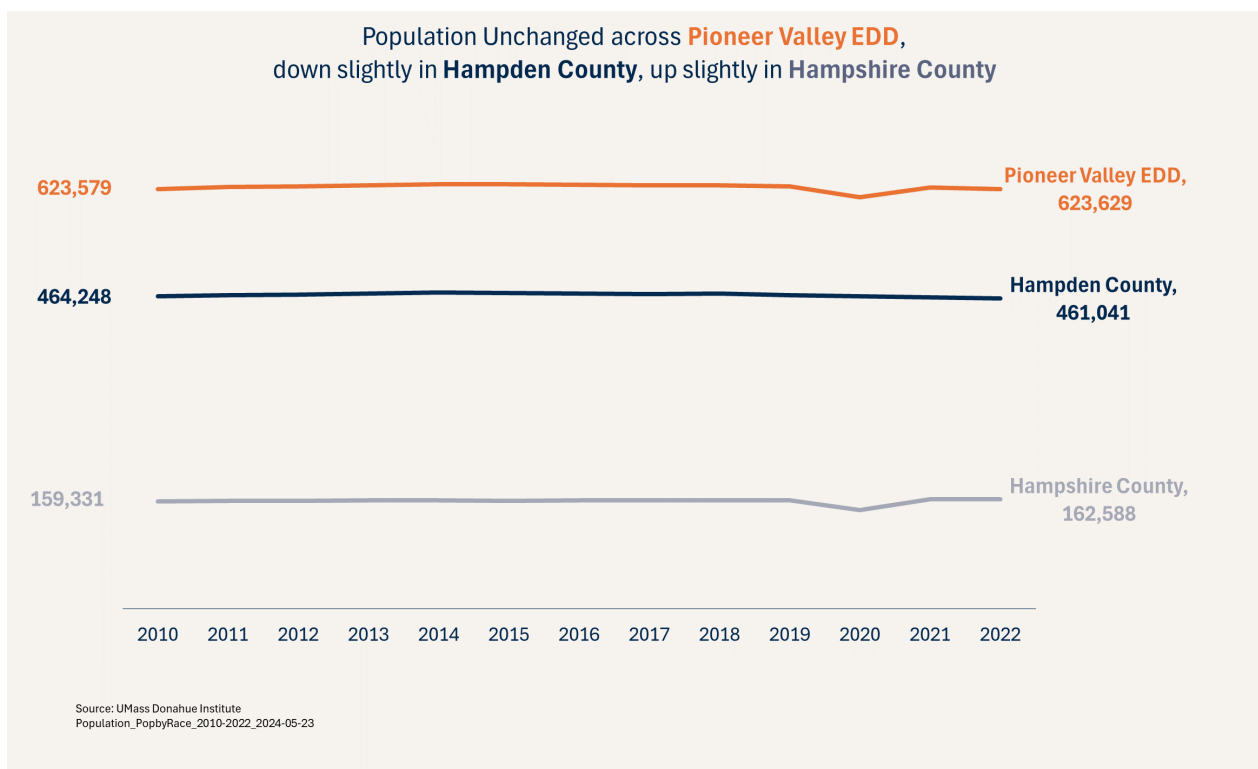
BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Local Economic Conditions

The Pioneer Valley region has many economic assets. It is home to 13 highly ranked colleges and universities, large healthcare providers, many large and mid-sized employers, numerous small businesses, a significant agricultural sector, and a vibrant arts community. Historically, the top three industries most important to the region's economic success have been health care, educational services, and advanced manufacturing; other important industry sectors include finance and insurance; professional, scientific and technical services; accommodation and food services; and agriculture and sustainable food systems.

Demographics

According to the US Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program, the 2022 population for the Pioneer Valley region was 623,629. This is only slightly higher than the 2010 population of 623,579 and includes a recovery from a brief loss of population in Hampshire County during the COVID-19 pandemic (primarily due to the temporary closure of several liberal arts colleges and the University of Massachusetts). The population of Hampden County is significantly higher than that of Hampshire County, because the region's major cities (including Springfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee) and greater metropolitan region are located there.



Almost every year since the late 1990s has seen an out-migration from the Pioneer Valley and a decrease in the native natality rate, a trend which has been noted nationwide. If not for immigration from a range of countries, the local population would have dropped to the point where it impacted state and federal funding, and diminished industrial interest from potential employers.

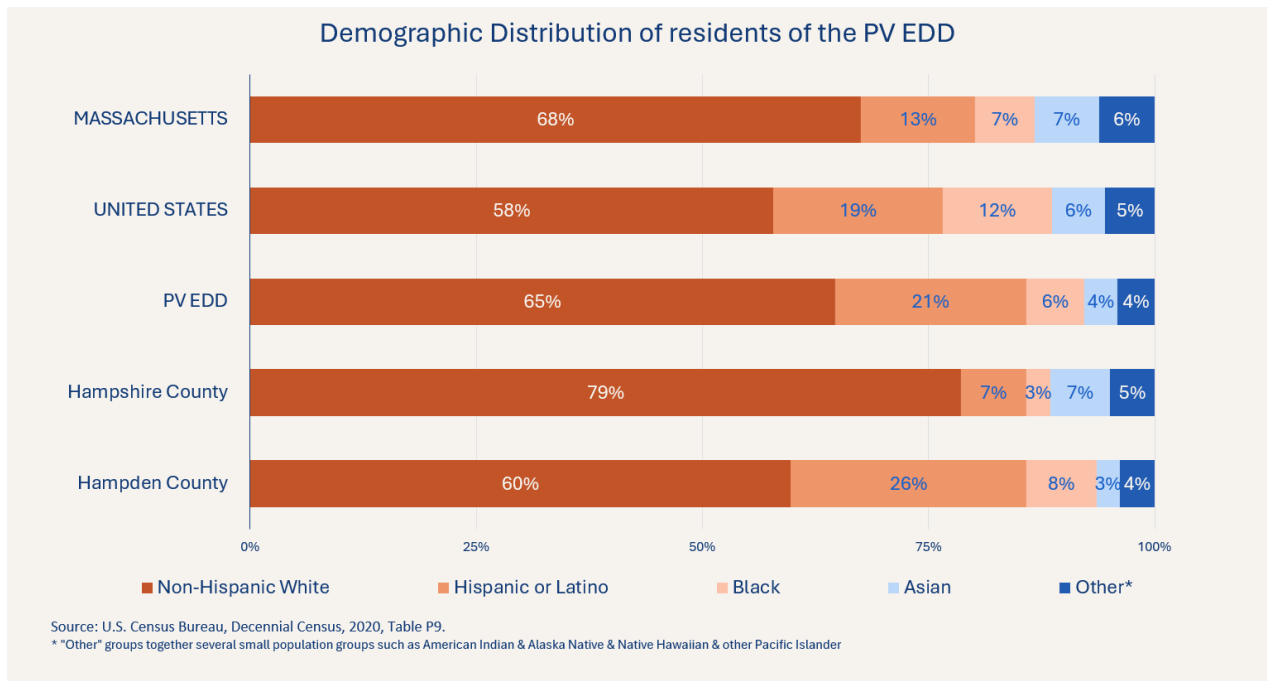
In Pioneer Valley's small and rural communities, the population has experienced very slow rates of growth, generally no more than 1% per year. Also, the population that remains is gradually shifting from working-age people and young families to retirees and empty-nesters, reducing school enrollment and the pool of potential workers.

Municipality	County	2010	2020	2021	2022	2023	Population Change, 2010-2023	Population Change, 2020-2023
Springfield	Hampden	153,570	155,280	154,993	154,007	153,672	102	-1,608
Chicopee	Hampden	55,306	55,448	55,222	54,939	54,838	-468	-610
Westfield	Hampden	41,121	40,743	40,621	40,501	40,509	-612	-234
Amherst	Hampshire	38,718	27,796	40,264	40,124	40,277	1,559	12,481
Holyoke	Hampden	39,917	38,154	37,866	37,689	37,628	-2,289	-526
Northampton	Hampshire	28,663	27,324	29,538	29,419	29,370	707	2,046
West Springfield	Hampden	28,357	28,768	28,663	28,479	28,424	67	-344
Agawam	Hampden	28,451	28,626	28,440	28,373	28,406	-45	-220
Ludlow	Hampden	21,136	20,766	20,854	20,859	20,845	-291	79
South Hadley	Hampshire	17,737	16,287	18,188	18,087	17,992	255	1,705
East Longmeadow	Hampden	15,793	16,389	16,346	16,337	16,378	585	-11
Easthampton	Hampshire	16,050	16,177	16,114	16,073	16,031	-19	-146
Longmeadow	Hampden	15,810	15,813	15,698	15,621	15,621	-189	-192
Belchertown	Hampshire	14,661	15,339	15,392	15,367	15,339	678	0
Wilbraham	Hampden	14,226	14,581	14,526	14,506	14,518	292	-63
Palmer	Hampden	12,145	12,425	12,385	12,330	12,315	170	-110
Ware	Hampshire	9,867	10,040	10,003	9,928	10,067	200	27
Southwick	Hampden	9,506	9,220	9,212	9,185	9,195	-311	-25
Monson	Hampden	8,568	8,134	8,115	8,091	8,104	-464	-30
Southampton	Hampshire	5,804	6,220	6,233	6,228	6,195	391	-25
Granby	Hampshire	6,242	6,103	6,096	6,071	6,060	-182	-43
Hadley	Hampshire	5,252	5,315	5,295	5,287	5,277	25	-38
Hampden	Hampden	5,141	4,953	4,939	4,910	4,913	-228	-40
Brimfield	Hampden	3,619	3,689	3,691	3,689	3,699	80	10
Hatfield	Hampshire	3,259	3,338	3,336	3,323	3,319	60	-19
Holland	Hampden	2,481	2,596	2,586	2,570	2,565	84	-31
Williamsburg	Hampshire	2,490	2,498	2,492	2,475	2,469	-21	-29
Huntington	Hampshire	2,184	2,095	2,090	2,077	2,071	-113	-24
Wales	Hampden	1,844	1,827	1,818	1,806	1,802	-42	-25
Russell	Hampden	1,784	1,639	1,637	1,631	1,627	-157	-12
Westhampton	Hampshire	1,603	1,617	1,626	1,625	1,626	23	9
Granville	Hampden	1,571	1,537	1,536	1,528	1,525	-46	-12
Pelham	Hampshire	1,323	1,282	1,274	1,271	1,265	-58	-17
Chester	Hampden	1,339	1,225	1,220	1,216	1,211	-128	-14
Blandford	Hampden	1,227	1,213	1,212	1,208	1,204	-23	-9
Worthington	Hampshire	1,159	1,192	1,191	1,187	1,179	20	-13
Chesterfield	Hampshire	1,226	1,185	1,186	1,178	1,173	-53	-12
Goshen	Hampshire	1,058	960	957	949	944	-114	-16
Montgomery	Hampden	846	817	816	817	825	-21	8
Cummington	Hampshire	868	827	825	820	819	-49	-8
Plainfield	Hampshire	648	632	634	636	637	-11	5
Tolland	Hampden	490	468	466	466	467	-23	-1
Middlefield	Hampshire	519	389	394	393	392	-127	3

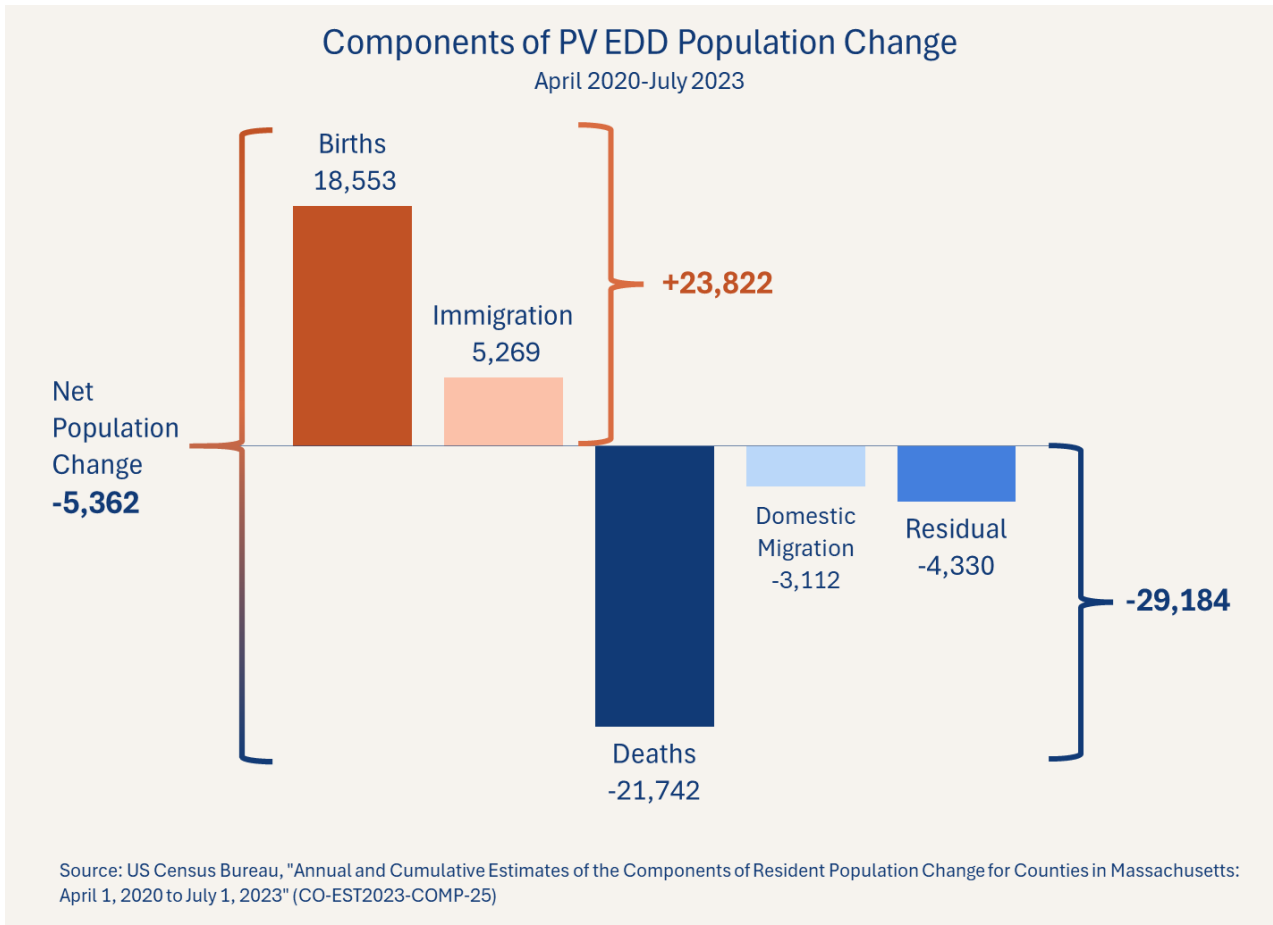
Source: US Census Bureau, Population Division, "Subcounty Resident Population Estimates: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023"

Drilling down to the community level, we see that most communities have lost population since 2010. Trends since 2020 (i.e. since COVID-19) show almost all communities with reduced 2023 population. Three notable exceptions include Amherst, Northampton, and South Hadley, home to five of the largest colleges in the region. The closing of campuses during COVID lowered the Census counts in 2020. The table—which is sorted by 2023 population—shows that Springfield is the only community with population exceeding 100,000. There are also 16 cities and towns with populations exceeding 10,000.

The region’s demographic composition can be seen in the chart below, with comparisons to the statewide and national distributions. Difference between the distributions in Hampden and Hampshire Counties are primarily due to the large size of population groups in Hampden County’s urban areas.

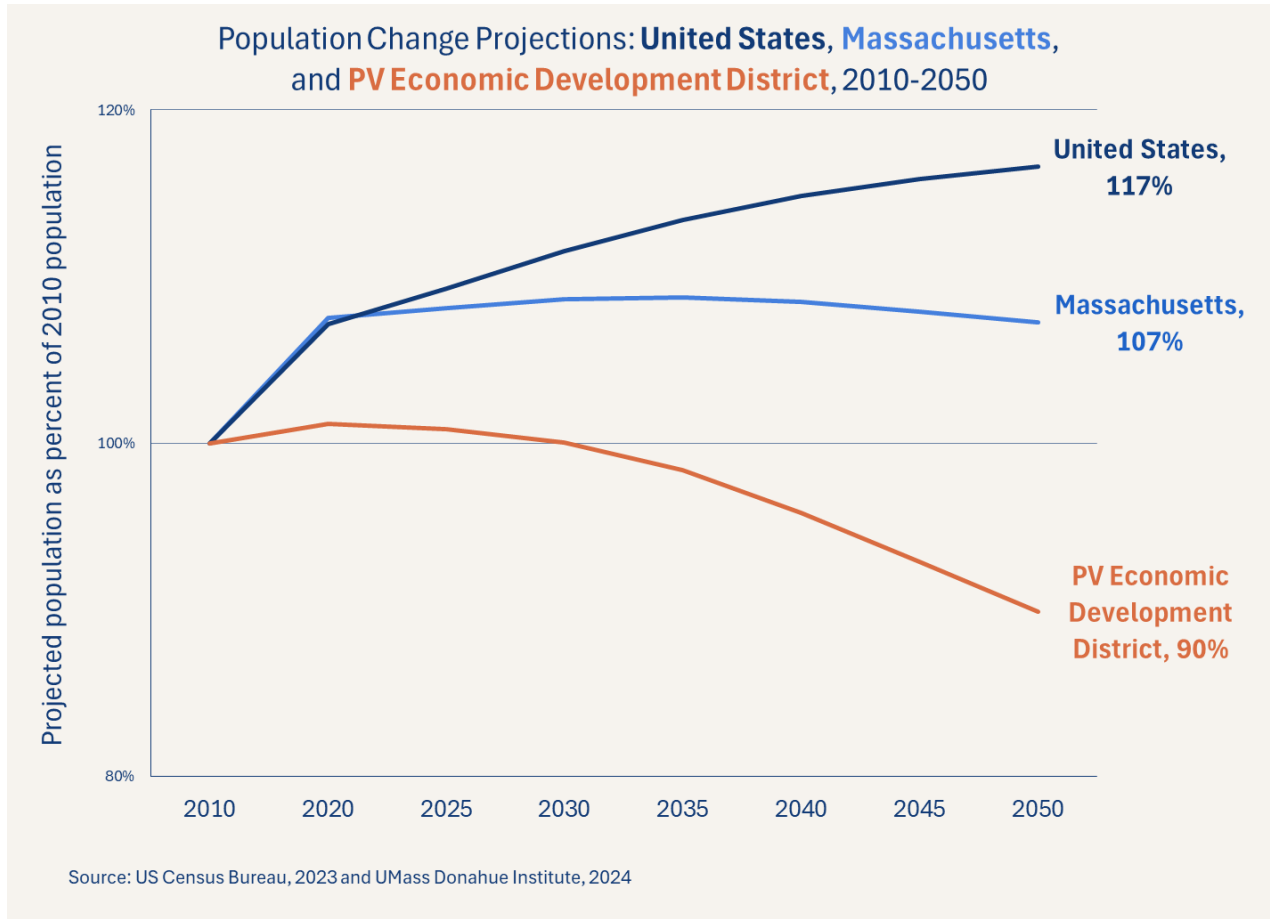


Population estimates from the U.S. Census show that the region’s total population has increased over the past 20 years. However, projections of future population show a gradual decline over the next three decades. There are many reasons for this, including decreasing birth rates, aging population, and emigration to other states.



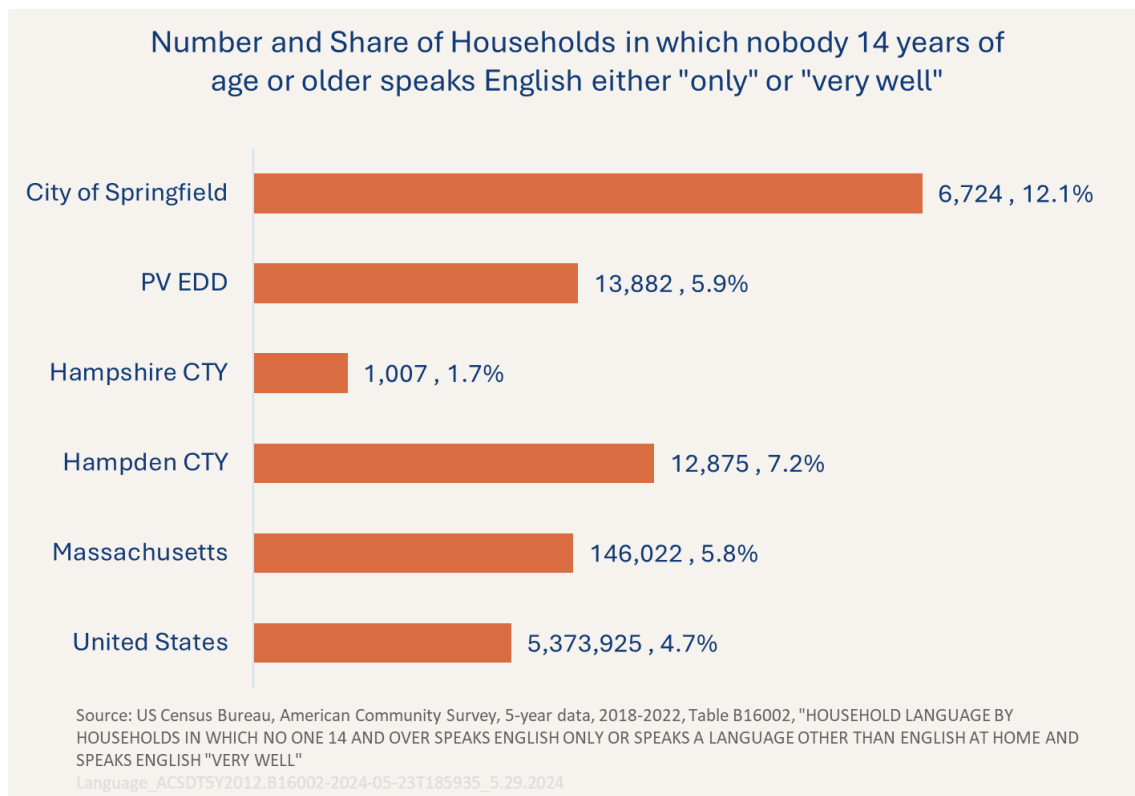
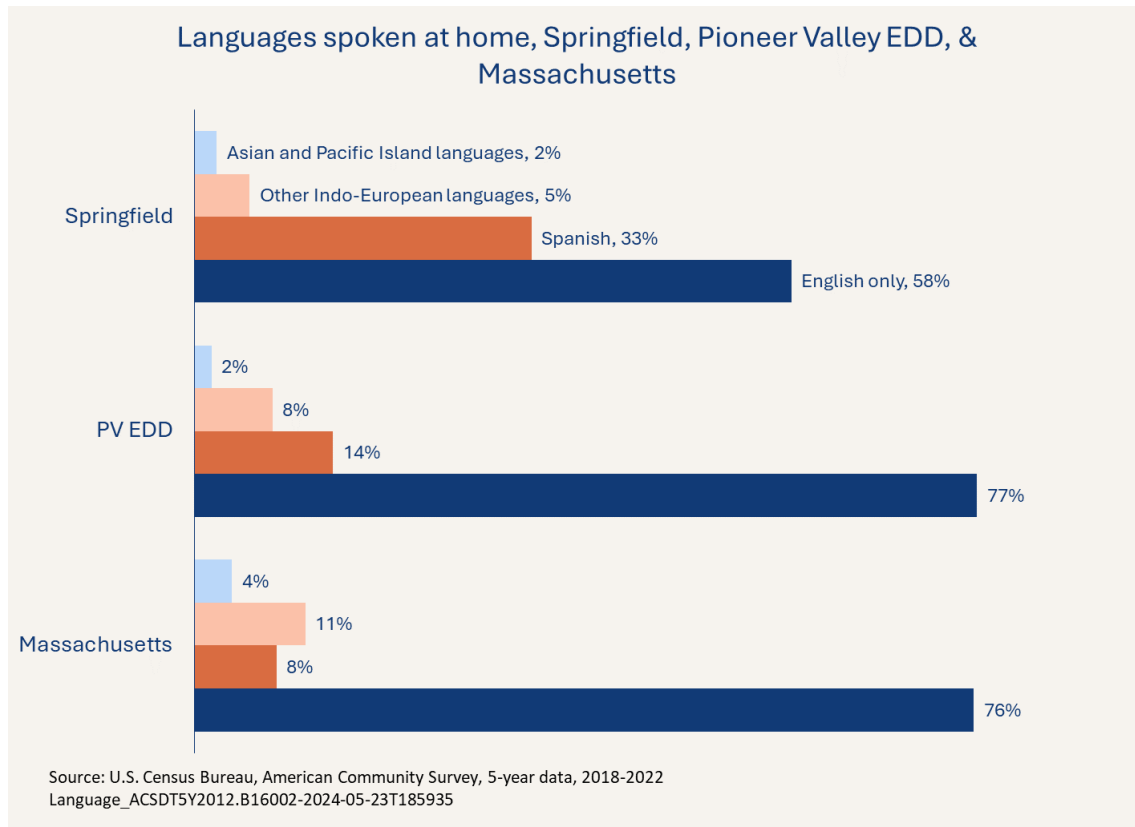
Looking only at the most recent years, since the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, overall population in the region has declined by 5,362, largely the result of Deaths outpacing Births. Domestic migration in this time period ended up being less than the influx of international immigrants.¹

¹ A residual component reflects population change that cannot be attributed to any of the identified categories.

