

Arts and Culture as Economic Drivers

A Report for Torrington, Connecticut

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Contents

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 5
- SUMMARY OF CASE STUDY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 5
- WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR TORRINGTON? 7
- SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES FOR ARTS-FOCUSED REVITALIZATION PROJECTS 8
- STUDY METHODOLOGY 10
- THREE CASE STUDIES 10
- EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA 12
 - EASTON DEMOGRAPHICS 13
- CREATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES 13
 - PROMOTION AND SUPPORT OF ARTISTS AND CULTURAL ASSETS 13
 - ARTIST COMMUNITY 14
 - CULTURE OF FLEXIBILITY AND RISK TAKING 15
 - ARTS INTEGRATED INTO SMART GROWTH APPROACH AND DOWNTOWN FOCUS 16
 - MAIN STREET PROGRAM 17
 - BUSHKILL CREEK CORRIDOR INITIATIVE 18
 - THIRD STREET CORRIDOR & LAFAYETTE COLLEGE 19
 - SIMON SILK MILL 20
 - KARL STIRNER ART TRAIL 21
 - LAFAYETTE COLLEGE CITY ENGAGEMENT 22
 - SERVICE LEARNING 22
 - FACULTY AND STAFF ACTIVITY 22
 - FINANCIAL SUPPORT 23
- CULTURAL RESOURCES 24
- PARTNERS 25
 - STARTUP FUNDING 26
 - SUSTAINED FUNDING 27
 - ADMINISTRATION 27
- IMPACT 28
- PUBLIC POLICIES 28
- CHALLENGES 28
- IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TORRINGTON 29
- FUTURE DIRECTIONS 29
- FOR MORE INFORMATION 30

| | |
|--|----|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | 30 |
| PEEKSKILL, NEW YORK: ARTIST DISTRICT AND ARTIST RELOCATION STRATEGY..... | 31 |
| PEEKSKILL NEW YORK PROFILE..... | 32 |
| PEEKSKILL DEMOGRAPHICS..... | 33 |
| CREATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES..... | 33 |
| ARTIST LIVE/WORK DISTRICT..... | 34 |
| THE GOALS OF THE ARTIST LIVE/WORK, HISTORIC, AND CENTRAL COMMERCIAL (C-2 ZONE) DISTRICTS | 34 |
| DEFINITIONS..... | 35 |
| ARTIST LOFTS CRITERIA..... | 35 |
| CERTIFICATION AS AN ARTIST IN THE CITY OF PEEKSKILL..... | 35 |
| OPEN STUDIOS..... | 36 |
| ART ALONG THE HUDSON..... | 36 |
| CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM..... | 37 |
| CULTURAL RESOURCES..... | 38 |
| PARTNERS..... | 39 |
| STARTUP FUNDING..... | 39 |
| SUSTAINED FUNDING..... | 40 |
| ADMINISTRATION..... | 40 |
| IMPACT..... | 40 |
| PUBLIC POLICIES..... | 41 |
| CHALLENGES..... | 41 |
| FUTURE DIRECTIONS..... | 42 |
| IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TORRINGTON..... | 42 |
| FOR MORE INFORMATION..... | 42 |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | 43 |
| PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS: CREATIVE PITTSFIELD..... | 44 |
| PITTSFIELD MASSACHUSETTS PROFILE..... | 45 |
| PITTSFIELD DEMOGRAPHICS..... | 45 |
| CREATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES..... | 46 |
| BRANDING..... | 46 |
| CHANGING MUNICIPAL RULES..... | 47 |
| STREETSCAPE DEVELOPMENT..... | 48 |
| SECURING FUNDING..... | 48 |
| DOWNTOWN PITTSFIELD INC..... | 49 |
| CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT..... | 50 |
| ASSETS FOR ARTISTS PROGRAM..... | 51 |
| BERKSHIRE CREATIVE..... | 52 |
| HIGHER EDUCATION..... | 53 |
| BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE..... | 53 |
| MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS..... | 54 |
| CULTURAL RESOURCES..... | 54 |
| PARTNERS..... | 55 |
| STARTUP FUNDING..... | 55 |
| SUSTAINED FUNDING..... | 56 |
| ADMINISTRATION..... | 56 |
| IMPACT..... | 56 |

