

**An Economic Development Strategy For  
The Town of Pittsfield, New Hampshire**

**AUGUST, 2007**



*Downtown Pittsfield, C. 1922*

**With Assistance From  
Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission**



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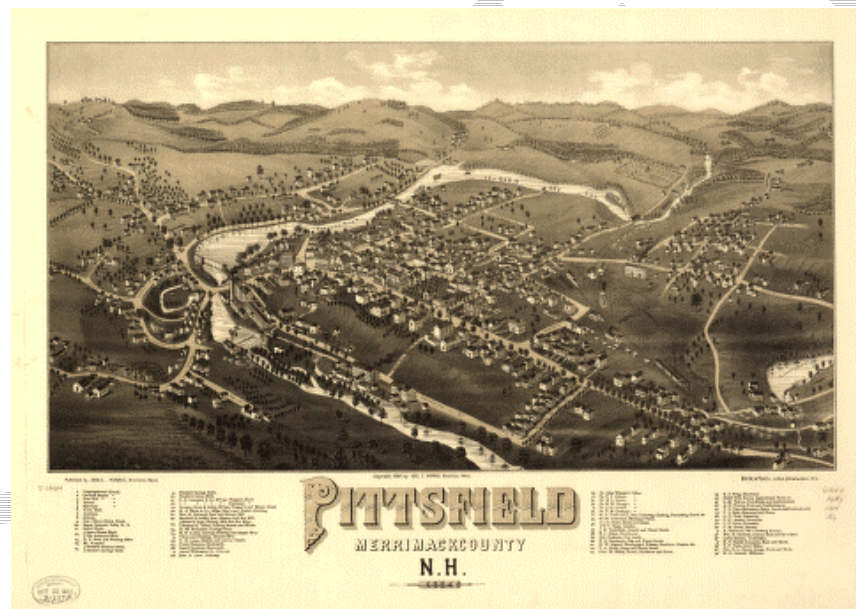
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pittsfield is a unique community with a unique economy. Pittsfield does, and historically has had, a diverse local economy. One of the keys to Pittsfield's past economic success has been its ability to adapt to changes in regional, state, and local economic trends. Pittsfield, through its Economic Development Committee (EDC), is working to adapt to these changes in the economy in an effort to ensure a high quality of life for all of Pittsfield's residents.

As part of the Economic Development Committee's effort to usher the economy of Pittsfield into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the EDC, with the assistance of the Board of Selectmen, contracted with the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) to create an Economic Profile of the Town of Pittsfield as a first step to strengthening the economy. The Profile was completed in February, 2007, and in response, the EDC and BOS, with CNHRPC have worked to create this Economic Development Strategy to be used, in conjunction with the Profile, as a tool to guide economic development in Pittsfield.



*Pittsfield, 1889 as depicted by Beck & Pauli*

This Economic Development Strategy is based upon the findings of the 2007 Economic Profile. The Strategy document incorporates the Profile's findings, and expands upon some of the assets and challenges of Route 28 and the Downtown as commercial centers in town as depicted in the Profile. In addition, it adds several recommendations for both Route 28 and Downtown commercial centers, as well as the town as a whole (20 in all). It is intended that this document, used in conjunction with the Economic Profile, will help to guide economic development in Pittsfield in a way consistent with Pittsfield character while considering its many assets in the process.

## **SYNOPSIS OF 2007 PITTSFIELD ECONOMIC PROFILE**

## **Executive Summary of the 2007 Community Profile**

The Pittsfield Economic Development Committee, with assistance from the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission, created an Economic Profile of the Town of Pittsfield in 2007. The Profile's purpose was to create a "snapshot" of Pittsfield's economy. The historic context of Pittsfield's economy, as well as items such as major employers, demographics, unemployment rate, workers' commutes, strengths and challenges for the economy, and the locations of economic centers within the town were some of the areas considered in the profile.