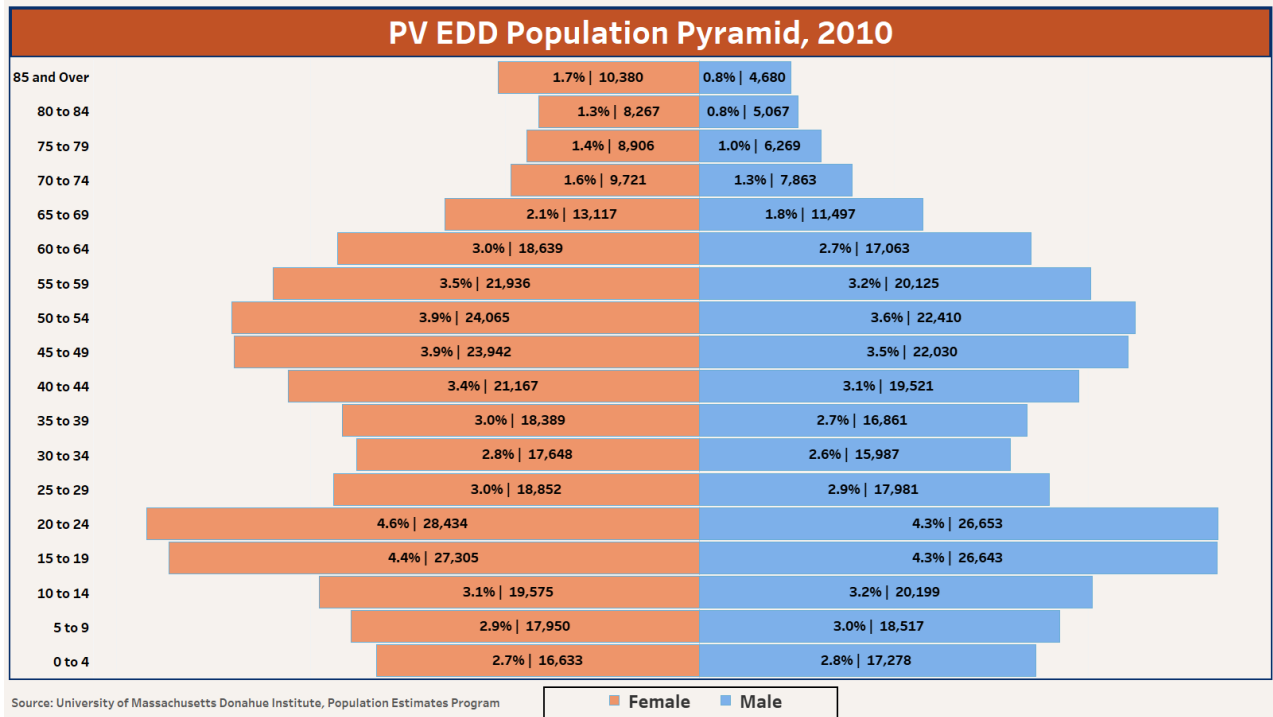
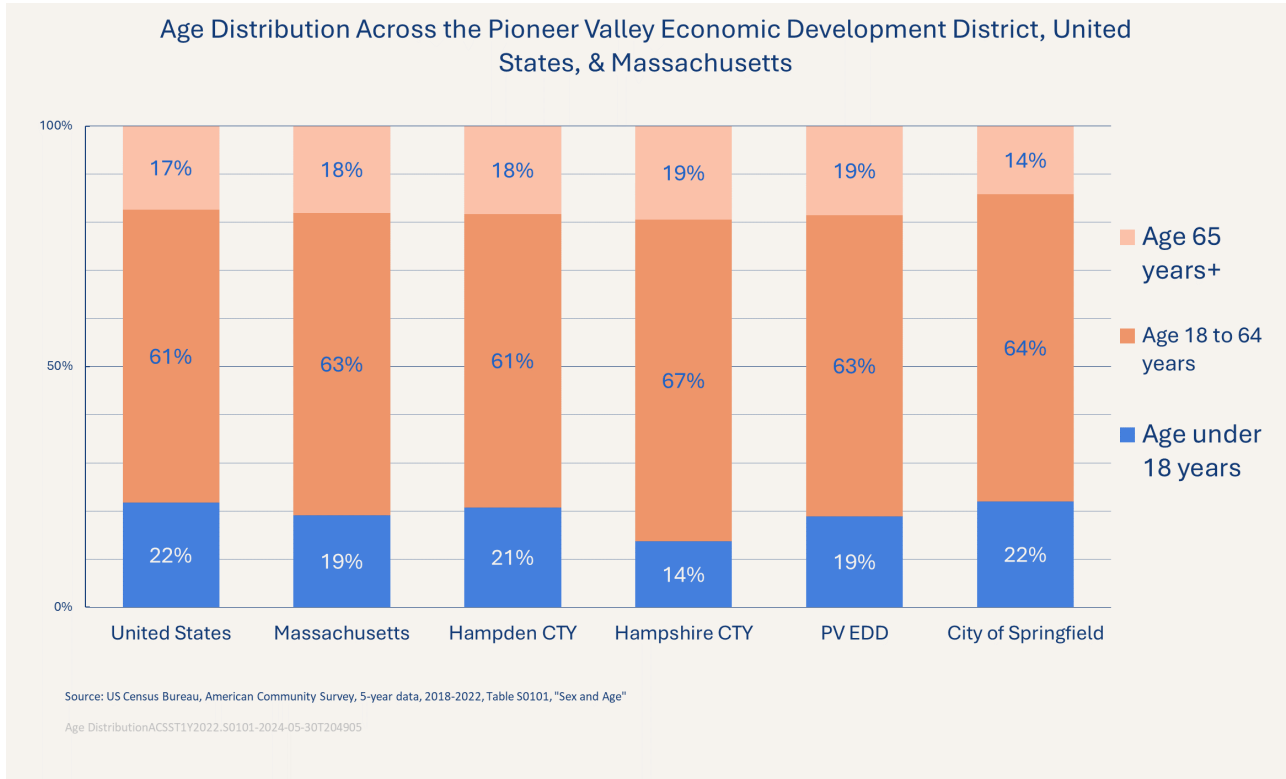


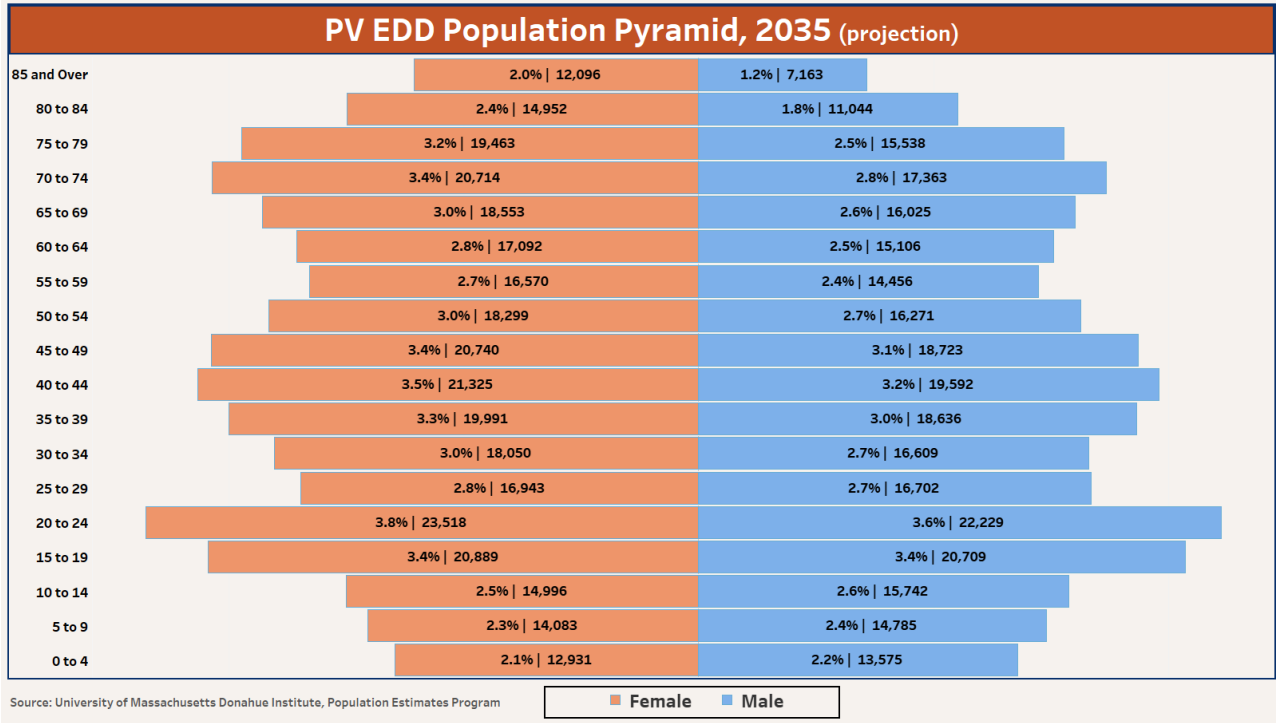
Comparing population trends and projections for the Pioneer Valley Economic Development District with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the United States, we see that – indexed to 2010 population, by 2050, the PVEDD is expected to see a 10% decline in population, compared with 17% growth for the nation, and 7% growth for the state.

In correlation with the figures above showing a high Latino population, it is in the city of Springfield that the most Spanish is spoken – more than double the amount spoken in the full District and three times the amount in the Commonwealth as a whole. In fact, in some cases Spanish is the only language spoken; lack of English language fluency affects 12% of the population in Springfield.



The age distribution of the Pioneer Valley EDD population is very similar to the state and the country, with Hampden County having a younger population than Hampshire County. The highest number of youth and lowest number of seniors is in the City of Springfield, in Hampden County.

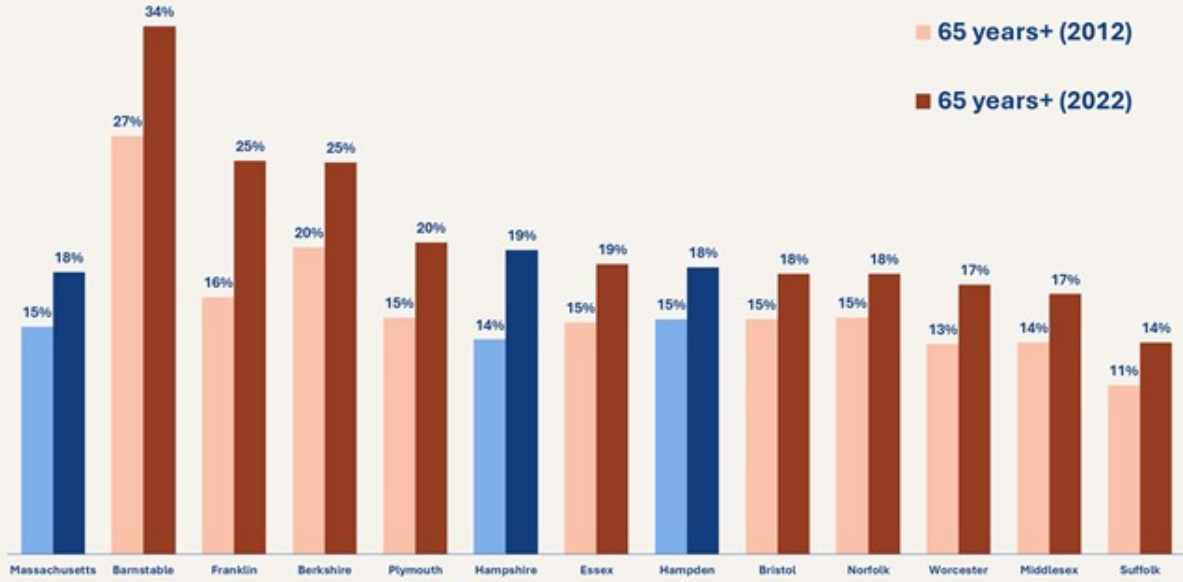




The aging of the regional population can also be seen when comparing the share of residents age 65 and over time. In the chart below, we see that in every county in Massachusetts, this has been a growing share, comparing two periods of time (2008-2012 and 2018-2022). Both Hampden and Hampshire Counties have had similar shares of seniors over both periods, and both counties are very similar to the overall Massachusetts share.

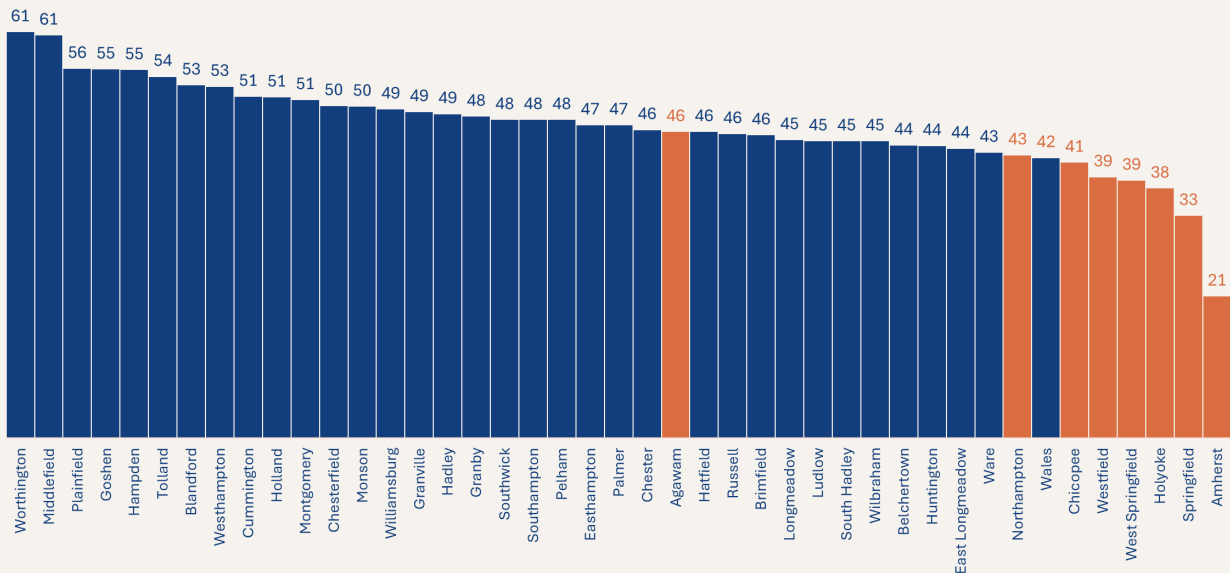
Also, we see that the aging of our region is coupled with a distinct disparity between our urban and rural communities. Seven of the eight largest communities in the PVEDD fall within the eight lowest median ages, and the median ages range from 21 years to 61 years. Moreover, the weighted median age of the 35 rural communities is 10 years older than the weighted average of the eight largest communities (46.2 years vs 36.3 years).

The share of Massachusetts residents who are age 65 or older has increased throughout Massachusetts over the past decade, including here in Hampshire and Hampden Counties



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year data, 2018-2022, Table S0101, Age and Sex. Data unavailable for Dukes and Nantucket Counties.

There is a striking gap in median age by community size -- weighted average of **8 largest communities** (36.3 years) is 10 years younger than **smaller/rural communities** (46.2 years)

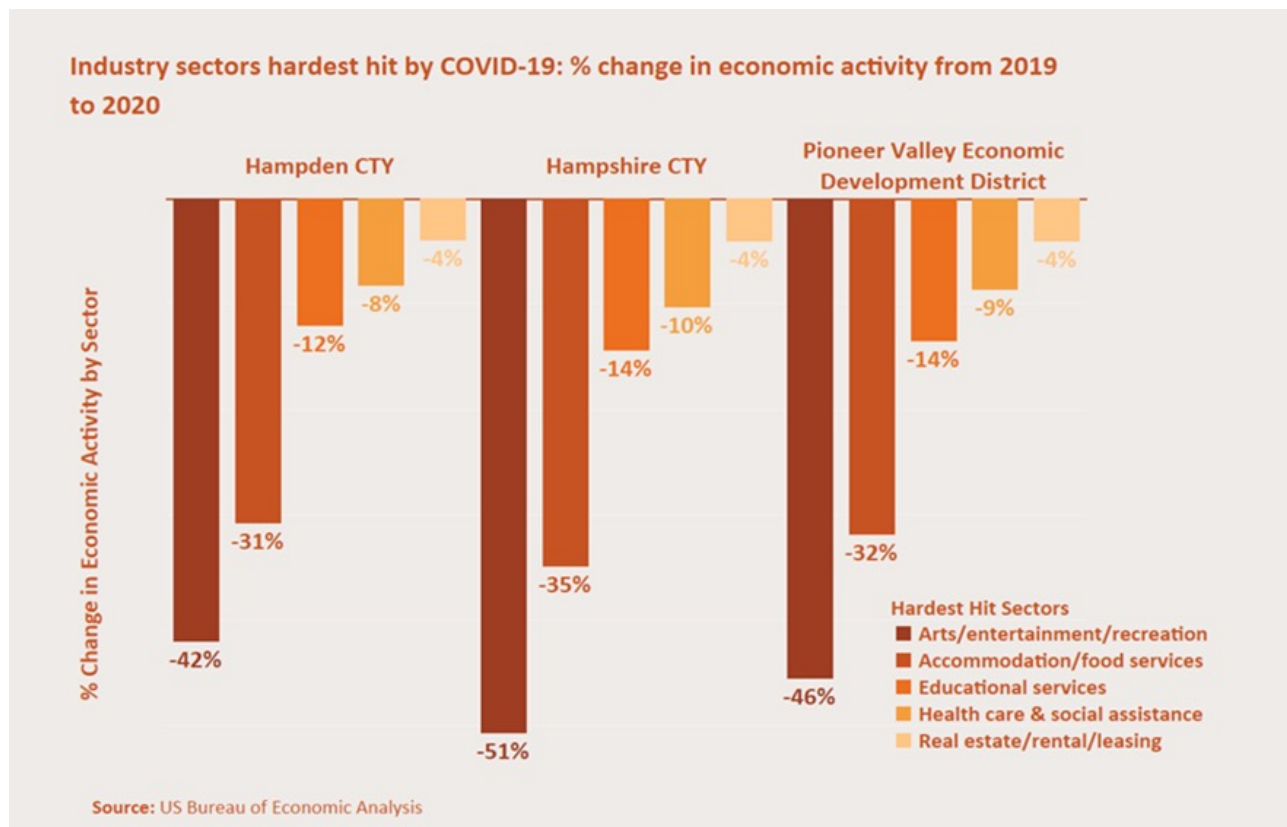


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year data, 2018-2022

MedianAgeRural vs Rural_ACSST5Y2022.S0101-2024-06-05T203035

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ECONOMIC SHUTDOWN

During 2020, like most regions across the United States, the Pioneer Valley experienced a substantial decrease in the size of its economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The inflation-adjusted value of goods and services (i.e., the Gross Domestic Product [GDP]) declined by \$1.6 billion (5.3%). The reduced demand for goods and services hit small businesses especially hard, undercutting their revenues dramatically. In the initial weeks of the COVID-19 shutdowns, small business revenues declined steeply – by 40.6% in Hampden County and 58.1% in Hampshire County – and remained below January 2020 levels throughout 2020 and into 2021. Five industrial sectors that are the backbone of the regional economy dropped by 4%-51% between 2019 and 2020.