PUBLIC POLICIES..... 57

CHALLENGES..... 57

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TORRINGTON..... 58

FOR MORE INFORMATION..... 58

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... 59

APPENDIX..... 60

 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... 60

 CONNECTICUT LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBERS..... 60

 CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROFILE CITIES..... 61

 SELECTED ARTS-FOCUSED PROGRAM INITIATIVES AND RESOURCES..... 61

 TORRINGTON CULTURAL RESOURCES..... 63

 COMPARATIVE DEMOGRAPHICS: TORRINGTON AND THE 3 STUDY CITIES..... 64

 EASTON APPENDIX..... 65

 SELECTIVE TIMELINE..... 65

 EASTON MAIN STREET INITIATIVE VISION STATEMENT..... 66

 PEEKSKILL APPENDIX..... 67

 ARTIST LOFT CRITERIA..... 67

 ARTIST LOFT APPLICATION INFORMATION..... 68

 PITTSFIELD APPENDIX..... 70

 DOWNTOWN ARTS DISTRICT MAP..... 72

 STREETSCAPE PHASING PLAN..... 74

 TRADITIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN PITTSFIELD..... 75

 COLONIAL THEATRE RESTORATION..... 79

 BARRINGTON STAGE COMPANY AND BERKSHIRE MUSEUM PROJECTS..... 84

 CINEMA CENTER PROJECT..... 87

 PITTSFIELD SPECIAL EVENT CHECKLIST..... 91

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Increasingly, arts and culture are recognized as contributing to both the economic bottom line and the quality of life in our communities.

Leaders in Torrington, Connecticut understand the potential of arts-focused revitalization efforts as part of a comprehensive strategy to secure a thriving downtown. By encouraging artists and creative businesses and organizations, Torrington has an opportunity to engage residents, local students, visitors and people throughout the region and to distinguish Torrington by capitalizing on its unique assets.

Arts and Culture as Economic Drivers provides three case studies of cities with successful arts-focused revitalization initiatives. The cities – Easton, Pennsylvania, Peekskill, New York and Pittsfield, Massachusetts – have parallels to Torrington in terms of size, geography, and industrial history. By examining their strategies, partnerships, successes and challenges, Torrington can learn by example.

The case studies do not offer quick fixes. Progress is rarely without difficulty, dissent and setbacks, and while none of the cities would claim that their work is complete, each fully embraces arts and culture as a key if not primary factor in their current success. In every case, arts-focused initiatives have been unique to the city and have been implemented over time, requiring strong public sector leadership, private sector and arts community buy-in, and careful work to develop long-lasting partnerships.

The good news is that Torrington appears to possess what some places find elusive:

committed executive leadership and engaged, active champions – individual artists as well as people in nonprofit organizations, educational institutions and in commercial businesses – who have excellent ideas, tremendous energy, and community spirit.



Figure 1: Nutmeg Conservatory Dancers at Torrington's Main Street Marketplace.

SUMMARY OF CASE STUDY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are common themes and best practices that emerged from the three cities' studies. These points align with some of Torrington's existing strengths, and indicate opportunities for future strategies and development.

- The three study cities identified and built upon local assets (buildings, history, traditions, artists, cultural institutions, natural features, proximity to markets, etc.).
- Strong mayoral leadership was critical to all three cities. Other strong private and nonprofit leaders played important roles.
- The cities worked to recruit and retain individual artists and other creative workers. Artists got help with networking, business

development, marketing, and housing/studio spaces. Peekskill and Easton recruited well-established and developing artists from New York and nationally and encouraged local artists. Resident artists encouraged and recruited other artists.

- Cultural initiatives were highlighted, but were integrated with comprehensive downtown redevelopment efforts including infrastructure improvements.
- Partnerships were important, especially among each Mayor's office, planning and economic development agencies, and downtown development organizations (BIDs, Main Street, etc.).
- Peekskill does not have a staffed local arts agency, and Easton lacks a nonprofit or government arts agency that serves a comprehensive arts service and policy function. In each case the City works extensively with the arts community, but without a robust arts council partner, it places additional burden on the City to coordinate those efforts.
- All leveraged significant state and federal grants. Pittsfield had a substantial G.E. Economic development fund to work with.
- All three cities produced regular events to bring people downtown.
- The successful cities used traditional community and economic development tools including zoning, adaptive reuse of downtown buildings (especially second floors), TIFS, loans, and professional development assistance for creative entrepreneurs.
- Pittsfield acknowledged that critics will question creative economic

development, preferring traditional attempts to recruit major manufacturers.