The purpose of the profile was to create a tool that to assist economic development efforts in town. Although the document was intended to be used as a tool for economic development planning, it does not make the in-depth recommendations that a traditional "plan" would make. This document seeks to make more general recommendations while taking the Profile's findings into account. There are some suggestions at the end of the profile, but overall, the attempt was to outline the key characteristics of Pittsfield's economy as a foundation for future planning efforts as well as to assist the Town. This Economic Development Strategy will further expand upon the Profile and provide a more specific plan of action and recommendations for economic development.

## **Findings from the 2007 Economic Profile**

Some of the key findings from the Economic Profile included:

- The top three employers in 2004 in the Town of Pittsfield were Globe Manufacturing, Pittsfield School District, and Pittsfield Weaving (according to NH Employment Security).
- Globe Manufacturing's employees make up a large portion of the manufacturing employment base in Pittsfield with the company claiming 300 total employees in 2004 (a total of 467 persons lived and worked in Pittsfield in 2000).
- According to the 2000 US Census and New Hampshire Department of Employment Security, Pittsfield had an unemployment rate of 1.9% in 2000 and in 2004 and unemployment rate of 3.7%. During the same period, the state's unemployment rates were 2.7% and 3.9%, respectively.
- Depending upon the industry, Pittsfield residents had an average weekly wage between \$489 and \$836 (\$661.61 average overall) in 2004 according the NH Employment Security.
- Also according to NH Employment Security, the per capita income for Pittsfield in 1999 was \$21,082, and the Median Household Income was \$38,833 for that same year. The state had a per capita income of 23,844 and a Median Household Income of 52,203 for the same period.

- The average commute time for Pittsfield residents was approximately 29.2 minutes according to NH Employment Security.
- NH Employment Security indicated that in 2004 58% of Pittsfield residents were between the ages of 20 and 64 years of age, 2.8% were between the ages of 15 and 19, and 5.04% were 65 years of age or older. Opportunities for full-time employment could be targeted towards the 20 to 64 years of age demographic, while the other two age groups would likely benefit more from part time employment opportunities.
- The 2000 US Census indicated that college graduates make up 21.2% of Pittsfield's workforce, high school graduates 56%, and those who did not graduate high school 22.9%.
- 23.1% of Pittsfield residents work in town, 27.8% work in Concord, 15.5% work in Manchester, Nashua, Hooksett or out-of-state, and the remaining 33.7% commute to "another New Hampshire Community".
- The Economic Development Chapter of the 2000 Pittsfield Master Plan indicates that there are two commercial centers in town, one being along Route 28 and the other being in the village area.
- The top five industry sectors employing Pittsfield residents were, according to the year 2000 Census:
  - a) Manufacturing
  - b) Retail
  - c) Healthcare & Social Assistance
  - d) Public Administration
  - e) Education
- In 2004, NH Employment Security indicated that the top five employment sectors that will add the most jobs in Merrimack County by 2014 were:
  - a) Retail Salespersons
  - b) Registered Nurses
  - c) Personal/Home Care Aides
  - d) Business Operations Specialists
  - e) Nurse Aides/Orderlies/Attendants
- In November of 2006 NH Employment Security indicated that the top five employment sectors likely to experience the most growth by 2014 statewide include:
  - a) Healthcare Support
  - b) Computer & Mathematical
  - c) Healthcare Practitioners/Technicians
  - d) Community & Social Services
  - e) Personal Care & Service

## **Pittsfield's Businesses and Institutions**

Pittsfield has 2 major centers of commercial activity in town: Route 28 and in the Downtown, although there are other businesses scattered throughout town, these 2 areas

represent the densest concentration of businesses locations in Pittsfield. The 2000 Master Plan indicated that Commercial and Industrial property represented approximately 17% of the property in town, whereas residential property represented 78%. In addition to Pittsfield's private sector employers, there are close to 30 or so not-for-profits organizations as well as schools and town departments that together can be thought of as Pittsfield's Institutions. Institutions, like businesses, can serve to draw people to particular locations, and such draws can have an impact on the local economy in that they can bring potential customers into town. The breakdown of businesses and institutions in Pittsfield is further delineated in Chart 1.