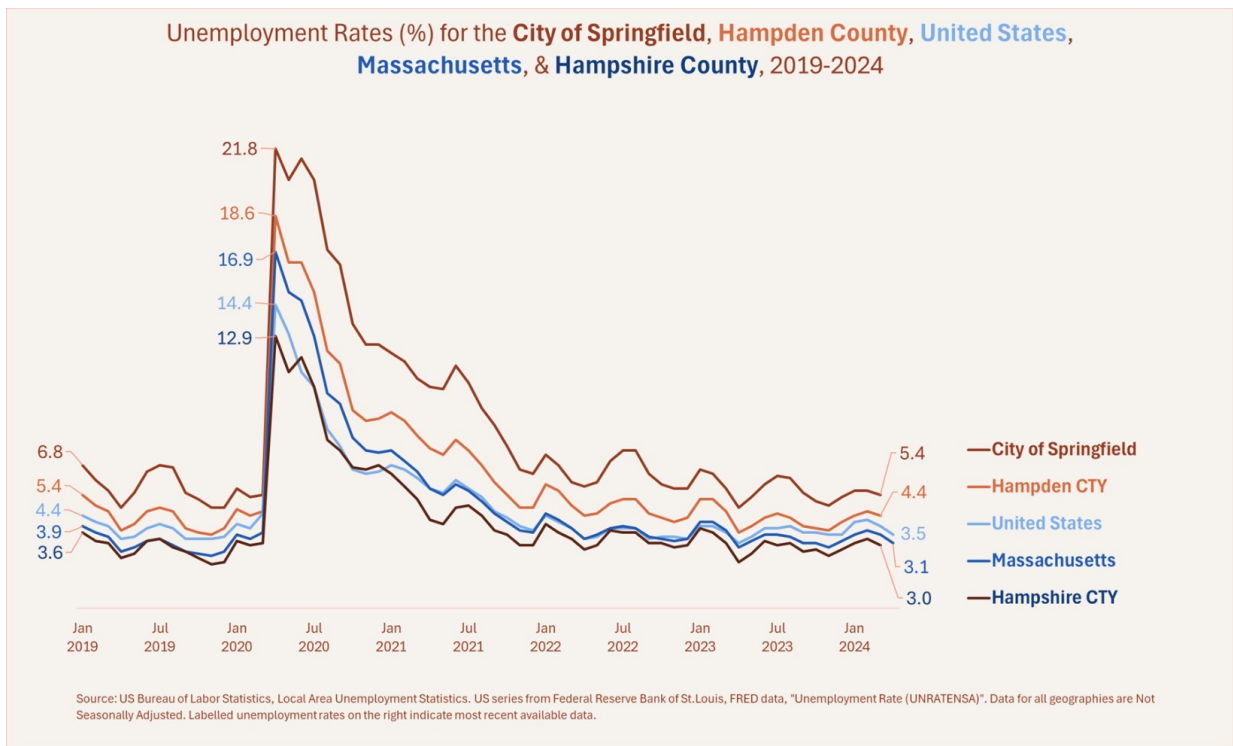


As the pandemic took hold, unemployment rates spiked, remaining well above pre-pandemic levels at the end of 2021. In Hampden County, home to the vast majority of the region’s BIPOC residents (93% of the Hispanic/Latino population, and 90% of the region’s Black population) unemployment peaked at 18.6% in April 2020. Hampshire County’s peak was lower at 12.9%. Among the municipalities in the Pioneer Valley, April 2020 unemployment rates topped 20% in two cities (Springfield and Holyoke) and exceeded 15% in another 15 cities and towns. While we do not have county level unemployment rates broken down by gender, race and ethnicity, we know from unemployment-insurance-claims data that women and Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) workers shouldered a disproportionate share of the unemployment burden.

The economic shutdown due to the pandemic was momentous for our region, the country, and the world. The impact on the Pioneer Valley was significant, causing regional economic development and business support agencies and organizations to re-think their modes of operation, how and why they conducted certain activities, and imagining new ways of engaging with residents, businesses, and local leaders. By the end of 2021, unemployment rates had mostly, but not entirely, recovered, though rates remained higher in the PV EDD’s urban centers. Some regional businesses continue to struggle to adjust to persistent changes in the regional economy.

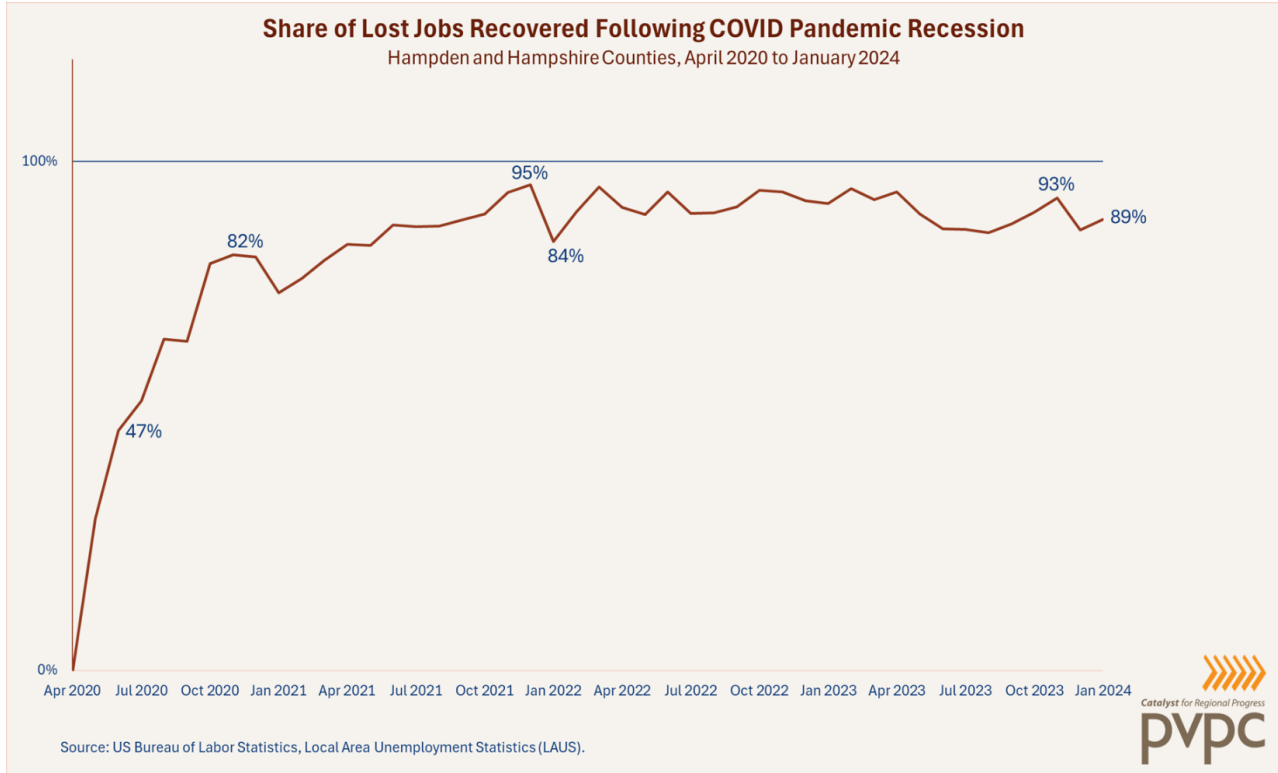
POST-COVID RECOVERY

By early 2024, unemployment rates for all regions had recovered to below pre-COVID levels. While this accurately reflects improvements in the regional economy, it also reflects a reduction in the labor force, as some workers have fallen out of the labor force, and therefore are not counted as unemployed. Although every community in the PV EDD experienced spikes in unemployment rates during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the disparities by region have remained notably persistent, with the City of Springfield experiencing region-leading unemployment levels, and Hampshire County experiencing unemployment rates consistently below the statewide averages.

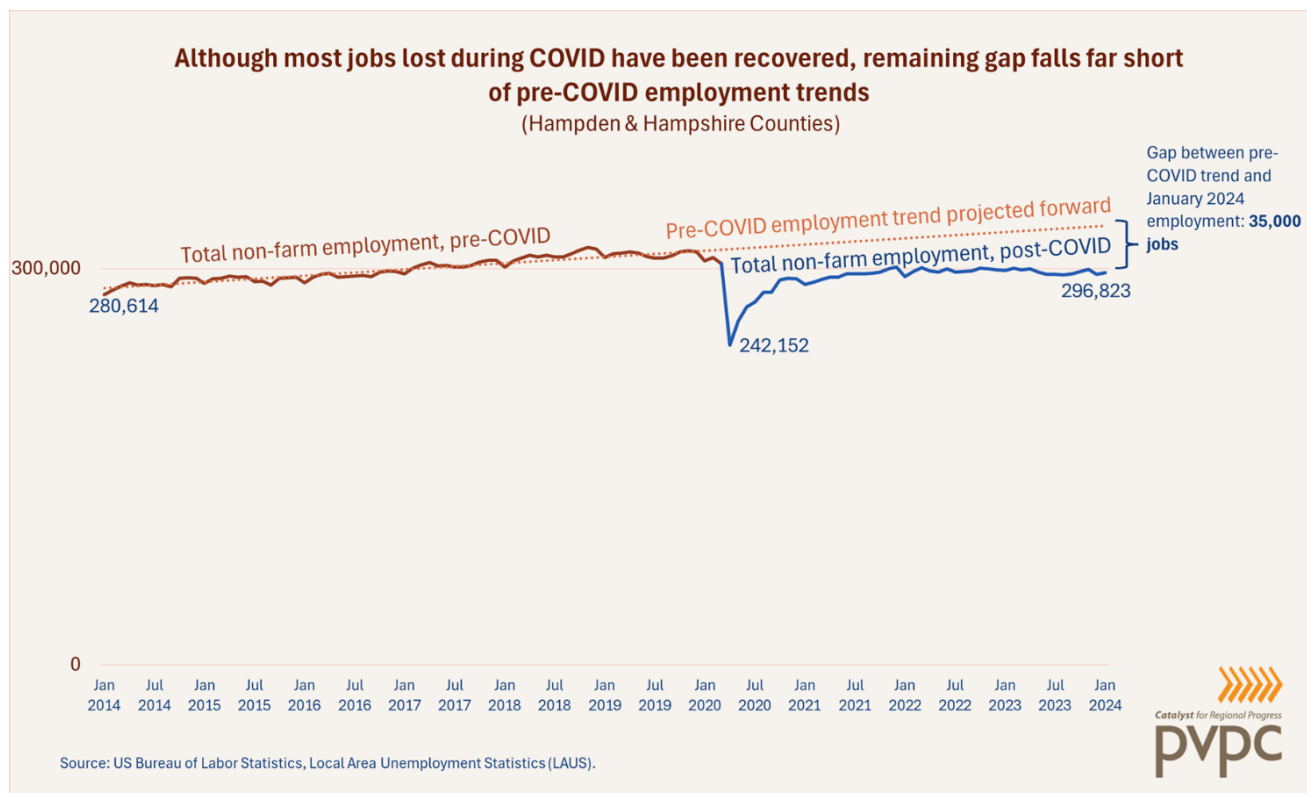


COVID-19'S LINGERING IMPACT ON THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

One sign of the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is evident in the number of jobs held in the region. In the chart below, we see that within a year of the peak pandemic downturn in April 2020, most of the jobs had been recovered. Since then, however, the region has remained “stuck”, fluctuating between 84% and 93% of lost jobs recovered.

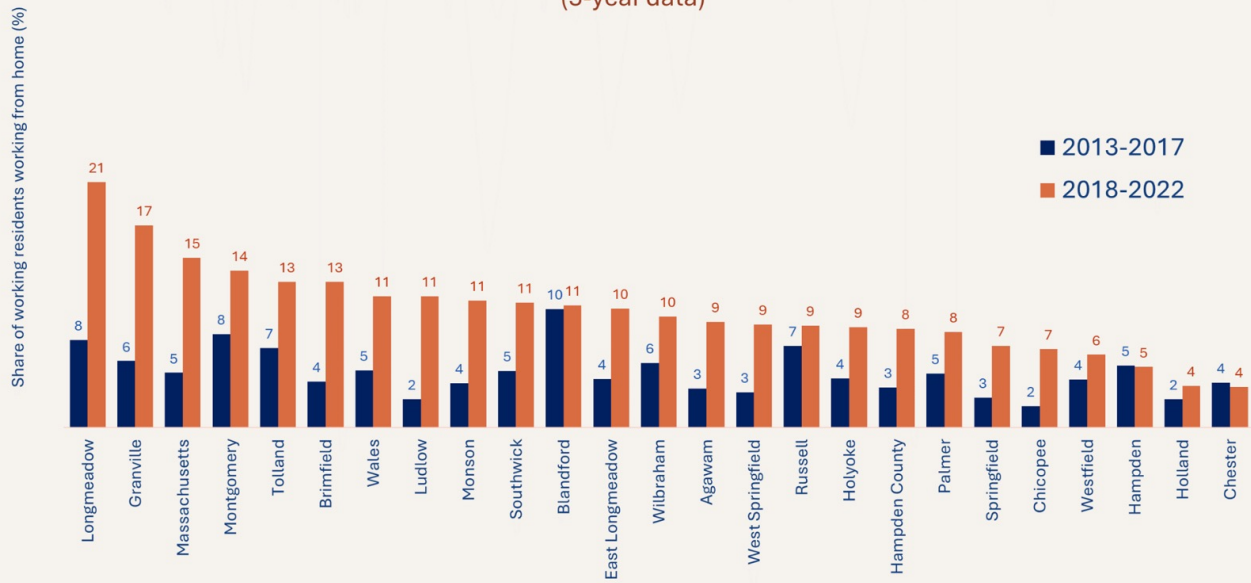


Pre-COVID, the region’s economy was quite robust, having recovered well from the 2008-2009 recession. Like all other regions, tens of thousands of jobs were lost during the COVID shutdown, but most were reinstated or newly created fairly quickly after businesses reopened. Nevertheless, the upward trajectory pre-COVID was lost, and total employment has never fully recovered to those levels.



One of the most significant impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on jobs and workforce issues is the shift to remote work, primarily from workers’ homes. Only a small portion of the workforce worked remotely prior to the pandemic, but that number doubled or tripled during and after it. Although there has been a significant move back to the workplace, in some cases with employers now requiring fully in-person work, most workplaces that allowed remote work are still allowing it to some degree.

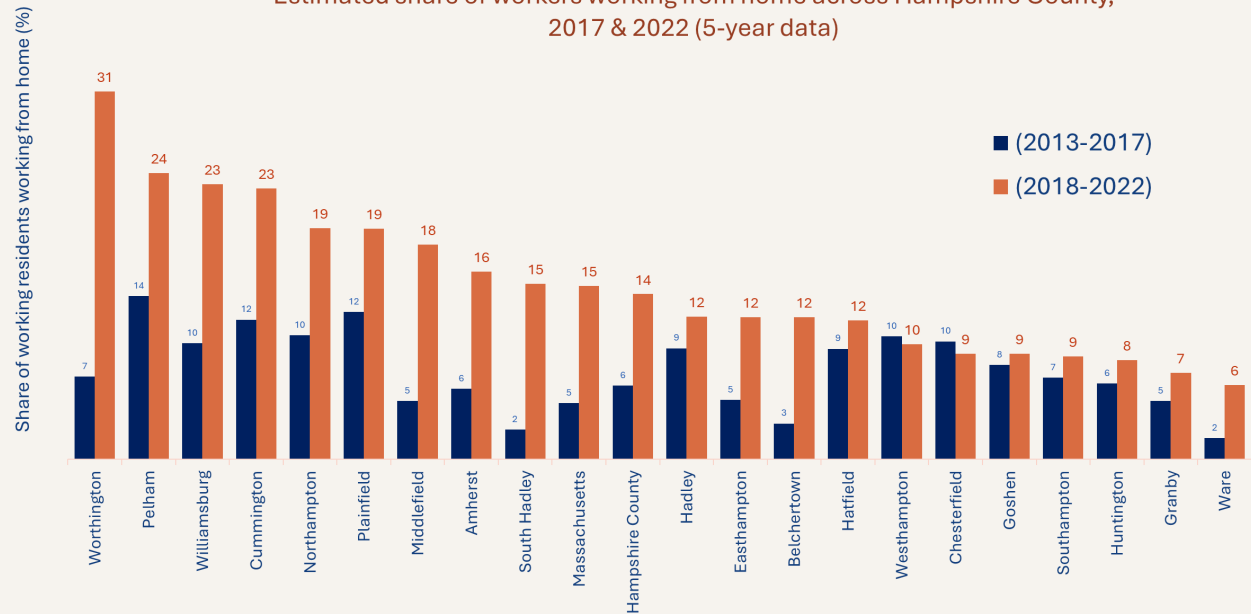
Estimated share of workers working from home across Hampden County, 2017 & 2022
(5-year data)



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year data, Table B80141, Means of transportation to work by vehicles available (estimates are rounded to full digits)

One interesting note from these charts is that in some of the more rural areas, such as the towns of Blandford, Westhampton, and Chesterfield, a significant share of workers has always worked from home, and that did not significantly change due to COVID.

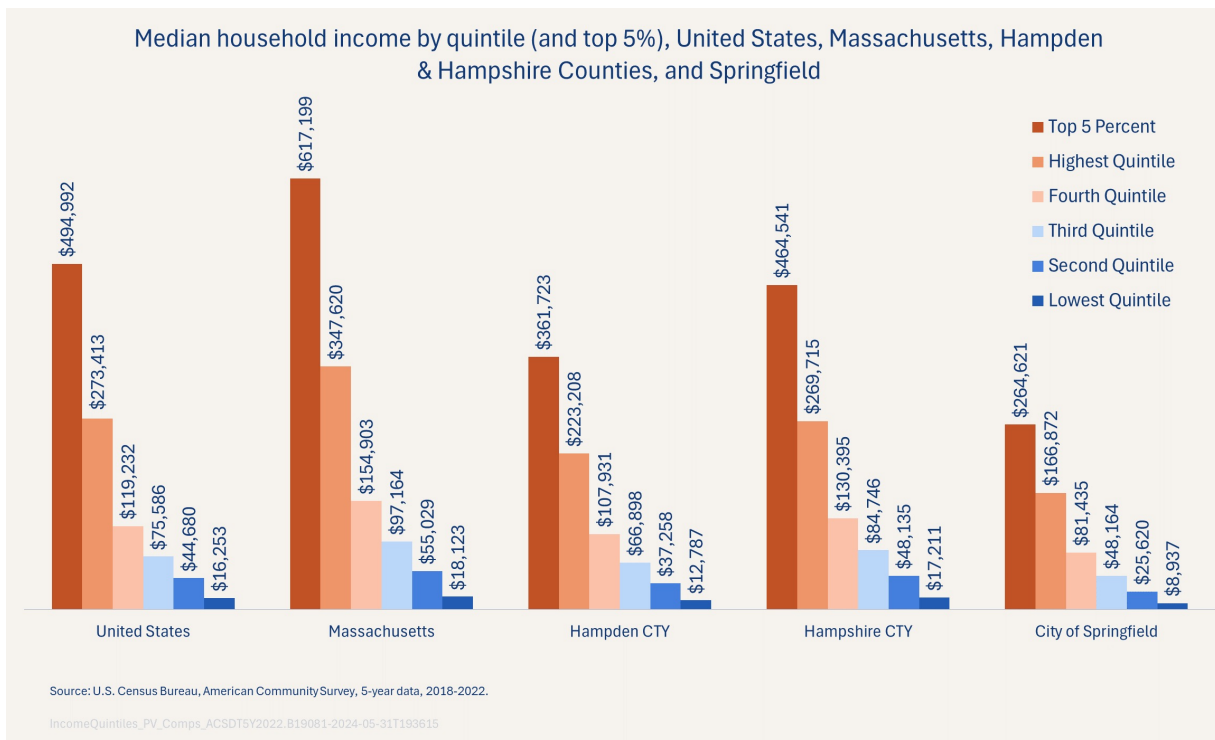
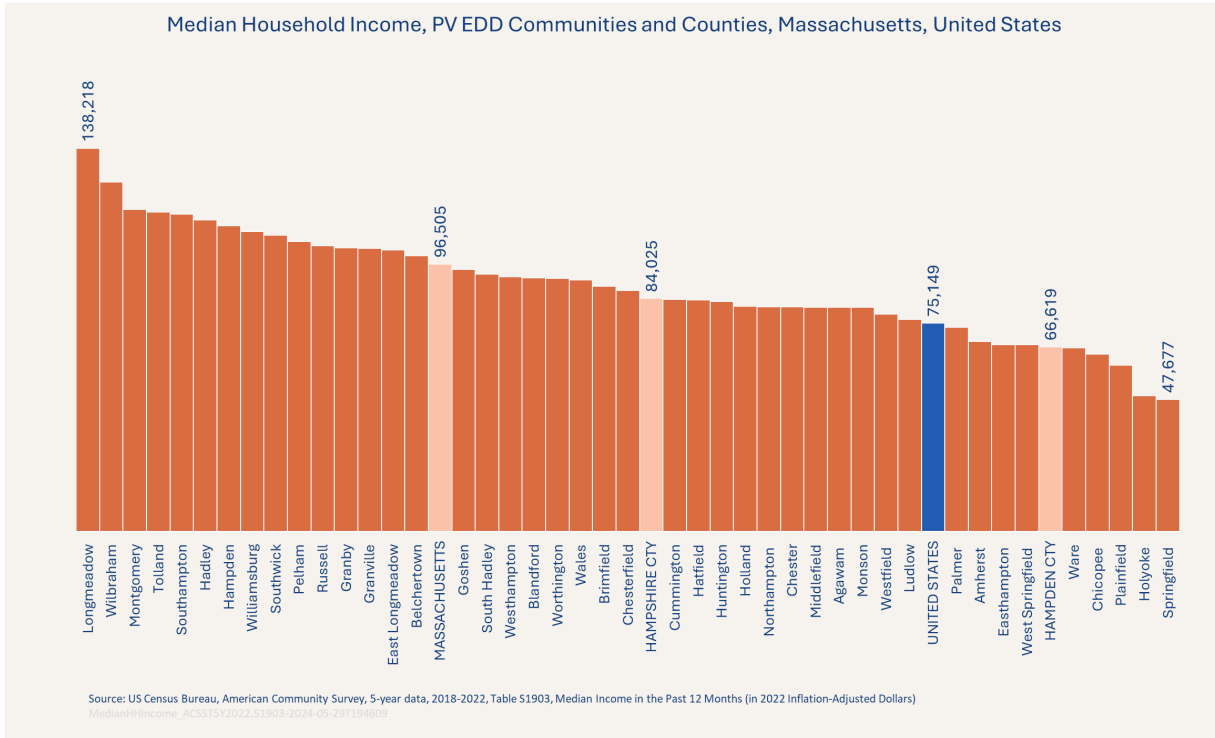
Estimated share of workers working from home across Hampshire County, 2017 & 2022 (5-year data)



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year data, Table B80141, Means of transportation to work by vehicles available (estimates are rounded to full digits). Note that margins of error on these estimates are generally larger for smaller communities.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING INDICATORS

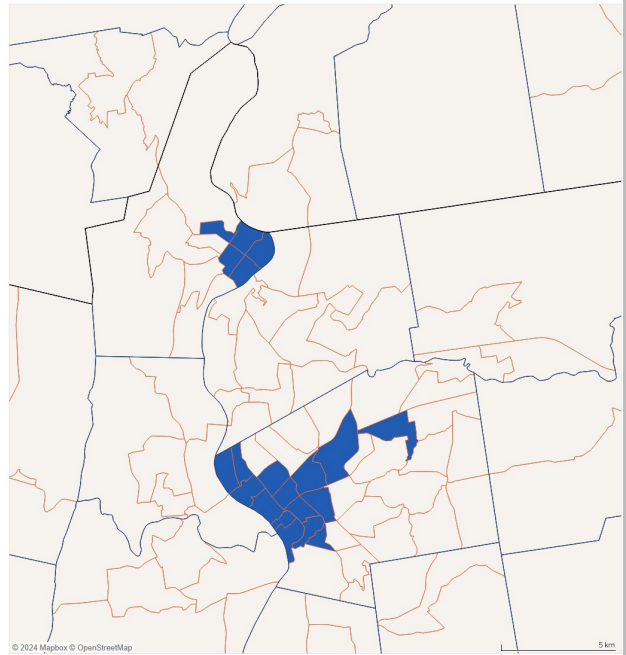
When all communities in the region are compared, the vast range of median household income can be seen. Most of the region has lower incomes than the median for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but many communities (14) are on the higher end of the range. However, by comparison, most of the Pioneer Valley has median incomes above that for the United States as a whole. The lowest incomes are seen in the largest cities of Springfield, Holyoke and Chicopee as well as the towns of Ware and Plainfield. Ware is a former industrial community in a relatively rural area, and Plainfield is a very small town at the extreme northwest of the region, bordered by Berkshire and Franklin Counties.