- Sustained improvements took patience and persistence. Peekskill has been doing this for 20 years, Pittsfield for six and Easton for over 30 years. Each warned that it takes years before new initiatives yield significant economic benefits.
- The cities invested in their local cultural organizations (Pittsfield made substantial investments in building improvements).
- Tourism was an important part of the mix, but each of the cities aimed first to serve their own citizens.
- Neither Peekskill nor Easton has a staffed local arts agency, though both have arts organizations that conduct some of the typical functions of a local arts agency.
- Aesthetic improvement to building facades, streetscapes, and signage was an important strategy for all three cities. Improvements placed emphasis on creating walkable downtowns and improving traffic flow.
- Lafayette College's capital facility expansion in the Third Street Corridor, while helping in downtown redevelopment, clearly helped meet academic goals of the institution: serve students by accommodating growing programs, remain competitive in attracting students, and provide outlets and the means for service learning. In Pittsfield, the decision to locate classes downtown helped meet academic goals and in the case of both Pittsfield higher education entities, expands their markets.

Some caveats:

- Grant-funded initiatives may be more difficult as states and the federal government continue to pare budgets. However, creative economic development is gaining traction with evaluations and impact studies demonstrating positive results as the sector out-performs other industries.
- Individual artists and galleries are struggling in the current economy, so recruiting artists isn't a panacea.
- Nonprofit cultural organizations are struggling for the same reasons and may be less robust downtown development partners than when they were more stable.
- There are not many staff members supporting these efforts in both the City and nonprofit partners. Everyone wears multiple hats, sits on multiple and overlapping committees, and frequently looks to the same core group of people to accomplish goals.

What does this mean for Torrington?

Based on our brief visit and exchange with Connecticut Leadership Team members, there is good cause for optimism in Torrington.

Torrington appears to have committed executive leadership and engaged, active champions – individual artists as well as people in nonprofit organizations, educational institutions and in commercial businesses – who have excellent ideas, tremendous energy, and community spirit. There are multiple public, nonprofit and commercial entities that have experience working with each other, and there appears to be a receptive environment for new initiatives.

As evidenced by Easton, Peekskill and Pittsfield, Torrington will require strong political leadership, sustained over time, to achieve success in arts-focused revitalization. Placing arts and culture up front requires conviction – it is not universally embraced as a sound development approach. The three cities profiled here integrated an arts focus with infrastructure improvements and as part of an overall downtown revitalization strategy. Leaders kept their passion front and center, but made sure they grounded their work in planning, community process, and coalition building. They invested time in relationship building – with city council members, developers, artists, residents, educational institutions, business owners, regional authorities, state and federal funding agencies. They hired staff members who believed in their vision, gave them the opportunity to develop frameworks and projects to support that vision, and championed and defended their work. And they committed to cultural development as a long-term strategy; a reorientation, rather than a discrete project or event.

Finally, there is the question of authority, responsibility and accountability. If there is consensus to embrace arts-focused revitalization, Torrington would do well to identify, empower and commit necessary resources to an entity that can lead a process to identify assets and prioritize opportunities, manage efforts to integrate shared cultural goals and priorities in to public policy and work plans, and serve as an ongoing steward of Torrington's cultural development. It does not need to be a new entity, but may require changes in the mission and focus of an existing entity. Easton, Peekskill and Pittsfield each developed creative structures for cultural development that make sense for their communities. Torrington should similarly

respond to your environment, taking advantage of your existing strong cultural assets, committed individuals and relationships.

Success factors and challenges for arts-focused revitalization projects

This study benefits from a growing body of work that examines arts-focused revitalization efforts. A partial list of resources is included in the appendix.

Two recent works provide especially relevant guidance for Torrington. The first stems from a 2007 study conducted by the Arts Extension Service of the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Arts Extension conducted an assessment of the Massachusetts Cultural Council's (MCC) Adams Arts Program, created by the Massachusetts Legislature in 2004 to fund projects that create jobs and income, revitalize downtowns, and draw cultural tourists. The assessment yielded an excellent set of best practices and challenges for any group interested in pursuing arts-focused revitalization work, and helped shape lines of questioning for project interviews.