The number of businesses in each sector and type of institution in Pittsfield is as follows:

**Chart 1: Businesses & Institutions in Town**

Business Type	# in Town
Agricultural	4
Auto Repair	7
Auto Sales	1
Beauty Services	6
Construction	11
Electrician	1
Financial	5
Maintenance	2
Manufacturing	11
Mechanical	2
Media	1
Medical Service	3
Printing	1
Professional Service	14
Real Estate	10
Recreation	3
Restaurant	7
Retail	22
Service Industries	2
Skilled Craftsmen	20
Storage	1
Transportation	3

Source: 2007 Pittsfield Economic Profile

Institution Type	# in Town
Children's Home	1
Churches	7
Government Office	9
Schools	6
Social Organization	3

Source: 2007 Pittsfield Economic Profile

## Profile of Pittsfield's Downtown Commercial Area & Route 28

The two commercial areas in Pittsfield (downtown and Route 28) both have assets and challenges with regard to their potential as businesses districts. Understanding these differences and what type of economic development is best suited for these locations are the best way to ensure that both areas and the town reach economic development potential. A successful economic development strategy will play to the strengths of both of these areas given their unique characteristics. The chart below provides further detail of challenges and assets for each commercial area, and these criteria should be considered with regard to any economic development effort. Chart 2 compares the 2 commercial areas in Pittsfield

**Chart 2: Assets & Challenges for Commercial Areas**

<b>Assets</b>	
<b>Downtown</b>	<b>Route 28</b>
Buildings Exist	Vacant land
Utilities Exist	Located on Route 28
On the way to Winnepesaukee	On the way to Winnepesaukee
Existing dense pool of Customers	Close to Southern NH and NHIS
Walkable Community	Active citizenry & Civic Organizations
Banks Present	Labor Force
Government Office Present	
Victorian Village "feel"	
Existing "anchors"	
Access to Route 28	
Potential Brownfield Grant Opportunities	
RSA 79:E	
Active citizenry, Organizations & special events	
Easily accessible to Route 28	
Close to Southern NH and NHIS	
Labor Force	
<b>Challenges</b>	
<b>Downtown</b>	<b>Route 28</b>
Lack of buildable lots	Sites require auto access
Potential Brownfields	Limited access highway
Perceived Lack of Parking	No existing utilities
Limited/Difficult Truck Access	Development Constraints
Flood plain development issues	
Perception may need to be improved	

Source: 2007 Economic Profile

## Conclusion of the 2007 Economic Profile

Based upon the Economic Profile, Pittsfield's residents have varying levels of technical skills and education attainment, as well as varying part-time/full-time employment needs. Understanding these factors are key components to devising strategies to ensure that industries pursued by economic development efforts fit the employment needs of Pittsfield's residents. The majority of Pittsfield's residents have between a high school education and some college (56%), while 22.9% of Pittsfield residents have less than a high school education, and 21.2% have some kind of college degree. Also, based upon age, it may be beneficial to develop jobs that are both full-time and part-time in nature. With this in mind, it would make sense to foster job growth that could meet all the needs of Pittsfield's citizens.

To maximize the effect of targeting job and economic growth, selecting businesses that match education, skill levels, and part-time/full-time employment needs of Pittsfield residents is crucial. The Economic Profile seemed to indicate that service industries, some professional, and retail/recreational industries would be a good fit for Pittsfield. Successfully diversifying the types of businesses in Pittsfield can only add to economic strength. Lastly, considering where in town these industries would be located is a priority as well. Route 28 is best suited for new development, while downtown would be best suited for the "niche" or "creative economy" type of growth. Locating businesses that could support each other would be beneficial, and also considering what constraints particular locations of town pose to certain businesses cannot be ignored. Chart 2 above depicts the assets and challenges of each commercial area in town, and each of these items should be considered in order for Pittsfield to "get the biggest bang for the buck".