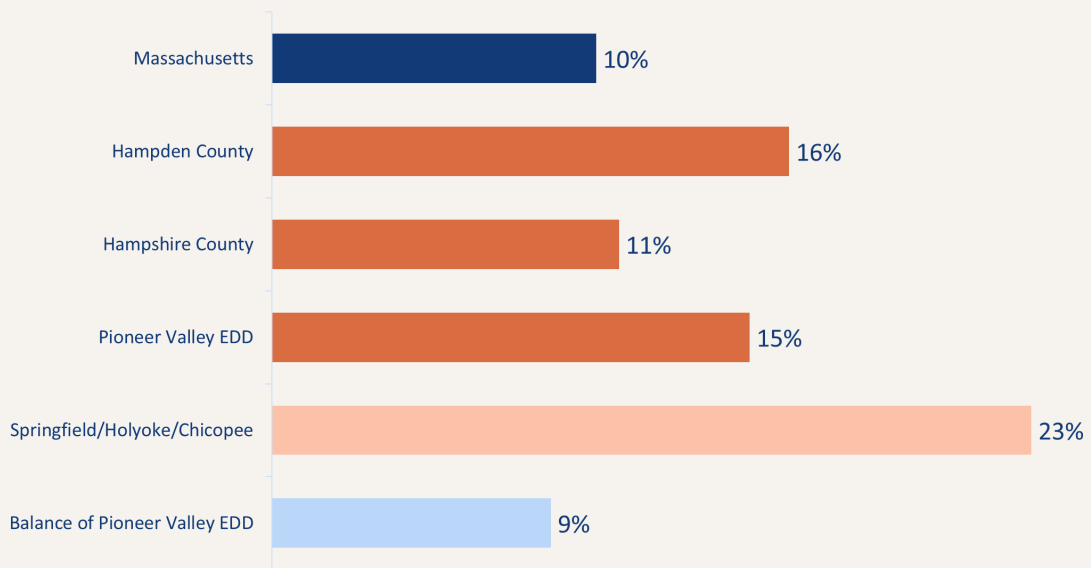
Poverty

The PVEDD region area has persistent pockets of high poverty, primarily concentrated in the Cities of Holyoke and Springfield. Over the five year period between 2016 and 2020, poverty rates in both Hampden (16%) and Hampshire Counties (11%) exceeded the statewide rate (10%). Combined, the cities of Springfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee have a collective poverty rate more than twice as high as the overall Massachusetts rate (23% vs 10%).

PVPC EDD Persistent Poverty Census Tracts



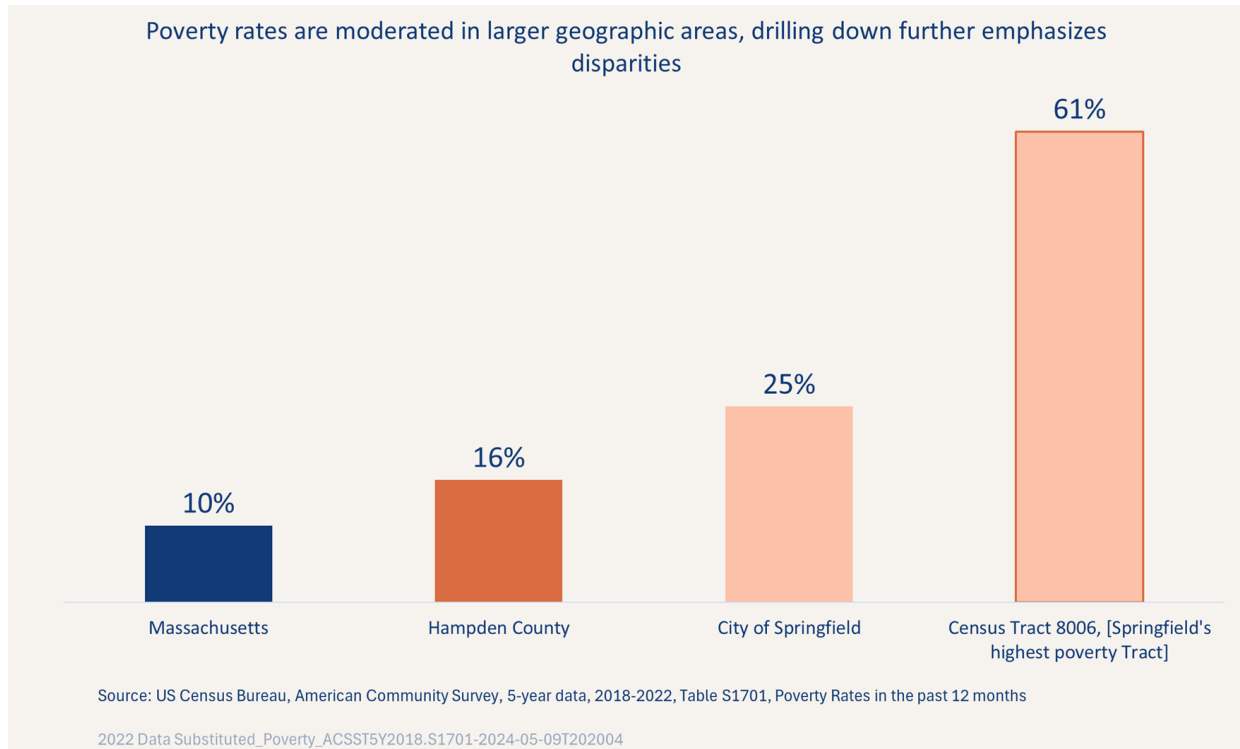
Poverty rates across the Pioneer Valley Economic Development District



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year data, 2018-2022, Table S1701, Poverty Rates in the past 12 months

2022 Data Substituted_Poverty_ACSST5Y2018.S1701-2024-05-09T202004

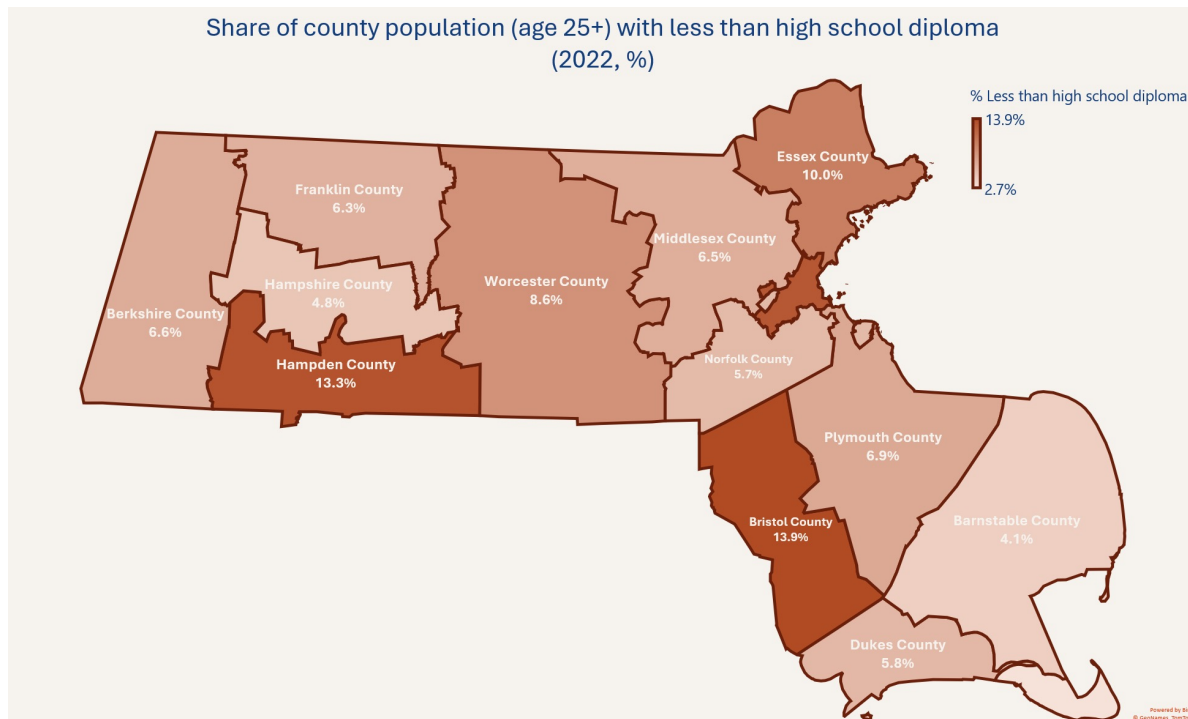
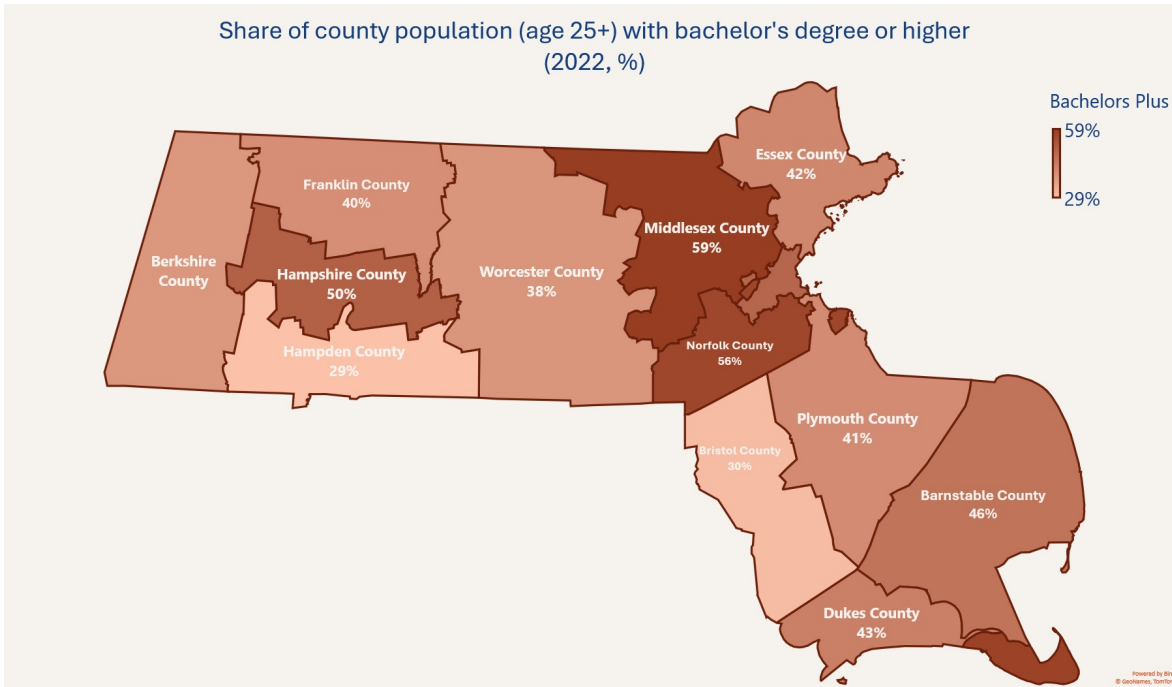
Furthermore, poverty is concentrated in certain areas of those cities; for example, the lowest income census tract in Springfield has 61% poverty. These rates are distinctly higher for Hispanic and Latino residents and lowest for non-Hispanic White residents.



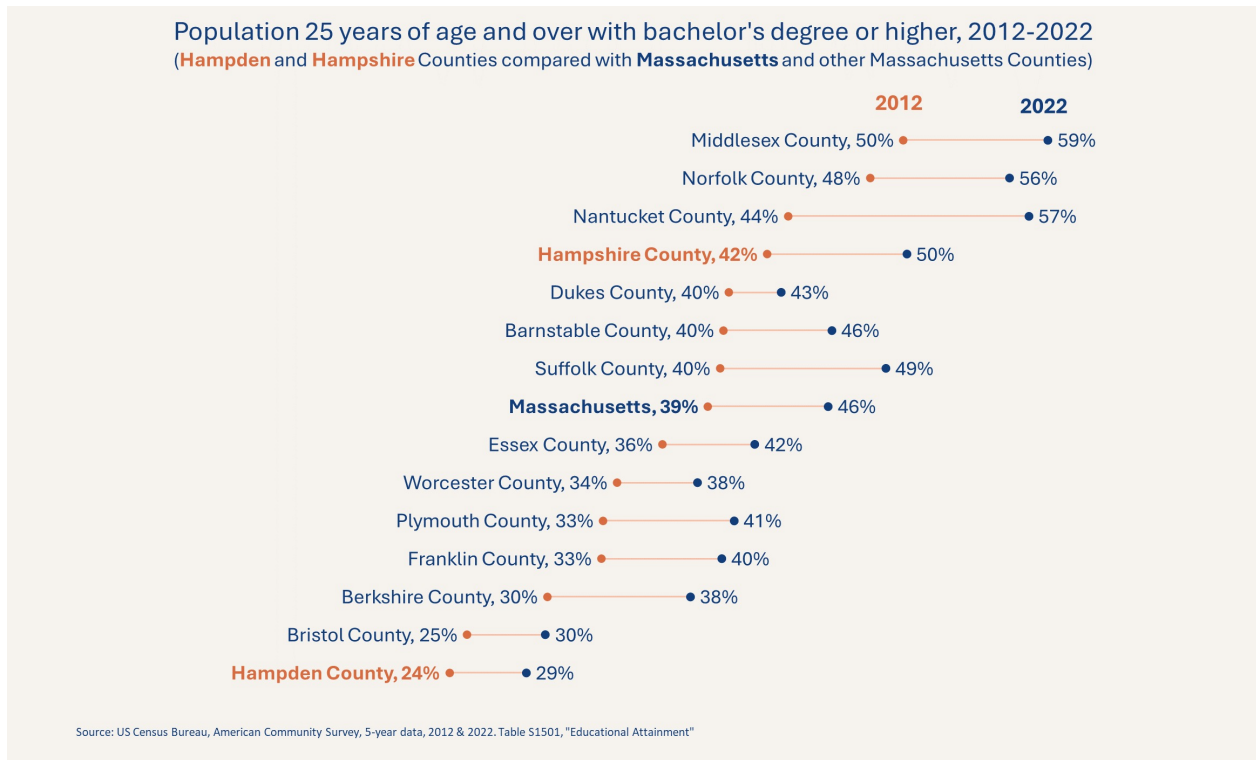
Education

Although there are institutions of higher education in both counties, Hampshire County colleges and the University of Massachusetts are the major employers in the county and make up a larger share of the economy and workforce. In Hampden County, with larger populations overall, a smaller percentage of residents attend the higher education institutions that exist.

Conversely, Hampden County has one of the highest shares of adults with less than a high school diploma, and Hampshire County has one of the lowest. As we have seen, incomes are higher in Hampshire County, and thus school systems, which are funded through income tax, have more resources. Parents and caretakers also have more resources due to higher incomes and can intervene when a student is struggling.



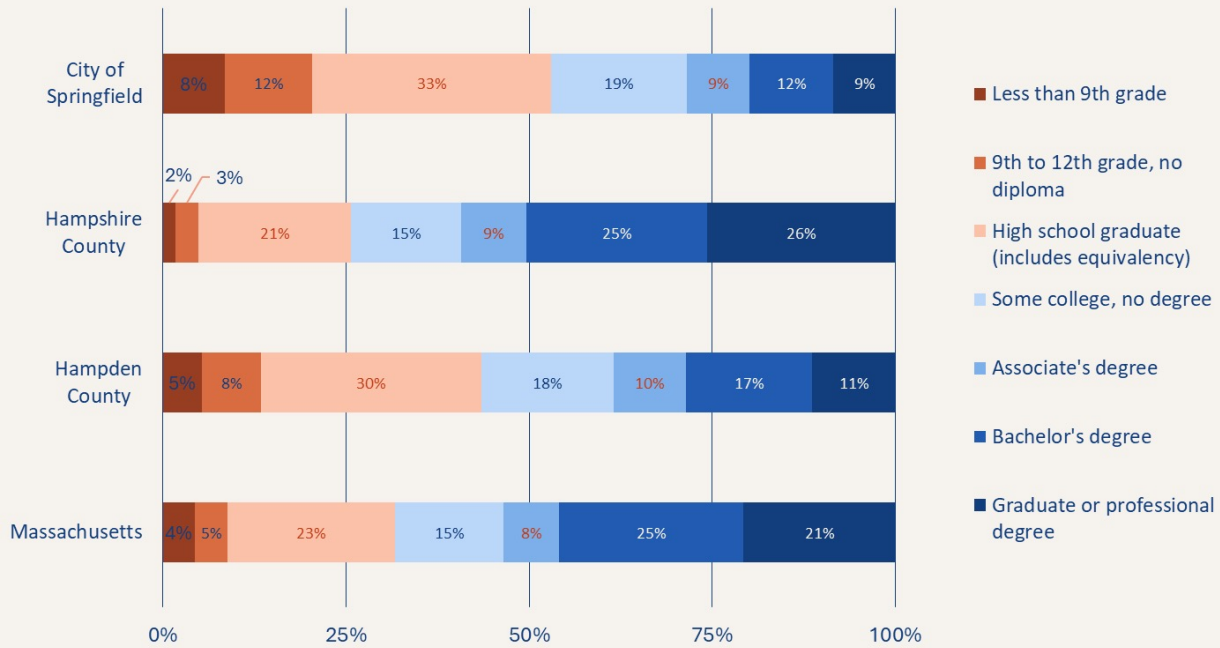
While Hampden County’s lowest ranking for those with a bachelor’s degree or higher is concerning, it is encouraging to see that Hampden County has joined with the other counties of Massachusetts in improving its share over the ten year period from 2012-2022, from 24% in 2012 to 29% in 2022. Over the same period, Hampshire County increased its share from 42% to 50%.



Educational Attainment

The educational attainment level of geographies within the PV EDD varies considerably, with Hampshire County’s pattern most closely resembling the statewide pattern of educational attainment. While the “bachelor’s degree or higher” threshold has been the focus of most discussions of educational attainment, we can learn how to better shape education and workforce supports to ensure that every individual is able to pursue and complete their educational goals. The Census Bureau may also want to consider adding data that identifies when individuals have pursued shorter term certifications, and we all would do well to remember that the lived experiences of workers often prepares them for levels of work previously restricted to those with degrees or diplomas (the so-called “paper ceiling”).

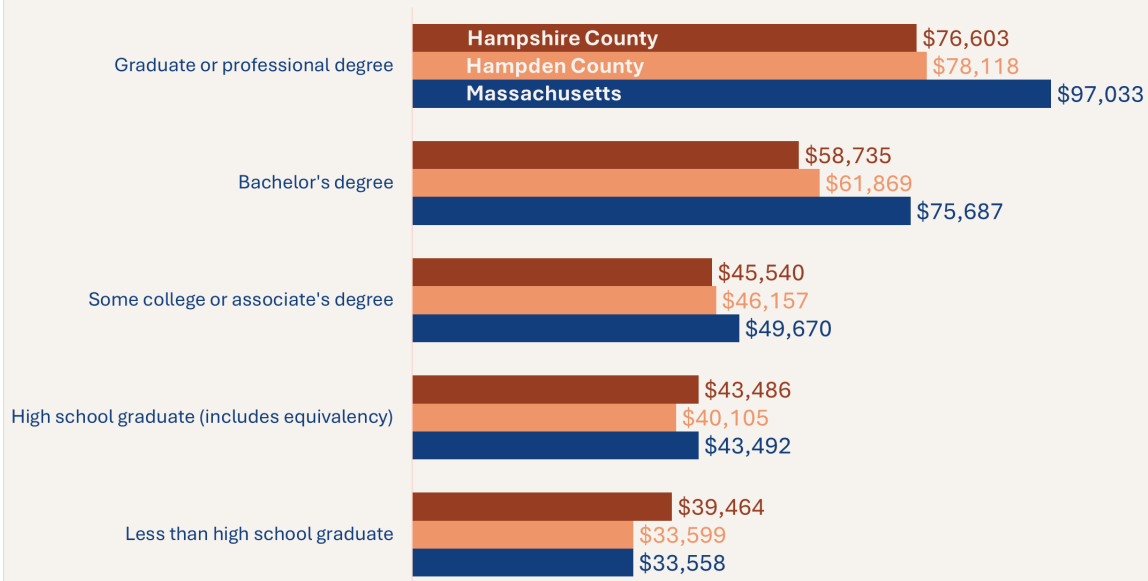
Educational Attainment Levels Compared: City of Springfield, Hampshire & Hampden Counties, and Massachusetts



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year data, 2018-2022, Table S1501, "Educational Attainment"

Educational Attainment_ACSST5Y2022.S1501-2024-04-08T221810_06.25.2024 Rev

Median earnings by educational attainment level: Hampshire & Hampden Counties & Massachusetts



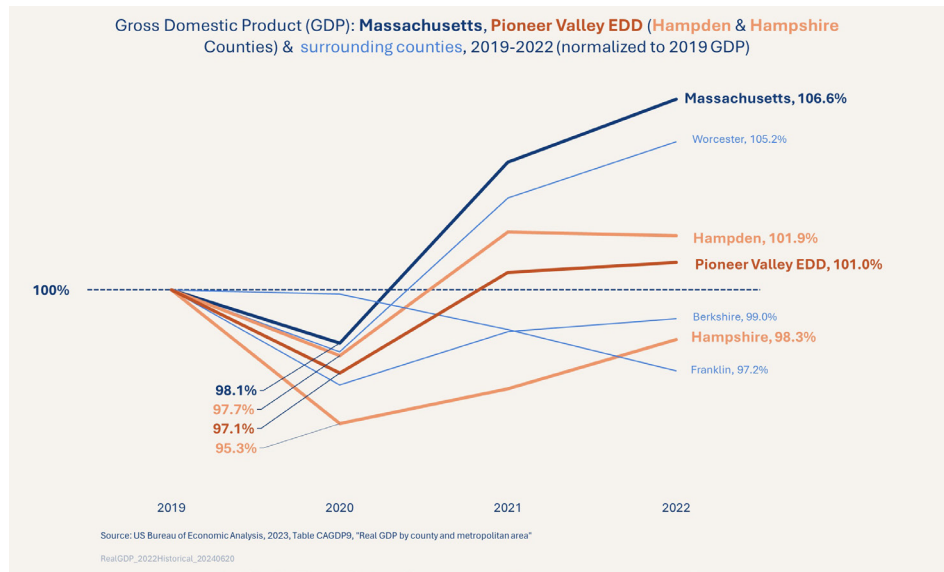
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year data, 2018-2022, Table S1501, "Educational Attainment"

The importance of educational attainment for achieving financial security can be seen throughout the region, as well as statewide, with median earnings growing for each level of educational attainment achieved.