Arts Extension Service Assessment of the Massachusetts Cultural Council's Adams Arts Program

Best Practices

1. Effective, shared leadership
 - a. Visionary leaders are critical to the success of creative economic initiatives.
 - b. Effective programs learn to recruit and manage their partnerships, integrating:
 - i. The right mix of community development, cultural, and

business representatives;

- ii. A defined decision-making structure; and
- iii. Ongoing attention to partners' interests.
- c. Many partnerships built on a previous history of trust and success.
- d. Good planning, shared goals, and flexibility are hallmarks of successful ventures.

2. Initiatives built on community assets

- a. Effective projects are authentic, building on genuine community cultural assets.
- b. Good timing, community readiness, and cultural organization capacity are important success factors.
- c. Good projects are specific to a place and projects inspired by other communities must be adapted to local circumstances.

3. Political Support

- a. Cultural sector advocacy works to sustain local creative economy programs.
- b. Elected officials' and municipal staff support is often critical.

4. Diversified funding

- a. Sustainable programs raise funds from the MCC, nonprofit organizations, municipalities, business, foundations, and earned revenue.
- b. The most sophisticated programs tap local economic development sources such as Community Development Block Grants and Tax Increment Financing.

5. Attention to results
 - a. Sustained programs evaluate results and effectively communicate their impact to partners and funders. Many engaged professional evaluators.

Challenges

1. Inadequate capital and sustainable funding!
 - a. While it is much easier to secure seed money and short-term, project funding, community economic development requires long-term work to create significant, sustainable impact.
 - b. Much depends on the volunteer efforts of partnerships, which are difficult to sustain over long periods.
2. Volatility of politics and partnerships
 - a. Elected officials and partners change, requiring ongoing cultivation of relations and adaptation to changes.
 - b. Partnerships are vulnerable to economic or political stresses and are particularly difficult to sustain when individual partner agencies are stressed by funding emergencies.
 - c. Conflicts are inevitable and may derail worthy programs early in partnerships.
3. Complex community problems
 - a. Cultural programs alone cannot resolve poverty, crime, racism, and other perplexing social problems.

- b. Complex problems defy easy fixes or short-term resolutions.¹

Creative Placemaking

The second, more recent study is *Creative Placemaking*, by Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa, produced in 2010 for the Mayors' Institute for City Design and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). With the NEA's recent emphasis on creative placemaking² and reflecting Chairman Rocco Landesman's signature priority "Art Works,"³ the study explored 20 years of creative placemaking efforts, examined economic research and provided case studies of various initiatives.

Markusen and Gadwa provide an excellent summary of challenges and components of successful placemaking initiatives, and the study provides numerous resources and suggests helpful strategies.

Challenges for Creative Placemaking

- Forging and sustaining partnerships
- Countering community skepticism
- Assembling adequate financing
- Clearing regulatory hurdles
- Ensuring maintenance and sustainability
- Avoiding displacement and gentrification

¹ Used by permission of the Arts Extension Service, UMass Amherst, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, Adams Arts Program, Meri Jenkins, Adams Arts Program Manager.

² Markusen and Gadwa describe creative placemaking in the Executive Summary: "In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired."

³ www.arts.gov/artworks

- Developing metrics for performance and evaluation

Successful Creative Placemaking

- Prompted by an initiator with innovative vision and drive
- Tailors strategy to distinctive features of place
- Mobilizes public will
- Attracts private sector buy-in
- Enjoys support of local arts and cultural leaders
- Builds partnerships across sectors, missions, and levels of government.⁴

Study Methodology

Recognizing the potential of arts and culture to contribute to the economic health and quality of life in Torrington, The City of Torrington (the City), the University of Connecticut (UConn) and the Torrington Development Corporation (TDC) engaged consultants Mary Margaret Schoenfeld and Craig Dreeszen in May 2011 to produce a study profiling three cities that have realized successful arts-focused downtown revitalization.