*Scenes from Pittsfield's "World Famous" Balloon Rally*

## **A VISION FOR PITTSFIELD'S ECONOMY**

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Pittsfield is positioned geographically in such a way that it is within a reasonable drive to the mountains, ocean, Concord, Manchester, and Boston. In addition, it is located on the way to Winnepesaukee and New Hampshire's Lakes Region. Lastly, it is right next door to NHIS and Motor Cycle Weekend events. Economically, Pittsfield is positioned in such a way that it has limited opportunity for new commercial development, but has an excellent opportunity to foster, promote, and capitalize on a unique economy that traditional economic centers (like Concord) might not normally provide. As such, the effort to grow Pittsfield's economy should be one that focuses on some new commercial on Route 28, with other the economic development efforts directed to the downtown. The face of Pittsfield's economy should consist of mixed businesses, unique, and exciting. In short, Pittsfield should focus on those assets that make it stand out from the rest of the region, and consider them as economic advantages.

For Pittsfield's economy overall, the Route 28 area is where new commercial development would best be located, and the downtown area is prime for smaller businesses as part of a niche or "creative economy". A combination of small professional offices and unique commercial options, coupled with events and recreation opportunities are the best way to enhance this type of economy in the Downtown. A larger community-type draw could also be beneficial in the downtown (such as a YMCA). In addition, efforts should be made to tie Route 28 development to the downtown area. Based upon the assets and challenges of each area of town, the following are recommendations on how to foster economic development along 28 and in the downtown.

### **- Route 28**

Despite challenges such as limited access, no existing sewer and water, and some site challenges, Route 28 is best suited for new development. The 2000 Master Plan sees this area in a similar light. Some recommendations for Route 28 include:

- Investigate the feasibility and cost of extending the water and sewer lines along Route 28 (also a recommendation from the 2000 Master Plan). In addition, consider ways to fund the effort (impact fees, TIF district, etc.).
- Conduct a corridor study to determine how the area could be developed in light of the numerous challenges (e.g. Sewer/water, limited access, site difficulties).
- Consider changes to the Site Plan Regulations and Zoning Ordinance in an effort to maximize site design and ensure that the businesses along 28 are properly suited to Pittsfield.
- Consider a "pre-approved" site plan for Route 28 parcel(s). This would be a site plan already developed according to town standards that an applicant could submit to PB for approval. The benefit is that it could serve as a "master plan" for development on 28, and it could make an approval process much faster.

### **- Downtown Pittsfield**

The downtown area in Pittsfield appears to be a tremendous asset for the community. Many of its challenges can be used as assets for economic development. Brownfields, for example, could be

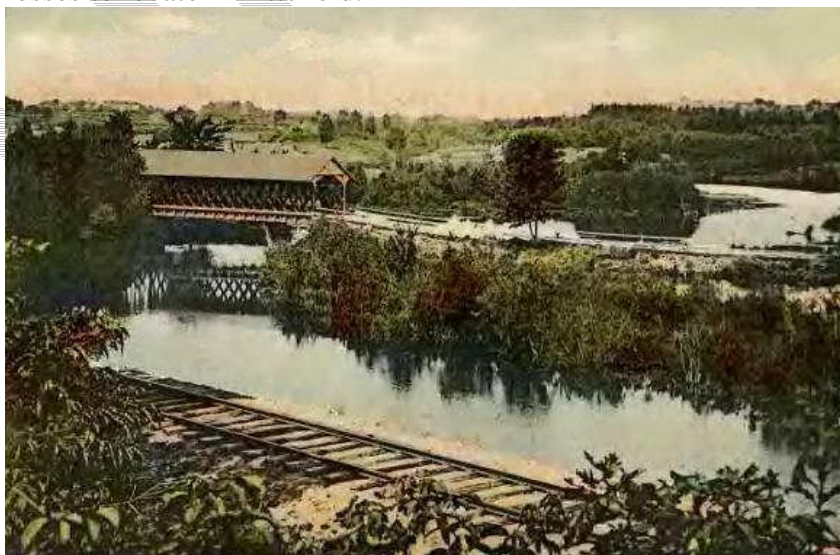
seen as a challenge, but given the fact that there are numerous grant opportunities for developing brownfields. Downtown Pittsfield has many existing assets (buildings, sewer and water networks, businesses, institutions, government offices, etc.) and a unique character. An active citizenry and unique community events provide even more assets for the community. As a result, the following are recommendations for the downtown:

- Foster and encourage a “creative economy” to draw upon Pittsfield’s unique atmosphere. This can create a unique draw to Pittsfield. A creative economy can include anything from an active theater community (Pittsfield has much of this in place already), to architectural walks, to art studios. Ensuring that zoning and other regulations foster this growth is a good first step to growing a creative economy. In addition, the 2000 Master Plan speaks to encouraging tourism, devising ways to draw people off Route 28, and to ensure a diverse economy in downtown, and a creative economy could further these goals.
- Continue to support local festivals and events (like the balloon rally) and look to expand into other areas. The balloon rally is a great tool for economic development. Developing other events, such as events with NHIS and Motorcycle Weekend could serve as great economic development tools as well.
- Ensure that Site Plan Regulations do not overburden many of the small businesses in the Downtown. Expedited reviews, among other things, can make it easier for small businesses in downtown which in turn shows potential businesses that Pittsfield is businesses-friendly. In addition, making it easier for the existing businesses to expand helps them to respond quickly to the market which in turn helps them stay in business and remain profitable.
- Ensure that the zoning in the downtown encourages creative economy, niche professional offices, mixed use, as well as other desirable development/redevelopment. The 2000 Master Plan recommends the reuse of existing building stock for similar purposes.
- Explore options and methods (like the enactment of RSA 79:E) to revitalize downtown Pittsfield. Infrastructure, streetscape, façade, and the historical character of Pittsfield are a tremendous draw and asset that need to be protected and enhanced, and calculated revitalization is a way to do this. Revitalization is also a recommendation from the 2000 Master Plan.
- Explore, and if feasible, become a Main Street Community. Main Street membership is a great way to institutionalize economic development momentum.
- Recreational opportunities are a key to economic development. They can help to draw people to the downtown, and keep them there for a longer period of time. The Town should look at options for recreational opportunities in the downtown (trails, for example).

- Establish signage on Route 28 in an effort to draw people into town from Route 28. A well placed, attractive sign can help to draw people into town, and this would be consistent with the 2000 Master Plan's recommendation to draw people into town.
- Consider establishing a Concord YMCA satellite branch in Downtown Pittsfield. This could help utilize currently unoccupied or under occupied space, create jobs, and create a community facility.
- Conduct a parking needs assessment for Downtown.
- Consider participating in the Plan New Hampshire Design Charette Program. This can help to upgrade and utilize historic properties. It is a competitive grant program.
- Consider ways to improve streetscape in Downtown.

#### - **Route 28 & Downtown Together**

- Promote and market Pittsfield. For example, the New England Real Estate Journal is a great tool to market the town. A community profile in the publication (or one like it) could be a great way to market the town.
- Tie both sectors of the economy together by encouraging complementary businesses and find ways to include both parts of town in the numerous events, festivals, and recreation draws the town has to offer.
- Consider various grant opportunities that can help grow the economy on Route 28 as well as downtown. This could include CDBG grants, CROP Zones, TIF Districts, and Brownfield Grants.
- Explore tax incentives for both Route 28 and Downtown that can help to entice businesses to locate in Pittsfield.



*Suncook River in 1908, Pittsfield, NH; from an old postcard.*

## CONCLUSION

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Pittsfield has some unique opportunities for economic development. The community is has both a traditional village area that can capitalize on a unique character. Part of the vision for downtown can include capitalizing on a “niche” economy consisting of shops, small professional and service industries, and the “creative economy”. This type of economic development in the downtown can ensure that the best assets of the village are employed to their fullest potential. In addition, the character of the village and the town as a whole will be upheld.

Route 28, despite some challenges has the opportunity for new commercial development. Through careful planning and the leveraging of resources (grants, etc.), the area can capitalize on various assets. One asset is its location (on 28, in Southern New Hampshire, etc.), and another asset can be the village and character of Pittsfield – quality of life. These assets can help to make new commercial development along Route 28 possible.

Considering the unique aspects of Route 28 as well as the downtown, Pittsfield has an opportunity for more robust and complete economic development. Carefully leveraging Pittsfield assets, both individually and as a whole, will see Pittsfield’s economy grow, creating more jobs and a larger commercial tax base, which, in the end, will improve the quality of life for all.



*A Scene from Pittsfield, in from of the Dam*