Closer Look at the PV EDD Economy

Tracking the economic output of the region is best achieved by looking at data showing the area's Gross Domestic Product (GDP, sometimes referred to as Gross Regional Product (GRP) when looking at regions smaller than the state level). The Figure below indexes the GDP for Massachusetts, the combined Pioneer Valley Economic Development District (PV EDD), Hampden and Hampshire Counties, and also the neighboring counties of Berkshire and Worcester. All regions experienced a substantial reduction in economic output in 2020, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. By 2022, the economies of Massachusetts, Worcester County and Hampden County had achieved economic output surpassing the inflation-adjusted 2019 output, while Berkshire, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties continued to have output less than that achieved prior to the COVID-19 recession.

On the relative strength of Hampden County's recovery, the combined PV EDD economy surpassed pre-COVID levels despite Hampshire County's ongoing struggles.



² Data comparing GDP across regions and time are using "real" (inflation-adjusted) GDP.

GDP by Sector

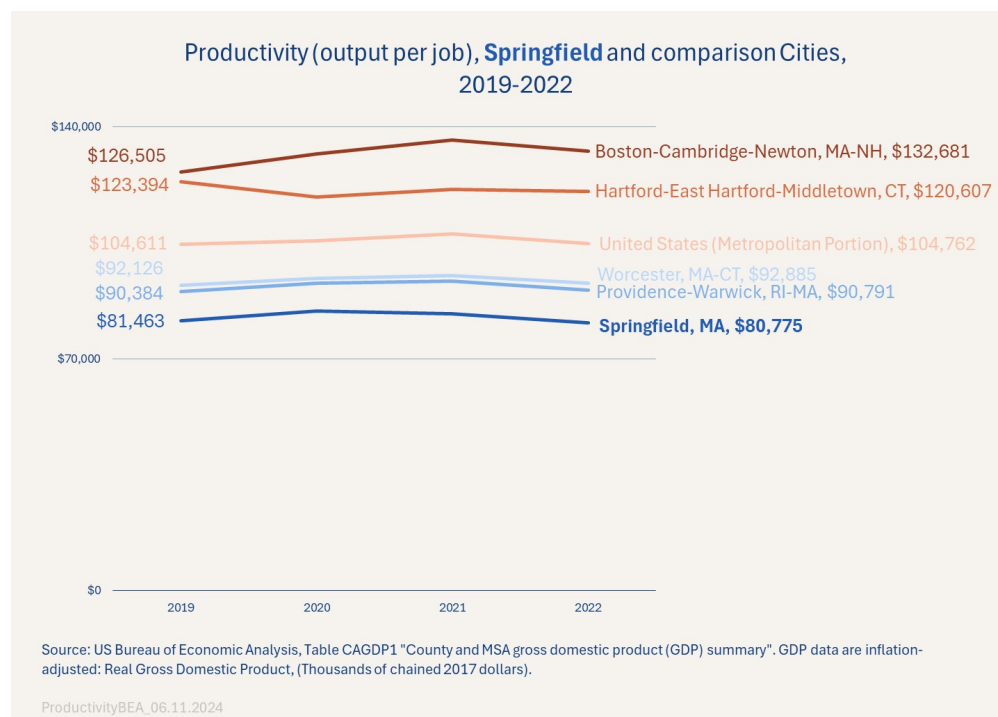
The table below, sorted by the contribution of each industry sector to the overall economy of the PV EDD, shows recent trends, including the impact of the COVID-19 recession on each sector's contribution to GDP, and the relative success at recovering from the pandemic.

Region	Sector	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Sparklines (blue marker = lowest value)	▲ 2019 to 2022 (\$)	▲ 2019 to 2022 %
PVEDD	All industry total	\$ 29,983,056	\$ 30,622,739	\$ 29,735,953	\$ 30,809,436	\$ 30,916,169		\$ 293,430	1.0%
PVEDD	Government and government enterprises	\$ 5,426,819	\$ 5,416,291	\$ 5,133,381	\$ 5,084,601	\$ 5,241,605		\$ (174,686)	-3%
PVEDD	Health care and social assistance	\$ 4,164,853	\$ 4,276,969	\$ 4,088,626	\$ 4,221,211	\$ 4,380,264		\$ 103,295	2%
PVEDD	Real estate and rental and leasing	\$ 3,742,802	\$ 3,950,074	\$ 3,909,439	\$ 3,960,110	\$ 4,072,075		\$ 122,001	3%
PVEDD	Wholesale trade	\$ 1,930,656	\$ 2,014,399	\$ 2,252,966	\$ 2,705,103	\$ 2,581,047		\$ 566,648	28%
PVEDD	Professional and business services	\$ 2,133,176	\$ 2,161,763	\$ 2,132,654	\$ 2,276,018	\$ 2,382,890		\$ 221,127	10%
PVEDD	Manufacturing	\$ 2,610,256	\$ 2,514,749	\$ 2,393,960	\$ 2,461,027	\$ 2,296,753		\$ (217,996)	-9%
PVEDD	Finance and insurance	\$ 2,072,789	\$ 2,126,604	\$ 2,312,710	\$ 2,290,961	\$ 2,202,358		\$ 75,754	4%
PVEDD	Retail trade	\$ 1,866,106	\$ 1,961,164	\$ 1,859,086	\$ 1,905,658	\$ 1,840,796		\$ (120,368)	-6%
PVEDD	Construction	\$ 1,154,537	\$ 1,138,168	\$ 1,091,811	\$ 1,081,972	\$ 993,856		\$ (144,312)	-13%
PVEDD	Educational services	\$ 1,024,123	\$ 1,034,099	\$ 922,063	\$ 923,467	\$ 970,718		\$ (63,381)	-6%
PVEDD	Accommodation and food services	\$ 910,541	\$ 970,463	\$ 652,317	\$ 804,148	\$ 867,983		\$ (102,480)	-11%
PVEDD	Information	\$ 610,940	\$ 694,301	\$ 668,326	\$ 718,837	\$ 766,314		\$ 72,013	10%
PVEDD	Other services (except govt and govt enterprises)	\$ 787,376	\$ 795,161	\$ 717,579	\$ 744,031	\$ 742,753		\$ (52,408)	-7%
PVEDD	Transportation and warehousing	\$ 700,594	\$ 724,442	\$ 665,764	\$ 688,039	\$ 687,698		\$ (36,744)	-5%
PVEDD	Utilities	\$ 525,478	\$ 486,403	\$ 698,659	\$ 647,299	\$ 608,485		\$ 122,082	25%
PVEDD	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	\$ 256,462	\$ 258,175	\$ 148,874	\$ 228,588	\$ 274,324		\$ 16,149	6%
PVEDD	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	\$ 46,446	\$ 75,144	\$ 64,113	\$ 59,446	\$ 57,031		\$ (18,113)	-24%
PVEDD	Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	\$ 19,602	\$ 30,261	\$ 29,732	\$ 12,666	\$ 10,432		\$ (19,829)	-66%

Productivity

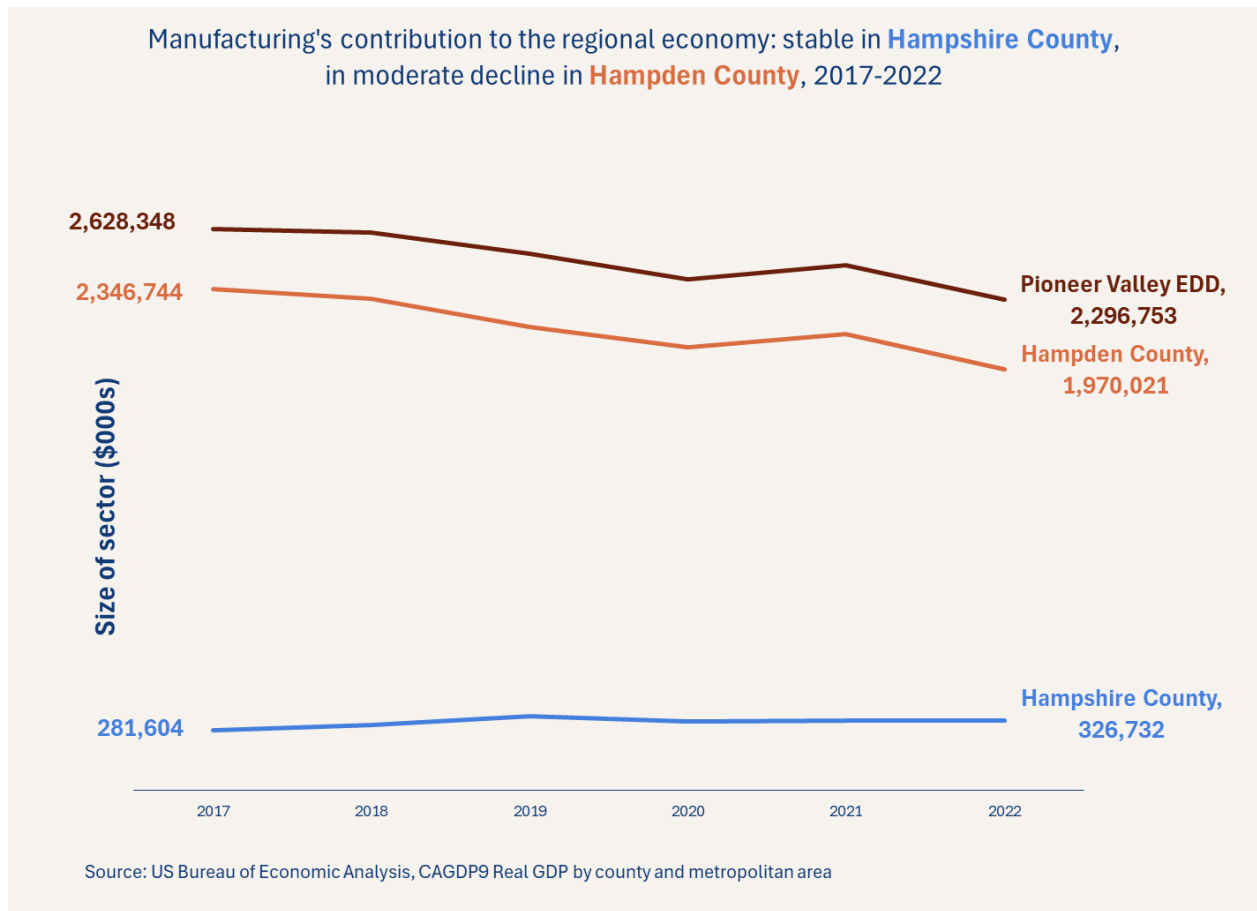
In 2022, Springfield ranked 250th out of 384 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) in terms of productivity (GDP per job), falling short of other regional MSAs including Boston-Cambridge-Newton, Hartford-East Hartford-Middletown, Worcester, and Providence-Warwick.

Of the top 100 MSAs (by size of local economy, i.e. GDP), Springfield MSA ranked 94th. However, it is significant that it made the top 100 list, where it is above Tulsa, Oklahoma and El Paso, Texas.



Manufacturing

Manufacturing is a small but steady component of the Hampshire County economy, but its prominence in Hampden County has been decreasing for decades and continues to do so. In recent years, precision-manufacturing in the PV EDD has been a growing sector, offsetting declines in other areas such as machinery, plastics, and wood products. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotics play a growing role within many manufacturing processes, the overall impact on the region's economic output and employment remains uncertain. While it seems unlikely that manufacturing will fully return to its "glory days", when workers—often unionized—could earn family sustaining wages without significant post-secondary education or training, the PV EDD is well positioned to benefit from growth in high-value added manufacturing, and from processes that fully leverage the strengths of the education and training that has sustained the workforce of the Knowledge Corridor.



Employment Concentration

In the tables below, industry sub-sectors are broken down into industry groups, identified by their 4-digit NAICS codes, allowing us to get a more accurate sense of the industries where we have a regional concentration of jobs that exceeds the concentration of jobs at the national level. This measure is known as the location quotient. Hampden County has 46 industry groups with location quotients exceeding 1.25 (where a quotient of 1 would indicate the same concentration as seen at the national level.) Notable in these data is the relatively high concentrations among these 46 industry groups of industry groups in the manufacturing sector and also in health care and social assistance.

In Hampshire County, famously home to five prominent colleges and universities, industry group 6113, Colleges, universities, and professional schools has a location quotient of 10.26, indicating that the concentration of employment in this group in Hampshire County exceeds the national concentration for that industry group by a factor of 10+. Comparing Hampshire and Hampden Counties, the relative lack of concentrated groups of manufacturing employment in Hampshire County is also noteworthy.

Industry group concentration in Hampden County

Industry Group (4 digit NAICS code)	Average Annual Employment	Average Annual Pay	Location Quotient (Employment)
NAICS4854 School and employee bus transportation	2,169	\$30,847	8.92
NAICS3336 Engine, turbine, and power transmission equipment manufacturing	643	\$75,714	5.27
NAICS3329 Other fabricated metal product manufacturing	1,746	\$67,498	4.74
NAICS3328 Coating, engraving, heat treating, and allied activities	812	\$65,235	4.67
NAICS3327 Machine shops; turned product; and screw, nut, and bolt manufacturing	1,764	\$80,981	3.93
NAICS3252 Resin, synthetic rubber, and artificial and synthetic fibers and filaments manufacturing	473	\$109,671	3.73
NAICS6241 Individual and family services	14,553	\$27,722	3.72
NAICS3115 Dairy product manufacturing	682	\$70,411	3.13
NAICS6232 Residential intellectual and developmental disability, mental health, and substance abuse facilities	2,603	\$45,976	3.11
NAICS6214 Outpatient care centers	4,238	\$100,624	2.99
NAICS6242 Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services	817	\$45,361	2.81
NAICS4855 Charter bus industry	80	\$39,233	2.7
NAICS3399 Other miscellaneous manufacturing	1,005	\$69,197	2.6
NAICS6222 Psychiatric and substance abuse hospitals	432	\$72,323	2.59
NAICS4453 Beer, wine, and liquor retailers	567	\$29,974	2.45
NAICS5241 Insurance carriers	3,561	\$154,785	2.23
NAICS5161 Radio and television broadcasting stations	345	\$73,235	2.16
NAICS4572 Fuel dealers	192	\$57,976	2.04
NAICS6219 Other ambulatory health care services	935	\$63,259	2.03
NAICS8134 Civic and social organizations	927	\$23,381	2.03
NAICS6243 Vocational rehabilitation services	713	\$45,006	1.9
NAICS3335 Metalworking machinery manufacturing	405	\$61,746	1.9
NAICS6221 General medical and surgical hospitals	11,671	\$65,209	1.81
NAICS6113 Colleges, universities, and professional schools	2,836	\$53,897	1.7
NAICS3261 Plastics product manufacturing	1,340	\$61,559	1.69
NAICS4859 Other transit and ground passenger transportation	232	\$28,601	1.69
NAICS6231 Nursing care facilities (skilled nursing facilities)	3,138	\$51,947	1.67
NAICS3231 Printing and related support activities	816	\$61,773	1.67
NAICS2211 Electric power generation, transmission and distribution	887	\$167,139	1.66
NAICS5629 Remediation and other waste management services	381	\$77,245	1.61
NAICS1114 Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production	367	\$48,755	1.59
NAICS3279 Other nonmetallic mineral product manufacturing	167	\$75,051	1.57
NAICS3333 Commercial and service industry machinery manufacturing	182	\$83,308	1.54
NAICS6233 Continuing care retirement communities and assisted living facilities for the elderly	1,845	\$36,311	1.48
NAICS8133 Social advocacy organizations	506	\$49,521	1.48
NAICS6223 Specialty (except psychiatric and substance abuse) hospitals	500	\$64,610	1.47
NAICS4241 Paper and paper product merchant wholesalers	227	\$73,812	1.46
NAICS5131 Newspaper, periodical, book, and directory publishers	548	\$69,130	1.44
NAICS4244 Grocery and related product merchant wholesalers	1,540	\$70,881	1.43
NAICS6116 Other schools and instruction	948	\$26,788	1.43
NAICS6216 Home health care services	2,957	\$41,151	1.37
NAICS6117 Educational support services	370	\$44,686	1.37
NAICS8122 Death care services	241	\$42,059	1.34
NAICS8129 Other personal services	701	\$39,609	1.3
NAICS5615 Travel arrangement and reservation services	311	\$56,618	1.27
NAICS4884 Support activities for road transportation	192	\$64,620	1.27

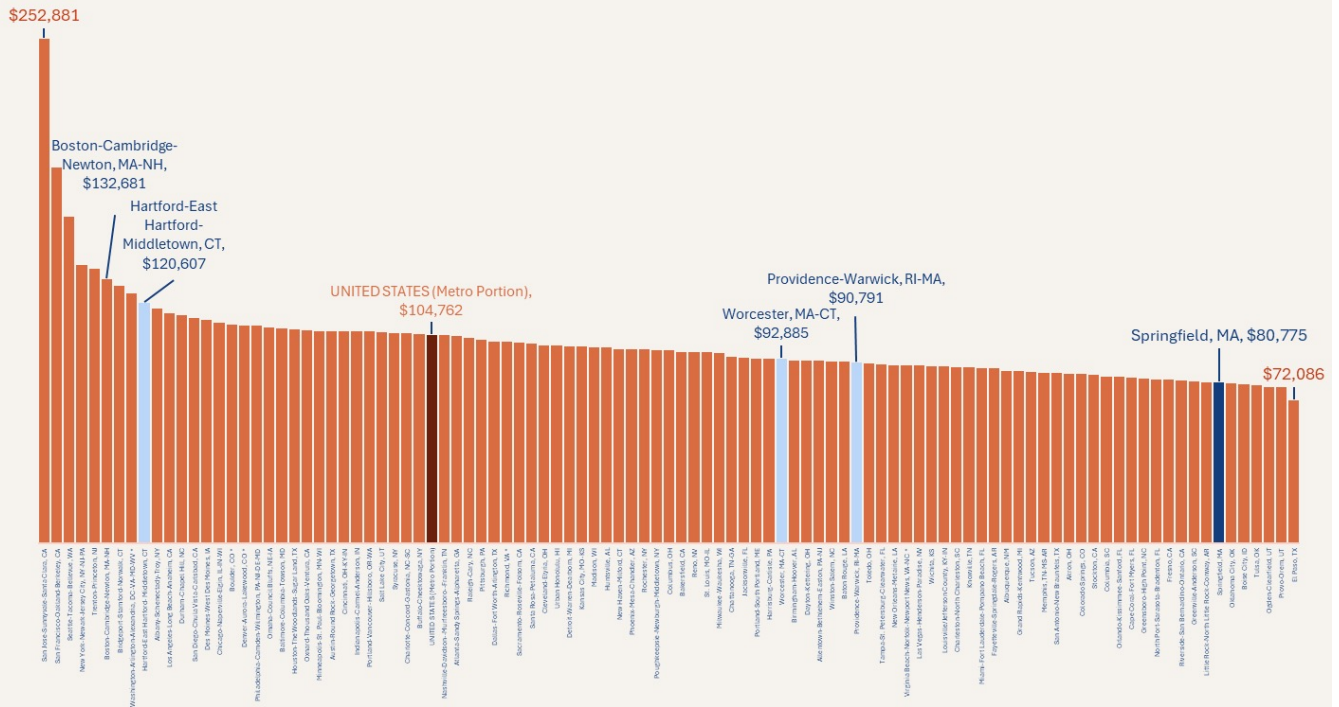
Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2023

Industry group concentration in Hampshire County

Industry Group (4 digit NAICS code)	Average Annual Employment	Average Annual Pay	Location Quotient (Employment)
NAICS6113 Colleges, universities, and professional schools	5,535	\$60,254	10.26
NAICS4572 Fuel dealers	202	\$79,584	6.63
NAICS6117 Educational support services	495	\$66,873	5.68
NAICS1112 Vegetable and melon farming	190	\$31,363	5.47
NAICS8133 Social advocacy organizations	366	\$63,086	3.31
NAICS3222 Converted paper product manufacturing	377	\$85,587	3.26
NAICS6242 Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services	298	\$50,576	3.18
NAICS4233 Lumber and other construction materials merchant wholesalers	336	\$67,948	3.01
NAICS3121 Beverage manufacturing	395	\$79,804	2.84
NAICS4599 Other miscellaneous retailers	583	\$39,157	2.82
NAICS4592 Book retailers and news dealers	81	\$29,666	2.74
NAICS4453 Beer, wine, and liquor retailers	197	\$31,634	2.64
NAICS4452 Specialty food retailers	268	\$26,788	2.61
NAICS4884 Support activities for road transportation	126	\$51,835	2.57
NAICS6232 Residential intellectual and developmental disability, mental health, and substance abuse facilities	671	\$43,355	2.48
NAICS7213 Rooming and boarding houses, dormitories, and workers' camps	10	\$21,247	2.27
NAICS6116 Other schools and instruction	485	\$32,982	2.26
NAICS3345 Navigational, measuring, electromedical, and control instruments manufacturing	362	\$106,727	1.98
NAICS4551 Department stores	755	\$27,369	1.83
NAICS3327 Machine shops; turned product; and screw, nut, and bolt manufacturing	255	\$82,315	1.76
NAICS8134 Civic and social organizations	255	\$22,605	1.73
NAICS4591 Sporting goods, hobby, and musical instrument retailers	363	\$32,290	1.72
NAICS5621 Waste collection	147	\$59,831	1.63
NAICS4451 Grocery and convenience retailers	1,919	\$33,288	1.6
NAICS3399 Other miscellaneous manufacturing	198	\$96,138	1.59
NAICS5192 Web search portals, libraries, archives, and other information services	122	\$109,688	1.55
NAICS4594 Office supplies, stationery, and gift retailers	131	\$24,320	1.49
NAICS5131 Newspaper, periodical, book, and directory publishers	181	\$66,909	1.47
NAICS4442 Lawn and garden equipment and supplies retailers	113	\$36,789	1.42
NAICS6111 Elementary and secondary schools	556	\$52,821	1.39
NAICS6241 Individual and family services	1,743	\$30,432	1.38
NAICS4249 Miscellaneous nondurable goods merchant wholesalers	186	\$73,688	1.33
NAICS7121 Museums, historical sites, and similar institutions	98	\$39,913	1.33
NAICS6214 Outpatient care centers	596	\$55,917	1.3
NAICS6231 Nursing care facilities (skilled nursing facilities)	785	\$56,390	1.29
NAICS7224 Drinking places (alcoholic beverages)	227	\$23,963	1.28
NAICS2389 Other specialty trade contractors	415	\$78,931	1.27

Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2023

Productivity (GDP/job) for 100 largest MSA economies, 2022



Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAGDP1 "County and MSA gross domestic product (GDP) summary". GDP data are inflation-adjusted: Real Gross Domestic Product, (Thousands of chained 2017 dollars).