The three study team leaders (Mayor Ryan Bingham for the City, Chief Operating Officer Barry Feldman for UConn, and Vic Muschell for the Torrington Development Corporation) identified a key staff member to support the study, and named four representatives to the Connecticut Leadership Team. Leadership Team members served as advisors to the effort. A list of all participants is included in the appendix. Staff leaders include Bill Baxter (TDC), Michael Menard (UConn), Rose Ponte

⁴ Markusen, Ann and Anne Gadwa, *Creative Placemaking*. Economic Research Services and Metris Arts Consulting for the Mayor's Institute on City Design and the National Endowment for the Arts, 2010.

(the City), and Amy Wynn of the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council. Fiona deMerell (UConn) provided administrative support for the project.

On a June 7, 2011 session in Torrington, Schoenfeld and Dreeszen had an opportunity to hear from Leadership Team members about goals and priorities for the City, UConn and TDC. Group discussion clarified expectations for the study, and the consultants learned about Torrington's impressive cultural assets during an extensive walking tour of downtown.

Working from agreed-upon criteria for selection of potential cities for the study⁵, Schoenfeld and Dreeszen produced profiles of ten cities: Asheville, North Carolina; Concord, New Hampshire; Easton, Pennsylvania; Eureka, California; Northampton, Massachusetts; Paducah, Kentucky; Peekskill, New York; Pittsfield, Massachusetts; Syracuse, New York; and Worcester, Massachusetts. Relative merits of these cities and consultant recommendations were discussed on an August 12 Connecticut Leadership Team phone conference. The final study city selection was confirmed on a September 8 call with study team leaders and staff members.

Three Case Studies

The three cities selected for case study are: Easton, Pennsylvania; Peekskill, New York; and Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Each of these cities shares a common economic history with Torrington as an industrial center. Easton and Peekskill are smaller in geographic and population size; Pittsfield has nearly the same square mileage as Torrington with a larger population. Pittsfield and Torrington are the largest cities and function as regional centers in

⁵ Criteria are listed in the appendix

their respective counties; Easton and Peekskill are much smaller than the major population centers in their regions.

Each stands out as having had success and increased recognition for their arts-focused revitalization efforts, yet none of the three cities have been the subject of extensive analysis of their work.

Schoenfeld and Dreeszen conducted research and held interviews with key personnel in each of the study cities. While each of the interviews was personalized, conversations were based on the following core set of questions:

What has been your creative economic development initiative, approach, or strategy?

How did this project or strategy develop?

How has the initiative been administered and financed? Has this changed over time?

What has been the impact?

What have been the challenges?

What do you expect will be the future of your initiative?

What advice would you offer others considering similar projects/ approaches?

and analysis. Additional information on the three study cities follows.

The report appendix includes acknowledgements and lists the Connecticut Leadership Team members. A list of Torrington's cultural resources (compiled by Amy Wynn of the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council) and demographic information for Torrington and the three study cities provides context for comparison

EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

Easton is a city of 26,361 in eastern Pennsylvania’s Lehigh Valley, situated on the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers and the Bushkill Creek on the New Jersey Border. The county seat for Northampton County, Easton is the smallest city in the metropolitan area that includes Allentown and Bethlehem. Easton is 60 miles north of Philadelphia and 75 miles west of New York City.

Easton has a diversified set of creative economy approaches and initiatives. The City works closely on both arts-focused and general downtown revitalization efforts with Lafayette College, a liberal arts college with an enrollment of 2,360. The City has led efforts to support and promote Easton as a good location for artists, as a cultural destination, and has fostered an environment in which a diverse set of partners can develop and execute both long-and short-term projects in the arts.

Originally surveyed in 1736 by the son of William Penn, Easton was one of three cities hosting a public reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 8, 1776. Completion of the Lehigh Canal in 1829 and development of the regional coal industry led to intensive industrial and commercial investment in Easton.

Historically a transportation hub, by the turn of the 20th century there were three canals and five important railroads centered there.⁶

Easton’s downtown is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the City passed a Local Historic District Ordinance in 2005. While some colonial buildings

survive, the predominant architectural style is Victorian, a product of the booming industrial economy at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. The compact city (4.26 square miles) features a central square with a victory column, and is home to the oldest continuously operating Farmers Market, dating to 1752.

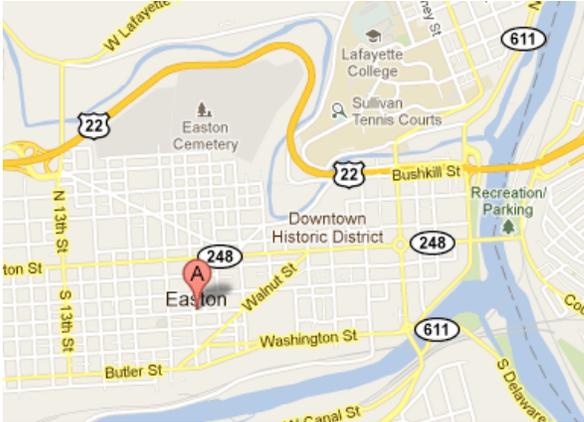


Figure 2 Downtown Easton Pennsylvania (Source: Google Maps)



Figure 3: Easton PA Regional Map (Source: Google Maps)



Figure 4 Easton’s Centre Square. Credit: [Christina Georgiou](#)

⁶ LivingPlaces.com, The Gombach Group, 2008.

Easton Demographics

(All data are from 2009 unless indicated.)

Population in July 2009: 26,361
Population change since 2000: +0.4%

Employed civilian labor force: 10,156
Unemployed: 7.2%

Race/Ethnicity: (categories above 5% of population)

White alone: 16,200 (61.7%)
Black alone: 4,335 (16.5%)
Hispanic: 4,231 (16.1%)

Education levels: For population 25 years and over:
High school or higher: 71.7%
Bachelor's degree or higher: 14.9%
Graduate/professional degree: 6.1%

Residents living below the poverty rate:
Easton: 16.9%
Pennsylvania: 12.5%

Estimated median household income:
Easton: \$39,475
Pennsylvania: \$49,520

Estimated per capita income: \$17,235

Jan. 2011 cost of living index in Easton:
100.5 (near average, US average is 100)

Daytime population change due to commuting: -513 (-2%)

Workers who live and work in this city:
3,148 (27.9%)⁷

Creative Economic Development Strategies

While Easton does not have a designated cultural development office or creative

⁷ <http://www.city-data.com/races/races-Easton-Pennsylvania.html#ixzzlQatO5lni>

economy plan, the city has long focused its economic development plans on culture and heritage tourism.

Promotion and Support of Artists and Cultural Assets

A 2001 article about the opening of the new Lafayette College Williams Visual Arts Building noted that town leaders "caught this fever in the 1980's that Easton emerge(s) as a major 'arts colony' in the future."⁸ Becky Bradley, Easton's Planning Director, notes, "In the 80's, people went to Manhattan and recruited artists to move here." Access to markets in New York and Philadelphia, and cheap, desirable real estate led to the establishment of many working visual art studios.

Mayor Sal Panto, Jr., who served as Easton's Mayor from 1984-1992 and was re-elected in 2008, is a long-time promoter of Easton's cultural assets. Panto kicked off his re-election campaign in February 2011, stating the following:

"When we campaigned four years ago we stated that our economic development program would be based on arts, tourism, entertainment and culture. We have not waived from that mission. In the last two years and into the next two years, our city will experience more than \$190 million dollars in public and private investment. Much of this investment will strengthen our investment in the arts, including:

- Lafayette College's new Film and Media Campus on North Third Street
- The \$2.5 million Karl Stirner Arts Trail along the Bushkill Creek will commence in April and open by the end of the year
- The opening of the new \$6 million Sigal Museum

⁸ July, 2001 article by Victoria Donahue for Philly.com

- Attracting the National High School Sports Hall of Fame and the new intermodal project on North Third Street
- The recently completed expansion of the State Theatre
- This summer's Urban Arts Festival sponsored by Lafayette College and the city with a \$200,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts
- The increase in visitors to the Crayola Factory and the National Canal Museum from 250,000 in 2007 to more than 300,000 each of the last three years.”⁹

Panto's strong and consistent leadership is widely credited as a critical factor in Easton's arts-related success.

Artist Community

While there have always been artists living in Easton, most people interviewed point to the 1984 arrival of sculptor Karl Stirner from New York as the beginning of the emergence of Easton as a magnet for artists. While artist relocation has been identified as a development strategy in various Easton documents, the city does not have a formal program nor are financial incentives tailored to new artist residents.