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Average Annual Pay

Payment for jobs throughout Western Massachusetts is about two-thirds the statewide annual average of \$90,168. In both Hampshire and Hampden Counties, payment per job was 67% of statewide average (\$60,420 and \$60,319, respectively). Only neighboring Berkshire and Franklin Counties had lower average annual pay in 2023.

County	State	Average Annual Pay	Avg Pay/MA Avg Pay
Suffolk County	MA	\$124,399	138%
Middlesex County	MA	\$107,170	119%
Norfolk County	MA	\$81,650	91%
Nantucket County/town	MA	\$76,061	84%
Essex County	MA	\$74,044	82%
Dukes County	MA	\$68,733	76%
Worcester County	MA	\$68,663	76%
Plymouth County	MA	\$67,387	75%
Bristol County	MA	\$62,248	69%
Barnstable County	MA	\$62,159	69%
Hampshire County	MA	\$60,420	67%
Hampden County	MA	\$60,319	67%
Berkshire County	MA	\$60,174	67%
Franklin County	MA	\$53,891	60%
Massachusetts		90,168	

Source: US BLS, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2023

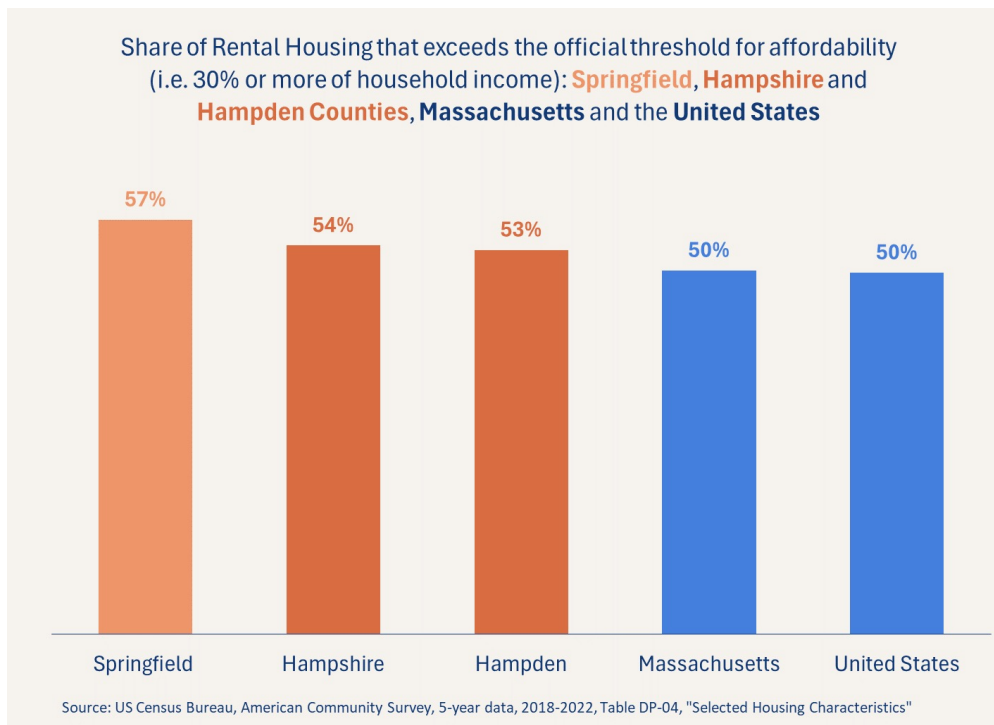
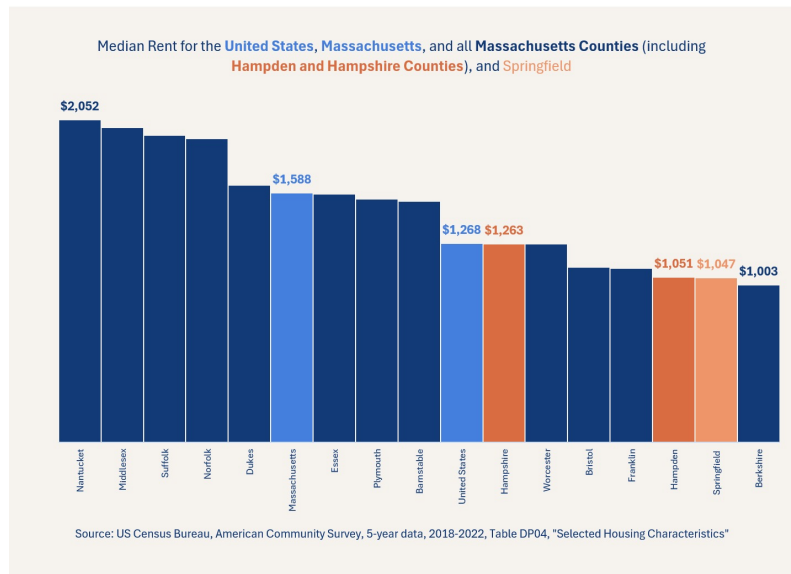
Housing

About a tenth of the region’s single-family detached housing consists of rental structures, though a few small communities in the region have over three-fifths of their rental housing stock as single-family detached homes, such as Blandford, Middlefield, Montgomery, Tolland, Chesterfield, and Westhampton. Some of these communities have zoning that discourages or prohibits the construction of housing other than single family homes. Most communities in the region restrict multi-family housing, which is typically the most affordable housing choice for low-income people. In the region, at least

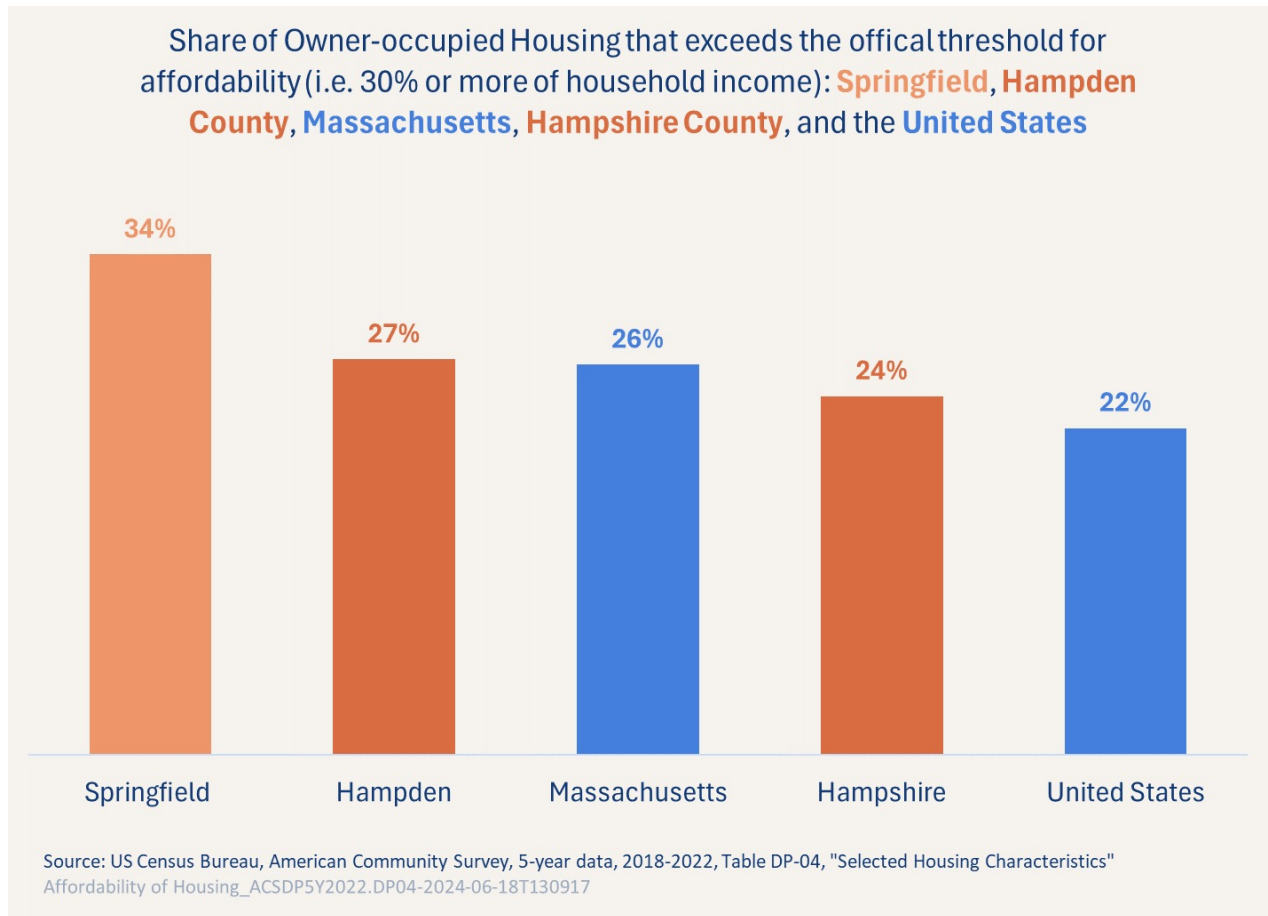
13 communities allow multifamily housing by-right or through a limited site-plan review process in one or more zoning districts in the community while at least 11 allow multifamily housing by special permit from the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals in one or more zoning districts in the community. Nineteen communities prohibit multifamily housing.

While many families struggle to afford adequate housing in the Pioneer Valley EDD, rental housing costs in the region are comparatively low. Hampshire and Hampden Counties both have median rents that are lower than the state and national averages, and Hampden County has the second lowest median rent, higher than only Berkshire County.

Despite median rents that are lower than the United States and Massachusetts averages, with lower incomes in our region than in Eastern Massachusetts, a larger share of rental housing exceeds the threshold normally considered for “affordability”, which is anything that is 30% or more of household median income.

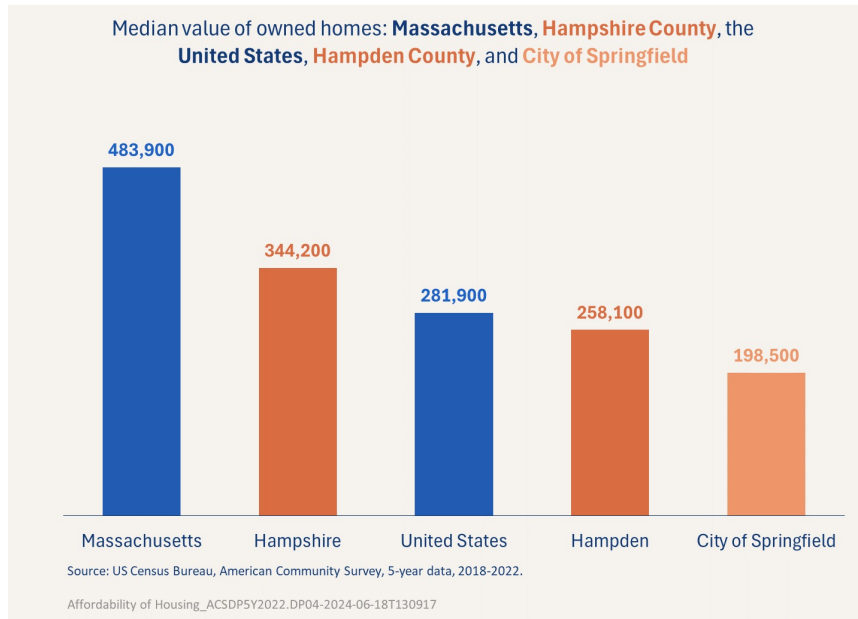


The share of owner-occupied homes that are unaffordable is considerably smaller than rental units, largely due to the higher incomes of those who own their homes. We see that about one in three homeowners in the City of Springfield face housing costs that exceed 30% of their income, while for owners in Hampden County, Massachusetts, and Hampshire Counties, approximately one quarter of owners are housing cost burdened, all at rates exceeding the national average



Asset Building via Home Ownership

While the lower prices of homes in Western Massachusetts should make home ownership more affordable, the lower income levels largely offset that advantage. And while homeownership is traditionally one of the main avenues for wealth building, the lower home values in Western Massachusetts greatly limit the capacity for wealth accumulation via homeownership. In the figure below, we see that the median value of owner-occupied homes in Hampden County – at \$258,100 – falls below both the national and statewide median values (\$281,900 and \$483,900). In fact, of the fourteen counties in Massachusetts, the five counties with the lowest median values are the five most Westerly counties – Worcester, Franklin, Hampshire, Hampden, and Berkshire.



THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE PIONEER VALLEY

Geology and Soils

Geologic History

The Connecticut River Valley formed primarily through the forces of continental drift, volcanic activity, and glacial scouring. During the Triassic Period (180 to 220 million years ago), two faults formed and then were pulled apart by continental drift. This formed the Triassic basin that comprises the river valley today. Volcanic venting and fissures created rock formations including the Holyoke Range.

The rock formations created in the Triassic Period were then further shaped in the Pleistocene Era, or the “ice age,” one million years ago. Contractions and movement of glaciers 10,000 feet thick left deposits and glacial till at the base of the Holyoke Range. Glacial till also contributed to the formation of Lake Hitchcock, a large lake extending from Middlefield, Connecticut to Lyme, New Hampshire. In addition to the meanderings of the Connecticut River over thousands of years, the sediments of Lake Hitchcock’s ancient bed form the rich soils along the river valley upon which farmland is now prevalent in the Valley.

Soils and Slopes

The soils in the Valley are considered some of the most fertile in the nation. These prime soils were created by glacial outwash deposits and the deposits of the Connecticut River. These soils are deep (sometimes up to 12 feet in some areas), well drained, and good for both agriculture and tree growth. These areas are some of the most threatened agricultural landscapes in the country, as indicated by the American Farmland Trust, due to their prime soils that are also of ideal quality for development.

Cradling the valley are hills and ridges formed by lava flows and then carved by glacial movements and melting millions of years ago. In particular, the Holyoke Range is covered by glacial ice deposits of thin-to-bedrock soils and forest. The steep slopes and loose soils at the base of the ridges are limitations to development but these hills and valleys offer excellent recreational opportunities.

Water Resources

Rivers

Connecticut River

The defining waterway in the region is the Connecticut River. It is New England’s longest river, flowing 410 miles from the Canadian border with New Hampshire, through four states, to the Long Island Sound. The 7.2-million-acre watershed is home to 2.4 million people, 396 municipalities, 51 designated urban areas, many thousands of species of flora and fauna, and more than 1.5 million acres of land in public and private conservation. An additional 4.75 million acres in the watershed remain undeveloped and unprotected, affording opportunity for even greater conservation. Designated an American Heritage River, its watershed is the focus of the Conte National Wildlife Refuge and considered the region’s most important natural asset. The river also became the first federally designated National Blueway under the National Park Service in 2012.

The Connecticut River is a natural and environmental resource of great regional and interstate importance, and is a key element in the bi-state area’s quality of life and economic prosperity. One longstanding issue is that the water quality in some sections of the river in both Massachusetts and Connecticut does not consistently meet Class B Swimmable/Fishable standards due to water pollution discharges in wet weather which include combined sewer overflows and urban stormwater runoff.

In addition, there are other sections which are suffering from impaired water quality due to streambank erosion and non-point source pollution. Under Administrative Orders from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to abate combined sewer overflows (CSOs) to the Connecticut River, communities in Western Massachusetts have been working for more than 20 years, eliminating 99 of the 163 CSO outfalls in the region. As of 2024, over 50% of the CSO problem has been eliminated on the Connecticut River in Massachusetts.

Other Major Rivers

The two major sub-basins within the Connecticut River watershed in Hampshire and Hampden counties are the Westfield and Chicopee Rivers. The Westfield River Watershed encompasses a total of 517 square miles in Hampshire, Hampden, and Berkshire Counties of western Massachusetts and is bordered by the Deerfield, Hoosic, Housatonic, Farmington, and Connecticut River Watersheds. The Westfield River is a major tributary to the Connecticut River made up of three branches, the East, Middle and West Branches. The watershed forms a general “L” shape, approximately 48 miles long and 20 miles wide, extending from the Berkshire Mountains in the west to the Connecticut River in the east. The river drops 2,000 feet in elevation before entering the Connecticut River. Thin soils in the hills combined with steep gradients produce extreme and rapid differences in the rate of flow, occasional flooding, and at times low water conditions. Roughly 78 miles in 10 towns of the Westfield River and its 3 branches have been designated as a National Wild and Scenic River, the first in Massachusetts. The watershed has an average population density of less than half a person per acre—the second lowest density of all Massachusetts watersheds, likely a contributing factor in making it one of the state’s best coldwater fisheries.

The river and other lakes and ponds in the Westfield River watershed are widely used for fishing, swimming, kayaking and canoeing. Sections of the West, Middle and East Branches are noted in the Appalachian Mountain Club’s River guide for Massachusetts Connecticut and Rhode Island. The East Branch provides one of the longest whitewater runs in Massachusetts. The winter pool release at the Knightville Dam triggers the annual Westfield River Whitewater Canoe Races, the longest continuing running race in the country, now in its 53rd year. The Appalachian Trail crosses October Mountain State Forest in Becket. The West Branch also contains 10 beautiful stone arch railroad bridges known as the Keystone Arches. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the arches are a popular trail destination point.

The Chicopee River basin encompasses all or part of 39 cities and towns in 4 counties; it is the largest of the 27 major basins delineated for planning purposes by the state; it has a drainage area of 721 square miles, comprised of 4 major basins: Swift River (215 square miles), Ware River (218 square miles), Quaboag River (212 square miles), and Chicopee River (76 square miles).

Drinking Water

Most smaller communities in the region have public drinking water supplies from local wells. However, the urban areas and many other towns obtain water from several reservoirs in the region. The largest of these are the Cobble Mountain Reservoir in Blandford and the Quabbin Reservoir in central Massachusetts, owned by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority. The Quabbin, a 412 billion gallon reservoir covers 39 square miles with 181 miles of shoreline. Recreational activities are regulated and limited to protect 3 million people’s drinking water. The Quabbin supplies water to local water departments in 42 greater Boston and MetroWest areas.

Dams and Culverts

There are 224 dams regulated by the Office of Dam Safety in the Pioneer Valley region. These dams are regulated because they are in excess of 6 feet in height (regardless of storage capacity) and have more than 15-acre feet of storage capacity (regardless of height). There are also many dams in the region that, because they fall below these parameters, are known as non-jurisdictional dams. Of the regulated dams in the region, 42 have a hazard index rating of “high,” 90 are rated “significant” hazard, and 92 are rated “low” hazard. Hazard index rating is a level of risk determined by the likelihood that a dam failure (an uncontrolled release of impounded water) would result in loss of life or substantial property damage.

There are 2,885 culverts in the region, many of which are not sized to handle some of the larger storm events, resulting in flooding and significant erosion. Dams, culverts, and rapid changes in flow all present challenges to fish passage and are detrimental to the success of many species that must travel up and downstream. Rapid changes in river flow can be difficult for many aquatic species to adjust to, though such flow can be beneficial to power generators and paddlers.

The fragmentation of dams and poorly designed culverts is one of the primary threats to aquatic species in the United States. In the Connecticut River basin in MA and CT, there are 1,422 dams, which translates to densities of one dam per 6.6 km of river. Impacts on aquatic species involve loss of access to quality habitat for one or more life stages of a species, including limiting the ability of anadromous fish species to reach preferred freshwater spawning habitats from the sea, and preventing brook trout populations from reaching thermal refuges (Northeast Aquatic Connectivity: An Assessment of Dams on Northeastern Rivers, 2011).

Fisheries and Wildlife

Recreational fishing on the Connecticut River and its tributaries is widespread. It is unknown what percent of the fishing on the river is subsistence fishing. More information needs to be gathered about subsistence fishing levels on the river, and outreach to these communities about fish advisories needs to be conducted. The Connecticut River connects an immense region that is home to nearly 5,000 wildlife and plant species and provides migratory pathways for both aquatic and avian species. This region is also highly attractive for human settlement. Potential challenges for preservation of streams and wildlife habitat include loss of riparian buffer areas and habitat along streams; introduction of non-native invasive species to riverine areas; and physical barriers that block river connectivity.

A 2001 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey provides compelling evidence of the importance of wildlife habitat to economic activity. Wildlife related expenditures (on fishing and hunting, and wildlife watching) in the four watershed states totaled \$2.6 billion.

The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge was established to conserve the abundance and wide range of native plants and animals and their habitats in the 7.2-million-acre Connecticut River watershed in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont. A Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared that includes management alternatives, proposed vision and management goals.