Interviewed by Kelly Prentice in February 2011 for Iaini's Little Pocket Guide, a publication and blog covering life in the Lehigh Valley, Stirner shared the following:

“Why he lives in Easton: I first came because a friend said you could buy anything you want for real cheap here, which turned out to be totally true. I came out here because I found this great building for practically nothing. Plus, it was one hour and 10 minutes through the tunnel

⁹ Remarks of Mayor Sal Panto, Jr. 2011 Campaign Kick-Off, Thursday February 17, 2011 | Gold Room, Grand Eastonian Hotel.

and there's an amazing world there in New York.

But then after living here for a short time, it suddenly seemed like this amazing location: this great historic town that had a lot of wonderful old buildings. It had a real sense of history. You know, Ben Franklin walked these streets, and it was all amazing. It became part of my life; I started to feel really centered here.

His philosophy: I worked hard to bring artists into town. What I would do was study where there were properties available and they were just kind of giveaways at the time. And people would come and if I didn't know the property I would find one. The result was I was a realtor operating without commission. It was a lot of fun.

How he sees Easton's future: There have been some enormous changes in Easton lately due to our [new] mayor. We're now coming back. I'm now on a committee at Lafayette College to restore the Silk Mill on 13th Street, a community arts project that could have enormous impact on the city.”

Mayor Sal Panto recently recognized Stirner's influence and contributions to the City by naming the Bushkill Creek Corridor trail the “Karl Stirner Art Trail.”

The relative affordability of housing in the area remains a draw. Artist Emil Lukas moved with his family to the Easton area from Brooklyn after searching through Long Island, Connecticut, and upstate New York. Easton offered the most affordable real estate while retaining easy proximity to New York. Lukas is also clearly inspired and supported by the artist community in the region.¹⁰

Many come to live and work quietly, while others become deeply engaged in local activities. Gretchen Longenbach, the City's Economic Development Director, notes that some New York City artists use Easton as a

¹⁰ Interview with Emil Lukas, 10/7/11

“hiding place,” and Ellis Finger, director of Lafayette College’s Williams Arts Center notes that “there is stuff happening here that runs through New York galleries, and we never see it.”¹¹ At the same time, the recently concluded Arts and Urban Environments Festival, coordinated by Finger, featured temporary and permanent public art works; 5 of 10 were created by local artists.

Others, like artists Ron Morris and Ken Jones regard the community as “part of our brand” and have created a business that has deep community engagement. The pair moved to Easton’s West Ward neighborhood in 2005 after hearing about Easton through Brooklyn-based business associates. They wanted to expand their home-based business in handcrafted home objects.

While initially continuing work out of their Easton home and traveling back and forth to New York, Morris and Jones spotted a downtown property for rent. Working with the Easton Main Street Initiative, they worked with the property owner (an artist and property redeveloper) to launch their small storefront shop, Mercantile Home. Kim Kmetz, director of the Main Street program, encouraged them to participate in the farmer’s market as a means to promote their business. Since opening their original space in 2008, they expanded twice within the original property and last year moved to a larger shop of their own.

They cite the benefits of offering your talent to a community that is receptive. “There are so many varied individuals who want to bring life back to this town. It is all artistic, and just being here, you can feel the creative energy.”¹²

They noted that the local artist community is very diverse and has come in many waves. What started as the opportunity to acquire lots of affordable space, and the fact that, as Jones notes, “artists can see things that others can’t, and weren’t scared by the ‘urban’ element,” has led to a synergistic environment where artists are involved in a variety of ways. “It’s not just the responsibility of Crayola, Lafayette and the State Theatre to lift us up.”

Longtime Easton resident and artist Mary Iacovone welcomes the influx of artists to Easton. “Competition is great for all of us” Iacovone noted on a recent Saturday afternoon in the Bank Street/alley studio and small gallery she shares with her husband, artist Bill Iacovone. “It helps create a market, and creates demand.”¹³

The scene also attracts regional artists to Easton. Claudia McGill mans the Artists Community of Easton booth at the Farmer’s Market and frequently travels to Easton from her home in Wyncote, PA, 48 miles south in the greater Philadelphia area. Easton provides McGill, a self-taught artist working in clay and collage, a sense of community and opportunities not available in her own town.¹⁴