Open Space and Recreation

The region is in a relatively rural area of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and is known for its recreational resources. However, accessibility to parks and open space has been evaluated relative to the Environmental Justice areas in the Pioneer Valley and found that only 5.8% of protected open space and parks in Hampshire and Hampden counties are within Environmental Justice areas.

Regional Trails and Greenways

Major regional trail initiatives provide critically important opportunities for recreation and alternative forms of transportation. These initiatives also help to galvanize local and regional land protection efforts toward

a common purpose. There are two types of regional trail initiatives: long-distance unpaved trails that pass through scenic protected lands and paved trails located on abandoned railroad beds and utility corridors.

The Metacomet-Monadnock Trail (M&M Trail) is a 114-mile-long (183 km) hiking trail that traverses the Metacomet Ridge of the Pioneer Valley region of Massachusetts and the central uplands of Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. It is now part of the New England National Scenic Trail covers 235 miles from Long Island Sound across long ridges to scenic mountain summits in Connecticut and Massachusetts. The trail offers panoramic vistas and close-ups of New England's natural and cultural landscape: traprock ridges, historic village centers, farmlands, unfragmented forests, quiet streams, steep river valleys and waterfalls.

The historic Metacomet-Monadnock (M&M) Trail received a tremendous boost in public profile when it was joined with the Mattabesett Trail in Connecticut and officially designated by the National Park Service as The New England National Scenic Trail. Stretching 215 miles now from Long Island Sound in Guilford, Connecticut, to Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire, the trail showcases classic New England landscapes...long distance vistas with rural towns as a backdrop, agrarian lands, un-fragmented forests, and large river valleys." Since the designation, the Appalachian Mountain Club and Massachusetts DCR have been at work to reroute parts of the trail in Massachusetts from privately owned lands to public lands at the Quabbin Reservoir. Advocates continue to work on land protection and easements to fully connect this trail system and to establish campsites for hikers.

The 47-mile Robert Frost Trail is another important resource for the region. Completed in 2004, the trail winds east from its start near Route 47 at the Hadley/South Hadley town line and then north to the Wendell State Forest. While the trail passes through some 10 towns, the Amherst Conservation Department and the Amherst Area Trails Committee have spearheaded much of the land protection and trail maintenance work to date.

Involving the work of 24 communities, the Mass Central Rail Trail will ultimately stretch from Boston to Northampton and eventually all the way to the New York state line. Locally known as the Norwottuck Rail Trail, the trail occupies the rail route built in 1887 by the Central Massachusetts Railroad Company to connect Boston and Northampton. In the Pioneer Valley Region, the trail is currently in place from Northampton, through Hadley and Amherst, and into Belchertown.

The Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway is a series of paved multi-use recreational pathways along the Connecticut River in Agawam, Chicopee, and Springfield.

The New Haven and Northampton Canal Rail Trail is known locally by many names locally—including the Manhan Rail Trail in Northampton and Easthampton, Westfield Columbia Greenway in Westfield, Southwick Rail Trail in Southwick, and Farmington Canal Trail in much of Connecticut—this rail trail will extend 84 miles from New Haven to Northampton when completed.

Brownfields

The Pioneer Valley of western Massachusetts is one of America's oldest industrial regions. Bisected by the Connecticut River and crisscrossed by its whitewater tributaries, the Valley provided ideal conditions for early 19th century mills that required water for power, transportation, and waste disposal. In the decades following 1800, factories producing textiles, paper, shoes, machine tools, and firearms – including the famous Springfield rifle – supplanted former farm villages, creating new mill towns and urban neighborhoods. These were often true company towns, where local industrial firms provided and controlled their host communities' housing, shopping, schools, infrastructure and social and civic life.

In 1960, employment in the Pioneer Valley's forty-three cities and towns was concentrated strongly in manufacturing, with more than 33% of workers in that sector. The area's household income was higher

than the national average. Unfortunately, by the later 1960s, competition from other U.S. regions and overseas combined with technological changes to reduce the area's competitive advantage for industry. The 1970s and '80s saw more than 45% of all regional manufacturers close. Industrial jobs fell to 19.7% of overall employment (1990), then to 11.6% (2008-2010), replaced largely by lower-paying service jobs. Household adjusted income fell to barely two-thirds of the national average in the same timeframe. As these industries closed or relocated outside of the region, their industrial footprint was left behind.

Overview of Key Findings - Natural Resources

The Connecticut River has been cleaned up considerably over the past two decades and is now far more attractive for recreation. In many areas, however, the river has been fenced by highways, railroads and commercial development, which has reduced opportunities for public access. Some areas of the river are heavily used for recreation, while other areas are neglected. Flood control dikes, highways and railroad tracks along the Connecticut River have been imposing barriers to public access and recreation. However, these barriers have also kept open large sections of riverfront land which otherwise would have been developed. Communities need to reconnect with the river and find ways to bring people back to the riverfront.

The river is heavily used for recreational activities. Recreational use on upper Connecticut River in MA (above the Holyoke Dam) was estimated to be 130,000 recreation days in 1996. Most popular uses include motor boating (39%); boat fishing (26%); migratory fish viewing (11%); camping (9%); picnicking and sightseeing (7%); and non-motorized boating (1.7%). The majority of recreational use occurs on weekends.

Transportation

Roads and Bridges

The Pioneer Valley area is considered the crossroads of transportation in western Massachusetts. Situated at the intersection of the area's major highways, Interstate 90 (Massachusetts Turnpike) traveling east-west and Interstate 91 traveling north-south, the region offers easy access to all markets in the eastern United States and Canada. Major southern New England population centers are accessible within a couple of hours.

There are just over 4,402 miles of roadway in the Pioneer Valley region. Roadways are classified based on their design, speed, capacity, and level of access. It is also used to establish funding eligibility. All total, 1,500 miles of regional roads are eligible for federal aid. Local roads, which are not eligible for federal aid comprise approximately 66% of the regional roadway mileage. Cities and towns are responsible for the maintenance of over 82% of regional roadway miles.

The interstate expressways (I-90 and I-91) link most of the major urban centers in the region. The basic highway network, including interstate highways, U.S. numbered routes, state routes, and other traffic arteries, provides access to all municipalities in the region, both urban and rural. The pattern of principal arterial highways in the region is radial, extending outwards from each of the region's major centers, a consequence of development and topographic influences.

Regional Highway Statistics

- 4,402 Roadway Miles
- 1,500 Federal Aid Eligible Roadway Miles
- 14,171,000 Estimated Daily Vehicle Miles Travelled in 2020.
- 688 Bridges - 61 (9%) are Structurally Deficient

Of the existing transportation facilities in the Pioneer Valley region, major bridge crossings remain a focal point of regional transportation concerns, as many streets and highways converge into a limited number of crossings over the Connecticut, Westfield, and Chicopee rivers.

Driving Distances and Times from Springfield to Select Urban Centers

Destination	Distance in Miles	Estimated Driving Time
Albany	85	1.5 hours
Boston	91	1.5 hours
Montreal	301	5.5 hours
New York City	140	3.0 hours
Philadelphia	260	5.0 hours
Washington, DC	400	8.0 hours

Source: PVPC, Regional Transportation Plan for the Pioneer Valley - 2024 Update

Major Interstate Highways Serving the Pioneer Valley Region

Interstate Highway	Principal Orientation	Number of Interchanges in the Region	Road Mileage in the Region	Toll Road?
I-90	East/West	6	46.08	Yes
I-91	North/South	22	31.17	No
I-291	Connector (Springfield to I-90)	6	5.44	No
I-391	Connector (I-91 to Chicopee/Holyoke)	6	3.82	No

Source: PVPC, Regional Transportation Plan for the Pioneer Valley - 2024 Update

In general, traffic on the region's roadways has been increasing. Between 1999 and 2009 the estimated number of daily vehicle miles traveled (DVMT) in the Pioneer Valley region rose nearly half a million miles per day, from about 14.76 million to about 15.23 million. The magnitude of increase is shared in the region's rural areas. The following table presents the commute times for each of the Pioneer Valley communities in 2000 and 2017. The 4.6% increase in commuter times can be attributed to several major trends including a rise in vehicle ownership and the onset of several major roadway improvement projects, such as the Great River Bridge in Westfield.

Passenger Rail and Other Transit Routes

The Pioneer Valley has a well-developed public transit system that includes local bus service, ADA and senior paratransit van service, intercity bus service, and passenger rail. In addition, there are formal and informal park-and-ride lots, as well as ridesharing and car rental services that offer more options for accessing and leveraging transit services. Train service was expanded to Northampton and Holyoke in 2015, and additional passenger rail services and facilities began operating in the fall of 2019. All of these elements are vital contributors to mobility options for the region's residents.

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA), established in 1974, is the largest of the Commonwealth's 14 regional transit authorities. A total of 24 municipalities are members of the PVTA service area. PVTA oversees the operation of 189 buses and 142 vans throughout Hampden and Hampshire Counties, as well as two municipalities in Franklin County. The PVTA system has 42 scheduled bus routes that provide service in urban centers, as well as outlying suburban and rural areas.

Fourteen towns in the PVPC region (which are not members of PVTA) contract with the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) based in Greenfield, for senior paratransit service. These towns are Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Plainfield, Russell, Southampton, Southwick, Westhampton, and Worthington.

Intercity bus service in the region is provided by Peter Pan Bus Lines, Greyhound Lines and Megabus. These companies operate a mix of routes to destinations within the region, as well as connections throughout New England and the country. Other private bus carriers provide charters and package tours.

The regional transit system includes the following bus terminals and hubs:

- Springfield Union Station, an intermodal transportation center, is the major bus station in western Massachusetts, serving as the hub for 20 PVTA Springfield-area routes, Peter Pan regional service, and Greyhound regional routes.
- Holyoke Transportation Center is the hub for 8 PVTA routes, as well as limited service by Peter Pan. Northampton Bus Terminal is served by Peter Pan and Greyhound, with connections to 10 PVTA and FRTA routes at the nearby Academy of Music stop.
- Olver Transit Pavilion in Westfield, with PVTA service and a ValleyBike sharing station.

Passenger rail stations for Amtrak service are located at Springfield's Union Station (Lyman Street), Northampton Station (Pleasant Street), and Holyoke Station (Main Street). Amtrak's most frequent service is at Union Station, where 18 trains per day are available to and from Springfield that provide extensive service within the Northeast. Passenger rail service is provided on east-west (Lake Shore Limited) north-south (Vermont) and regional (Northeast Corridor) routes through the region.

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation recently realigned Amtrak Vermont service north of Springfield to restore passenger rail service to the Connecticut River line through Holyoke, Northampton and Greenfield. The success of this service has spurred interest in additional north/south passenger rail service. In addition, the Connecticut Department of Transportation's New Haven-Hartford-Springfield (NHHS) commuter rail project began operating service on November 12, 2018. The new service includes six additional trips per day (3 northbound and 3 southbound) between Springfield and New Haven. The Springfield Union Station is currently served by 28 trains daily providing service in the northeastern U.S. and connections nationwide. Passenger rail service is provided on both East-West routes and North-South routes in the region. Most trains in Springfield operate south to New Haven as either Amtrak or CTRail trains. Amtrak provides daily service on the Vermont between St. Albans Vermont and Washington D.C., with major stops at Springfield, Hartford, New York City and Philadelphia. The highest ridership origin-destination pair along the Vermont route is Northampton, MA to New York City, NY. Valley Flyer service on the Connecticut River Line between Greenfield, MA and New Haven, CT is very successful and MassDOT has committed to permanently operating the route.

A long-distance train, the Lake Shore Limited, serves Springfield by providing daily service between Chicago and Boston. PVPC has been actively engaged in advocating for additional passenger rail service to Boston. Efforts include a MassDOT initiated study of East/West rail that recommended additional daily trips and more recently the Massachusetts State Legislature's Western Mass Passenger Rail Commission.

North/South Rail Service

- Amtrak and CTRail
- 13 arrivals/13 departures
 - 5 CTRail
 - 7 Amtrak
 - 1 Vermont
- 28,000 riders in 2017

East/West Rail Service

- Lake Shore Limited
 - Chicago to Boston
- Western Mass Passenger Rail Commission working on improvements to this service.

Passenger Rail Terminals

- Springfield Union Station
- Holyoke
- Northampton

Commercial van shuttles serve an important segment of the region's transit market. Many operators focus on service to and from airports and rail stations in New England. Service to Bradley International Airport is provided hourly from most locations in the Pioneer Valley. Service to Boston, Providence, and New York is also provided, though not on a scheduled basis. Non-profit organizations also operate shuttles, typically for their clients. Examples include municipal councils on aging, day care providers and social service agencies.

There are more than 20 taxi companies operating in the region. Taxi companies provide a vital link in the transportation system by offering mobility during times and at locations when public transportation is not available. Ride-sharing services have also become more widespread in the Pioneer Valley in the last several years.

Intelligent Transportation Systems

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) utilizes technology in traffic control, communications, computer hardware and software to improve the performance of an existing transportation system. The dissemination of real-time travel information improves safety and efficiency while reducing congestion.

The ITS infrastructure is continually expanding in the region. Interstates 90, 91 and 291 have a network of cameras and variable message signs to assist in incident management. PVTAs are equipped with technology to allow real time tracking of the fleet. The Massachusetts Turnpike converted to all electronic tolling in October of 2018. Massachusetts is a member of the E-ZPass Program, and its transponders are recognized by toll agencies/companies in 19 states.

Aviation

The Pioneer Valley is well served by air transportation facilities located within or adjacent to the region. Most air travel from the region goes through Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, Connecticut situated 15 miles south of the City of Springfield. The largest airport in the Pioneer Valley region is the Westover Air Reserve Base and Metropolitan Airport facility in Chicopee and Ludlow. The Westfield-Barnes Airport is located in the City of Westfield and is a general aviation facility that also houses the Air National Guard 104th Tactical Fighter Group. Northampton Airport is a small privately owned airport serving both business and recreational uses.

Transportation of Goods

Interstates and rail lines in the Pioneer Valley enable the quick delivery of goods to some of the nation's largest cities. The proximity of the region to major and middle-sized cities allows goods from the Pioneer Valley to be quickly transported. Freight is moved in and out of the Pioneer Valley primarily by truck with rail, air and pipeline carrying the remaining goods.

Completed in 2020, the Pioneer Valley Regional Freight Plan identifies freight needs, reviews existing conditions of the current freight network, and assesses future potential for improvement and expansion of freight in coordination with the Massachusetts Freight Plan. MassDOT has started the process to update this plan.

Non-Motorized Transportation

Bicycling and walking are popular transportation options in the Pioneer Valley. Historic town centers, vibrant central business districts and a variety of destinations are within easy walking or bicycling distance from many residential areas. An expanding network of bikeways, sidewalks, and accommodating roadways provide residents with a variety of transportation alternatives. Many of the region's city centers offer easy accessibility for pedestrians and are supported by a strong transit network.

Currently seventeen communities provide over 90 miles of bicycle lanes, multi-use paths or "rail trails" in the region. Twelve communities provide nearly 50 miles of designated on-road bicycle facilities. The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority supports a popular "Rack and Roll" bikes-on-buses program for the entire region. All fixed route buses are equipped with bicycle racks.

Pedestrian access and circulation are typically better in town or city centers due to the physical design of such places. Shops, offices, restaurants, and other amenities are generally clustered together and connected by a pedestrian network which is often more accessible and efficient than the vehicle network. Sidewalks are the most common infrastructure feature devoted to pedestrian circulation. The provision of sidewalks in the region varies with respect to location, quality, and function.

The Massachusetts Safe Routes to School program promotes healthy alternatives for children and parents in their travel to and from school. A total of 79 schools in the Pioneer Valley region actively participate in the program. Benefits include education on the value of walking and bicycling and funding for sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic calming measures.

Source: Pioneer Valley 2024 Regional Transportation Plan.

Land Use and Development Patterns

Land use trends in the Pioneer Valley over the past 50 years include the phenomena of suburban and rural development, population growth, growth in housing, and an increasing pace of conversion of agricultural land to other uses. The region is positioned for increased growth in the future due to its prime location at the crossroads of New England and its highly developable land base. The lower development costs and easy access to the Connecticut River Valley give it a high potential for economic development and rapid growth.

The Pioneer Valley region continues to experience a development trend that is unique in regions outside Boston and major urban areas of the Northeast: suburban sprawl without population growth. While the Valley's population has been relatively stable since 1990, the continued conversion of farms, forests and other undeveloped areas to low-density suburban single-family residential use is consuming land at a per capita rate that far exceeds that of regions where population is actually growing, such as the Southwest and California.

Only 11% of prime farmed soils and 16% of other farmland is currently protected. More than a quarter of the farmland in the Connecticut River watershed was lost between 1982 and 2002. Although only 11% of the landscape is developed for commercial or residential purposes, this number increased by 31 percent from 1982 to 1997. Nearly 80% of the Connecticut River watershed is forested, with roughly 31% permanently protected from development.

The region's farmland acreage has stabilized over the past decade, after several decades of steep declines. Farmland acreage in the Pioneer Valley substantially declined from the late 1950s to the 1990s, with most of the losses occurring by the late 1960s, according to the USDA Agricultural Census. During the past twenty years, Hampden County has held steady between 36-37,000 acres of farmland, while Hampshire County has held steady at around 52,000 acres. Between 2002 and 2007, Hampshire County experienced modest gains in farmland.

The upper reaches of the region are still primarily rural communities distinguished by unfragmented forests and scattered with agricultural, seasonal, and home-based businesses. The Greater Springfield area, including Westfield, Agawam, West Springfield, and Holyoke is urbanized, with the greatest job opportunities.

ATTACHMENT B: ACTION PLAN MATRIX

FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION

How Progress Will Be Measured

Building an Economy That Works for Everyone will use key socio-economic indicators to help gauge the CEDS’ performance. Tracking these key indicators will provide PVPC and its collaborating stakeholders with insight into how well the strategies are working and make any mid-course process improvements.

Each key indicator is assigned a rating of positive, negative, or neutral based on the most recent available data. An improvement of at least 1% is considered a positive trend; a decrease of least 1% is considered a negative trend; and trends between 1% positive and 1% negative are considered neutral. The key indicators will use a baseline of the most recent information available in 2024. The indicators will be updated mid-CEDS, in 2027, and at the end of the five-year period of implementation, in 2029. These intervals will be effective in understanding regional changes over time. Rather than evaluating current-year statistics in isolation, this method will look at changes over a broader period, indicating whether trends are increasing or decreasing.

The key indicators in this section, How Progress Will Be Measured, will be used to guide our understanding of the region’s economic growth and resiliency. The benchmarks in the second section of the Framework for Evaluation, How Progress Will Be Assessed, will complement the key indicators to provide a comprehensive overview of progress in the CEDS’ implementation.

Key Socio-Economic Indicator	Measure	Most Recent Data 2024	2027	Rating	2029	Rating
Gross Regional Product	Value of region’s economy					
Population						
Pioneer Valley EDD	Number of people who live in the region	623,629				
Hampden County	Number of people who live in Hampden County	461,041				
Hampshire County	Number of people who live in Hampshire County	162,588				
Demographics and Ethnicity						
Pioneer Valley EDD	Percent of regional population who identify as minority	34.1%				
Hampden County	Percent of Hampden County population who identify as minority	40%				
Hampshire County	Percent of Hampshire County population who identify as minority	21%				
Homeownership and Cost Burden						
Pioneer Valley EDD	Percentage of residents in the region who own their homes	63.5%				
Hampden County	Percentage of residents in Hampden County who own their homes	61.7%				

Hampshire County	Percentage of residents in Hampshire County who own their homes	68.9%				
Minority Homeownership in Pioneer Valley EDD	Percentage of minority residents in the region who own their homes	35.4%				
Hampden County	Percentage of minority residents in Hampden County who own their homes	34.5%				
Hampshire County	Percentage of minority residents in Hampshire County who own their homes	44.5%				
Cost Burdened in Pioneer Valley EDD	Percentage of renters in the region who pay >30% of their income on rent	53.5%				
Hampden County	Percentage of renters in Hampden County who pay >30% of their income on rent	53%				
Hampshire County	Percentage of renters in Hampshire County who pay >30% of their income on rent	54%				
Labor Force						
Size of Labor Force	Number of people in the Pioneer Valley EDD aged 18-64	320,657				
Labor Force Participation Rate	Percentage of labor force that is employed in the Pioneer Valley EDD	60.5%				
Minority Labor Force Participation rate	Percentage of minority labor force that is employed in the Pioneer Valley EDD	59.6%				
Unemployment Rate	Percent of labor force that is unemployed in the Pioneer Valley EDD	6.0%				
Minority Unemployment Rate	Percent of minority labor force that is unemployed in the Pioneer Valley EDD	9.2%				
Educational Attainment						
High School Graduation	5-year high school graduation rate in the Pioneer Valley EDD	91.9%				
Minority High School Graduation	5-year high school graduation rate in the Pioneer Valley EDD for minority students	88.3%				
Community College Graduation	Percent of population graduating with a community college degree or certificate program in the Pioneer Valley EDD	10.0%				
Minority Community College Graduation	Percent of minority population with a community college degree or certificate program in the Pioneer Valley EDD	10.3%				
4-Year Degree or Higher	Percent of population with a bachelor's degree or higher in the Pioneer Valley EDD	35.4%				
Minority 4-Year Degree or Higher	Percent of minority population with a bachelor's degree or higher in the Pioneer Valley EDD	22.8%				

Income Inequality						
Pioneer Valley EDD	Gini Coefficient for Pioneer Valley EDD	0.466				
Hampden County	Gini Coefficient for Hampden County	0.471				
Hampshire County	Gini Coefficient for Hampshire County	0.461				
Poverty						
Pioneer Valley EDD	Percentage of residents in the Pioneer Valley EDD who are at or below the Federal Poverty Line	15%				
Hampden County	Percentage of residents in Hampden County who are at or below the Federal Poverty Line	16%				
Hampshire County	Percentage of residents in Hampshire County who are at or below the Federal Poverty Line	11%				
Minority Community	Percentage of minority residents in the Pioneer Valley EDD who are at or below the Federal Poverty Line	26%				
Hampden County	Percentage of minority residents in Hampden County who are at or below the Federal Poverty Line	27%				
Hampshire County	Percentage of minority residents in Hampshire County who are at or below the Federal Poverty Line	19%				
Disadvantaged Tracts						
Pioneer Valley EDD	Number of disadvantaged tracts in the Pioneer Valley EDD	46				
Hampden County	Number of disadvantaged tracts in Hampden County	44				
Hampshire County	Number of disadvantaged tracts in Hampshire County	2				
Small Business Ecosystem						
Small Businesses	Number of small businesses in the Pioneer Valley EDD	TBD				
Tech-focused	Percentage of small businesses in the Pioneer Valley EDD that are focused on existing or emerging technologies	TBD				
Minority-Owned	Percentage of small businesses in the Pioneer Valley EDD that are minority-owned	TBD				
Immigrant-Owned	Percentage of small businesses in the Pioneer Valley EDD that are immigrant-owned	TBD				
Infrastructure and Infrastructure Planning						
Broadband	Percent of Pioneer Valley EDD which has access to high-speed internet	55%				
Roads, Water, and Sewer	Percent of communities in the Pioneer Valley EDD planning for infrastructure improvements	100%				
	Number of highway and transit projects being implemented	39				

Housing	Percent of communities in the Pioneer Valley EDD with housing production plans meeting 10% affordable housing threshold	13.9%				
Public Facilities	Number and condition of public structures (e.g. schools, fire stations) in the Pioneer Valley EDD that need capital improvements	TBD				

How Progress Will Be Assessed

Building an Economy That Works for Everyone will use benchmarks to understand and assess the implementation of the strategic priorities and goals. The implementation will entail committed collaboration among the stakeholder organizations and will require time and effort. Progress will be evaluated by annual updates to the status of the implementation, including the identification of lead entities and partners, revised cost estimates that are determined as the strategy proceeds, and substantive modifications to the descriptions, participating partner organizations, and timelines.

Goal 1: Prioritize access to economic opportunities for all, acknowledging that poverty and historic approaches to economic development continue to determine economic opportunities and outcomes for too many of the Pioneer Valley's residents.

Action	Focus	Description	Potential Lead	Potential Partner(s)	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Status
1.A	Create an economy with benefits for all Pioneer Valley residents	Establish a learning community around an economy that works for everyone and engage with national partners who successfully implement best practices, e.g., Global Detroit	PVPC	PVPC, Global Detroit, CEE, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Western Mass Economic Development Council (EDC), Fund for our Economic Future, Community Foundation of Western Mass, Davis Foundation, UMASS Amherst	2024-2029	~\$50,000	Private foundations	Fall 2024
1.B	Increase access to capital	Shift paradigm from lending to investing in creating access to capital for marginalized groups through establishing the Pioneer Valley Fund to	To be determined as part of the strategy	Federal Reserve Bank, Boston, PVPC, Common Capital, private foundations, lending	2024-2029	~\$4,000,000	Federal Reserve Bank, private foundations, CDFI	Underway

		support small business development		institutions, Latino Economic Development Council (LEDC), E & B Collaborative, Black Economic Council of Massachusetts (BECMA)				
1.C	Create workforce development programs	Create workforce development programs that meet the needs of underserved communities	To be determined as part of the strategy	PVPC, CEE, MassTech Innovation Institute, STCC, E&B Collaborative, nonprofits, HCC, Hampden & Franklin Hampshire County Workforce Boards, Commonwealth Corporation, Tech Foundry, Roca, Inc., Job Corps, public schools	2024-2029	\$500,000 for pilot, additional to be determined after completion of pilot \$15Million ~\$1,823,000 ~\$5,000,000	MassTech Collaborative EDA- Recompete Mass Clean Energy Center Cybersecurity Center: Congressional Directed Spending, City of Springfield, Mass Tech Collaborative	Fall 2024, ongoing Upon Award Ongoing Underway

1.D	Ensure workforce programs match needs	Ensure that workforce programs expand to match the needs of underserved communities to living wage jobs and career/skill growth opportunities	To be determined as part of the strategy	PVPC, CEE, MassTech Innovation Institute, STCC, E&B Collaborative, nonprofits, HCC, Hampden & Hampshire County Workforce Boards, Tech Foundry, Roca, Inc., Job Corps, public schools	2025-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	U.S. Department of Labor, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Commonwealth Corporation	To be determined as part of the strategy
1.E	Increase business ownership and homeownership	Develop and implement new mechanisms for direct communication with minorities, women, and other marginalized communities to ensure that resources are aligned with needs and will help overcome systemic economic challenges related to business	Way Finders, Common Capital	PVPC, CEE, Way Finders, Common Capital, E&B Collaborative, local lending institutions, real estate professionals, Home City Housing, Commonwealth of	2025-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	To be determined as part of the strategy	Begin 2025

		ownership and homeownership		Massachusetts, LEDC, BECMA				
1.F	Disaggregate data	Develop a new regional data management system that disaggregates data by demographic group and ethnicity.	PVPC	Local foundations, Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center	2024-2029	~\$100,000	Private foundations	Fall 2024, ongoing
1.G	Increase minority participation	Develop a mentoring program to increase minority participation in civic and government leadership roles.	To be determined as part of the strategy	CEE, PVPC, BECMA, LEDC, nonprofits, CBOs	2025-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	Private Foundations	Begin 2025

Goal 2: Pursue high-growth and emerging opportunities, adding emerging technologies, e.g., quantum and quantum-adjacent technologies, new technologies to generate power, AI, financial technology, food science, and advanced materials to the region’s existing strengths in healthcare/social assistance, educational services, and manufacturing.

Action	Focus	Description	Potential Lead	Potential Partner(s)	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Status
2.A	Support opportunities in emerging applied technologies	Support opportunities in emerging applied-technology industries , including but not limited to financial technology; AI; biotech; life sciences; quantum and quantum-adjacent technology; food science; cybersecurity; and specialized engineering, e.g., aeronautics.	UMass, WNEU, MTC	Private sector employers, STCC, HCC, Mass CEC, Mass Tech Collaborative, Local Legislative Delegation	2024-2029	~\$16,000,000	Commonwealth of Massachusetts NSF Grant	Underway Upon Award
2.B	Encourage new businesses	Undertake a regional industrial lands analysis to identify turnkey	PVPC	Economic Development Council of Western	2025-2027	~\$125,000	Private Foundations,	Begin 2025

		opportunities that will facilitate economic investment by developing an array of shovel-ready locations to site new businesses .		Mass, MassDev, municipalities			State or Federal Grants	
2.C	Strengthen collaborations	Strengthen connections between educational institutions and the communities that they are in or near by increasing collaboration.	UMASS Amherst, WNEU	STCC, HCC, local governments, PVPC, nonprofits, CBOs	2025-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	To be determined as part of the strategy	Fall 2024
2.D	Coordinate Workforce Development	Coordinate workforce development efforts with expanding and emerging industrial opportunities by collaborating with institutions of higher education and others.	Workforce boards	STCC, HCC, WNEU, PVPC, Mass Tech Collaborative, Mass CEC, private sector employers, nonprofits, CBOs	2026-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	U.S. Department of Labor	Begin 2026
2.E	Support Economic Investment	Support the economic investment recommendations of the WMEDC, which include food science; non-pharmaceutical biomanufacturing and food ecosystem; and advanced materials and R&D manufacturing.	WMEDC	Commonwealth of Massachusetts, private sector, higher education, public schools, private sector employers	2024-2029	~\$500,000,000	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	Underway

Goal 3: Recognize that rural communities need different and complementary economic development strategies tailored to their needs. As a region, the economic vitality of our urban centers impacts rural communities, which need their own set of strategies.

Action	Focus	Description	Potential Lead	Potential Partner(s)	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Status
3.A	Increase Rural Collaboration	Convene regularly scheduled regional round tables that focus on economic development	PVPC	Small and rural communities in the Pioneer Valley	2024-2029	\$50,000	Commonwealth of Massachusetts, District Local	Underway

		opportunities , innovations, and ways to optimize interlocal cooperation.					Technical Assistance (DLTA) program	
3.B	Increase Efficiencies	Collaborate with smaller communities to expand shared-services models to meet local service needs and improve efficiencies .	PVPC	Communities in Pioneer Valley with <10,000 population	2024-2029	\$100,000	Commonwealth of Massachusetts, DLTA Program	Underway
3.C	Increase Rural Revenues	Pursue travel and tourism opportunities for regional marketing and small-town revitalization , especially heritage, recreational, and/or eco-tourism.	Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Authority	To be determined as part of the strategy	2026-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	To be determined as part of the strategy	Begin 2026
3.D	Increase Housing	Develop a regional housing plan that incorporates twenty-first century zoning, including a locally focused needs assessment and market analysis for each town.	Way Finders, PVPC	Small and rural communities in the Pioneer Valley, Way Finders, Home City Housing,	2026-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	To be determined as part of the strategy	Begin 2026
3.E	Increase Business Development	Develop basic permitting guides for each town that clarify and facilitate business and commercial development	PVPC	Small and rural communities in the Pioneer Valley	2026-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	To be determined as part of the strategy	Begin 2026

Goal 4: Support small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs.

Action	Focus	Description	Potential Lead	Potential Partner(s)	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Status
4.A	Understand Small Business Ecosystem	Map the existing micro- and small business, and entrepreneurial ecosystem	To be determined as part of the strategy	PVPC, CEE, Massachusetts Gaming Commission,	2024-2027	\$98,400	Mass Gaming Commission	Recently Awarded

				EDC, Mass Development, LEDC, BECMA, business service providers				
4.B	Assist SMEs	Work with SMEs and their associations to identify their needs and explore creative strategies to meet those needs, e.g., hiring and retention, to help them open, stay open, and establish sustainable business practices. Recognize minority and women-owned SMEs may face different challenges	To be determined as part of the strategy	CEE, PVPC, Center for Women's Enterprise, LEDC, BECMA, E for All, business service providers	2024-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	To be determined as part of the strategy	Underway
4.C	Increase Immigrant Participation	Harness the energy and skills of immigrants in small business development using the Community Connectors model	To be determined as part of the strategy	Global Detroit, PVPC, CEE, Center for Women's Enterprise, LEDC, BECMA	2025-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	To be determined as part of the strategy	Begin 2025
4.D	Support Entrepreneurs	Identify spaces for young entrepreneurs to work and connect with peers	To be determined as part of the strategy	Local governments, including City of Springfield, City of Holyoke, City of Chicopee, EDC, LEDC, BECMA, CEE	2025-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	To be determined as part of the strategy	Begin 2026

Goal 5: Reverse long-standing stagnant population growth to increase the regional workforce capacity.

Action	Focus	Description	Potential Lead	Potential Partner(s)	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Status
5.A	Increase Good-Paying Jobs	Provide jobs and professional opportunities for all, including residents and graduates from the region's institutions of	Workforce boards	Private sector employers, institutions of higher education, nonprofits, CBOs	2024-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	To be determined as part of the strategy	Underway

		higher education and training programs						
5.B	Attract Residents and Businesses	Embrace the region's ethnic and cultural diversity and recognize its positive contributions to the quality of life in the Pioneer Valley	To be determined as part of the strategy	Municipalities, New England Knowledge Corridor, Commonwealth of Massachusetts	2026-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	To be determined as part of the strategy	Begin 2026
5.B.1	Collaborate with State Agencies Highlight Cost of Living Highlight Access	Collaborate with state agencies and other organizations that are working to make Massachusetts more competitive and attractive Showcase the region's relatively lower cost of living compared to other parts of the Commonwealth Showcase the region's geographic centrality to major metropolitan areas, including Boston, Hartford, and New York, with proximity to major interstate highways	To be determined as part of the strategy	Municipalities, New England Knowledge Corridor, EDC municipalities, Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Authority, Commonwealth of Massachusetts	2026-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	To be determined as part of the strategy	Begin 2026
5.C	Revitalize downtowns	Revitalize downtown environments to attract people with jobs, entertainment, and housing opportunities	City of Springfield, City of Holyoke, City of Chicopee	PVPC, MassDev, MA Executive Office of Economic Development, MA Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities	2024-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	To be determined as part of the strategy	Underway

Goal 6: Strengthen the region's infrastructure to enable communities small and large, urban, suburban, and rural alike, to pursue development opportunities and related investment, attract newcomers, and promote social and economic mobility. We are defining two types of infrastructure: "hard" (e.g., water systems, rail, broadband) and "soft" (e.g., services, programs). This goal recognizes that deferred

maintenance and lack of investment in these forms of infrastructure are threats that will continue to inhibit the region’s growth if not addressed.

Action	Focus	Description	Potential Lead	Potential Partners(s)	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Status
6.A	Improvements for Road, Water and Sewer Systems	Continue planning and coordination with units of local government, the Commonwealth, and the federal government	PVPC	Municipalities, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, U.S. Department of Transportation, Water & Sewer utilities	2024-2029	Part of existing tasks and grant budgets for PVPC	State and Federal Grants, Private Foundations	Underway
6.B	Climate Change and Sustainability	Continue regional planning efforts that address pre-disaster mitigation, resiliency and environmental vulnerability mitigation	PVPC	Local governments, Commonwealth of Massachusetts	2024-2029	Part of existing tasks for PVPC, additional grant resources needed	State and Federal Grants, Private Foundations	Underway
6.C	Compass Rail	Support the plan to increase connectivity	Massachusetts Department of Transportation	PVPC, FRCOG, CRCOG, BRPC, Trains in the Valley	2024-2044	Part of existing tasks and grant budgets for PVPC	State and Federal Grants, Private Foundations	Underway
6.D	Drinking Water	Complete the regional Drinking Water Plan	PVPC	Water & Sewer utilities	2026-2028	~\$125,000	State and Federal Grants, Private Foundations	Begin 2026
6.E	Broadband	Continue supporting Massachusetts Broadband Institute’s rollout	Massachusetts Broadband Institute	PVPC, Baystate Health Systems	2024-2028	Cost Dependent on size of each Community	Massachusetts Broadband Institute	Underway
6.F	Service Delivery	Assist with regional coordination of integrated service delivery through workforce development pilot to improve workforce participation rates	PVPC	Valley Opportunity Council, New North Citizens’ Council, STCC, Way Finders, Springfield Empowerment	2024	\$500,000	Mass Tech Collaborative Innovation Institute	2024

				Zone Partnership, E & B Collaborative				
6.G	Childcare	Advocate for increased access	Massachusetts Head Start Association	Public Schools, Head Start, Square One, Private childcare providers	2024-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy, building upon data work at PVPC	State and Federal Grants, Private Foundations	Underway
6.H	Transit	Continue to coordinate transit schedules with local need/demand	PVPC	Pioneer Valley Transit Authority	2024-2029	Part of existing tasks and grant budgets for PVPC	To be determined as part of the strategy	Underway

Goal 7: Develop a strong, effective regional voice to advocate for the Pioneer Valley in order to communicate regional priorities and increase economic investment from the Commonwealth, the federal government, and the private sector.

Action	Focus	Description	Potential Lead	Potential Partner(s)	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Status
7.A	Regional Priorities	Collaborate on the identification and communication of regional priorities for equitable economic investment	PVPC	CEDS Strategy Committee, others to be determined as part of the strategy	2024-2025	\$12,500 to start the process	Private and Community Foundations	2024-2025
7.B	Investments	Coordinate the development of a single, strong regional voice to advocate for and secure increased investments in the regional priorities from state, federal and private sources	PVPC	CEDS Strategy Committee, others to be determined as part of the strategy	2025-2026	To be determined as part of the strategy	Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Mass Gaming Commission, other sources	2025-2026
7.C	Emerging Opportunities	Develop mechanism for cross-sector early identification and	PVPC	CEDS Strategy Committee, others to be determined as	2025-2029	To be determined as part of the strategy	State and Federal Grants,	2025-2029

		planning for emerging opportunities		part of the strategy			Private Foundations	
7.D	New England Knowledge Corridor	Continue collaboration on bi-state New England Knowledge Corridor initiative	PVPC, CRCOG, Massachusetts Competitive Partnership	Others to be determined as part of strategy	2024-2029	Part of existing tasks for PVPC	State and Federal Grants, Private Sector	Underway

ATTACHMENT C: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The following individuals contributed to the Pioneer Valley CEDS during Spring 2024. They are listed below in alphabetical order.

Strategy Committee Members

- Megan Burke, Executive Director, Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts
- John Cook, President, Springfield Technical Community College
- Keith Fairey, President and CEO, Way Finders
- Mike Knapik, Vice President, Baystate Health Systems
- Javier Reyes, Chancellor, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- Kimberly H. Robinson, Executive Director, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- Christina Royal, Chair, Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts
- Patricia Samra, Chair, MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board
- Mallory Sullivan, Rural Programs Manager, Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development
- Rick Sullivan, President and CEO, Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts
- Tracye Whitfield, Executive Director, CEE and Councilor-at-Large, City of Springfield City Council

Focus Group Participants

- Doug Albertson, Town Administrator, Belchertown
- Paul Belsito, Executive Director, Davis Foundation
- Margaret Boyle, Asst VP for Government Affairs/Chief of Staff, Western New England University
- Nick Breault, Town Administrator, Wilbraham
- Mike Burkart, Commissioner, Amherst Housing Authority
- Megan Burke, Executive Director, Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts
- Ward Caswell, Executive Director, The Beveridge Family Foundation
- Lori Chavez, Director of Clinical and Family Services, HCS Headstart
- Adam Couturier, Director of Manufacturing Education, Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, Innovation Institute
- John Fisher, Fair Housing Manager, Way Finders
- Ben Forman, Research Director, MassInc
- Kiyota Garcia, Assistant VP of Student Affairs, Springfield Technical Community College • Donna Haghghat, Executive Director, Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts
- Don Humasson, Town Administrator, Chester
- Denise Jordan, Executive Director, Springfield Housing Authority
- Anne Kandilis, Executive Director, Springfield Works
- Mike Knapik, VP, Baystate Health Systems
- Mike Malone, Interim Provost, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- Amanda Mankowsky, Director of Youth Programs, Hampshire Workforce Board
- Alison Mathias, Executive Director, Mass Mutual Foundation
- Joel McAuliffe, Dean, Holyoke Technical High School
- Tom Moran, Director of Partnership and Ecosystem Development, Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, Innovation Institute
- Nicole Parker, Town Administrator, Southwick
- Peter Reinhart, Founding Director, Institute for Applied Life Sciences, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- Carl Rust, Asst Vice Chancellor for Corporate Engagement, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- Patricia Samra, VP Human Resources, Baystate Health Systems

- Kristen Smidy, Director, Gateway Regional School District
- Linda Thompson, President, Westfield State University
- Alexis Washburn, Regional Director, Northeast, Emerald Cities
- Lisa Wong, Town Administrator, South Hadley

Interviews

Local Government

- Mayor Garcia, City of Holyoke
- Mayor La Chapelle, City of Easthampton
- Gerry McCafferty, Director, Office of Housing, City of Springfield
- Tim Sheehan, Chief Development Officer, City of Springfield
- Diane Syzmal, Interim Town Administrator, City of Hatfield
- Alan Wolf, Chief of Staff, City of Northampton

State Government

- Ann Gobi, Director of Rural Affairs, Executive Office of Economic Development, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Lauren Jones, Secretary of Labor/Workforce Development, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Galen Nelson, Chief Program Officer, Massachusetts CEC

Higher Education

- Gladys Franco, Asst VP of Workforce Development, Springfield Technical Community College
- Dean Hickey, VP for University Advancement, Western New England University
- Mark A. Keroack, M.D. Chancellor, Department of Medicine, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- Peter Reinhart, Founding Director, Institute for Applied Life Sciences, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- Javier Reyes, Chancellor, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- George Timmons, President, Holyoke Community College
- Tony Maroulis, Executive Director of Community and Strategic Initiatives, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Regional Leadership

- Jay Ash, President & CEO, Massachusetts Competitive Partnership
- Ron Brantley-Molina, Executive Director, E&B Collaborative
- Jeff Daly, President, Western Mass Area Development Corporation (Develop Springfield)
- Will Fuqua, Program Manager and Research Analyst, Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, Innovation Institute
- Rich Griffin, Black Economic Council of Massachusetts
- Patrick Larkin, Deputy Director, Massachusetts Technology Collaborative and Director, Innovation Institute
- Col. Karen Magnus, Commander, Westover Air Force Base
- Andrew Melendez, Latin Economic Development Corporation
- Tom Moran, Director of Partnership and Ecosystem Development, Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, Innovation Institute
- Mike Moriarty, President and Executive Director, OneHolyoke Community Development Corporation
- Christine Roddy, VP of Operations, Clean Crop Technologies
- Mary Kay Wydra, President, Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Authority

ATTACHMENT D: REPORTS AND PLANS

1. Ascendant Global (New Growth Innovation Network): **Next Steps: Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Economic Community Fund, 2023**
2. Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (2023-2027): **2023-2027 CEDS Berkshire County, Massachusetts**
3. Boston Indicators and the Boston Foundation in partnership with the CEE: **The Color of Capital, 2021**
4. Capital Region Council of Governments (2023-2027): **Act Greater Hartford: A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Capitol Region**
5. Franklin Regional Council of Governments (2020-2024): **2020 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Franklin County, MA**
6. Global Detroit, **The Power of Trusted Connectors in Micro-Enterprise Development, 2024**
7. Healey-Driscoll Administration Economic Development Plan: **Team Massachusetts: Leading Future Generations, 2023**
8. Hilltown Collaborative and Mass Development: **Gateway Hilltowns Economic Development Strategy, 2023**
9. Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts: **Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan 2023-2050, 2023**
10. Massachusetts Broadband Institute: **Strategic Plan, 2022-2027** and **State Digital Plan, 2023**
11. Massachusetts CEC: **2023 Massachusetts Industry Report**
12. Massachusetts Commission on Clean Heat: **Final Report, 2022**
13. Massachusetts Office of the State Auditor: **Public Infrastructure in Western Massachusetts: A Critical Need for Regional Investment and Revitalization, 2021**
14. Massachusetts Technology Collaborative: Workforce Roadmap Series: **Preparing the Advanced Manufacturing Workforce, 2021**
15. Massachusetts Workforce Agenda: **Meeting the Moment to Attract, Retain and Develop a Future Workforce, 2024**
16. Massachusetts Workforce Association: **Preparing for the Future of Work in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2021**
17. MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board: **Strategic Plan, 2020-2025, 2020**
18. MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board: **Strategic Plan, 2023-2026, 2023**
19. MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board: **Pioneer Valley Labor Market Blueprint 2024-2025, 2024**

20. MassInc in partnership with the CEE: **Unleashing the Potential of Entrepreneurs of Color in Massachusetts**, 2021
21. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission: **Redlines, Black Neighborhoods**, 2024
22. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission: **Regional Transportation Plan**, 2024
23. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, (2019-2024): **The Pioneer Valley's Comprehensive Development Strategy (CEDs) 2019-2024 ("Plan for Progress")**
24. Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts: **2022 Community Health Needs Assessment**, 2022
25. Rural Policy Advisory Commission: **Rural Policy Plan for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts**, 2019
26. Wayfinders: **Springfield and Pioneer Valley Housing Phase II**, 2022
27. Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council Report: **Accelerating Growth in the Pioneer Valley: A Prospectus for Transformative Economic Investment**, 2024