Culture of Flexibility and Risk Taking

Planning Director Becky Bradley stressed the importance of flexibility and taking chances. “We do all kinds of things. If someone wants to do an event – the Mayor doesn’t say no!”¹⁵ She talked about the genesis of the Movies at the Mill event. “What started out as a casual conversation between Easton Mayor, Sal Panto and filmmaker, Gershon Hinkson, about the fate and future of the city-owned Simon Silk Mill, resulted in a festive and glorious

¹¹ Interview with Ellis Finger, 9/13/11

¹² Interview with Ken Jones and Ron White, 9/30/11

¹³ Interview, Mary Iacovone, 10/8/11

¹⁴ Interview, Claudia McGill, 10/8/11

¹⁵ Interview, Becky Bradley, 9/30/11

evening in 2009, foreshadowing the property's potential and the city's economic future. It was called, "Movies at the Mill, Easton (MME) and attracted more than 900 attendees."¹⁶ The event takes place on the mill site, among a large campus of closed buildings, and depends on nearly every city department and a host of volunteers. It is widely praised and generously sponsored. Still, Bradley notes that everyone has to "roll up their sleeves. No job is too good or too low for anyone here."

Jones and Morris agree, and cited as a great benefit to their work in Easton that "there are not a lot of bureaucratic loopholes to go through." One of their recent community art projects involved creating a 3,000-foot long sidewalk chalk "yellow brick road" from their store to the State Theatre to celebrate the release of Judy Collins' "Over the Rainbow" picture book and CD-set. Coinciding with Collins' State Theatre performance and post-performance book signing at the Mercantile Home shop, Jones and Morris pulled together sponsors and partners to help create the temporary public art works. "Getting the okay to draw on the sidewalk would have been a nightmare in New York!" noted Jones.

Nov. 11th Turn Easton Into Oz!
Help create a 3,000 ft. long yellow brick road in chalk and other Oz murals throughout Downtown

Nov. 12th Judy! Judy! Judy!
Judy Collins performs at the State Theatre, 8pm
Meet Judy at Mercantile Home for an "Over the Rainbow" book signing, 10pm

Nov. 13th Visit Oz
Experience the magic, explore the streets of Oz!
Easton Farmers' Market becomes Munchkinland, 9-1pm
Music at Mercantile featuring Kenny White, 2pm
"Wizard of Oz" movie screening, 6pm

follow the Yellow Brick Road through Downtown Easton

MERCANTILE HOME COMMUNITY ART PROJECT Crayola

More information at www.mercantilehome.com • 140 Northampton Street, Easton

Figure 5: Yellow Brick Road community art project, Mercantile Home.

Arts Integrated into Smart Growth Approach and Downtown Focus

As much as Mayor Panto has deliberately focused on arts, tourism, entertainment and culture as an economic development strategy, it functions within a larger context: a clean and safe downtown, balanced city budgets, and a smart growth strategy.

Easton overhauled its zoning controls in 2007 to reflect their emphasis on historic preservation, "transportation equity" (elevating biking and walking to parity with cars), and adopting a 500-year flood plain standard for land use (after a series of three floods had damaged many residences, businesses, and critical infrastructure buildings). Becky Bradley underscored the

¹⁶ www.moviesatthemill.com

importance of zoning controls, noting that in Pennsylvania, comprehensive plans have “zero legal standing.”

Thorough review processes and design guidelines for new construction help maintain the scale and character of Easton’s downtown. Bradley points out that Easton’s goal is not to encourage solely high-end development and that the City wants to be careful not to over-regulate and eliminate the funkiness and affordability that is attractive to artists and other entrepreneurs.

The 500-year flood plain standard allowed the City to reinvest in riverfront parks, opening up space for cultural and recreational use. Bradley notes that the new Karl Stirner Art Trail is a case in point: “We tied the art trail to things people would do everyday. It’s paved so people in wheelchairs and with strollers can use it. There is a dog park along the trail. And people who wouldn’t necessarily experience art get to experience it.”

Bradley noted that Easton has completed a series of plans with extensive public processes to get to where the community is today. Additionally, Easton’s staff works extensively with regional planning and economic development agencies to coordinate activity and prioritize funding requests. “That cooperation is key,” Bradley notes. “Everything is absolutely strategic.”

Main Street Program

The Easton Main Street Initiative (EMSI) was launched in 2005. Part of the national Main Street network, the program supports downtown commercial district revitalization with an historic preservation focus, using the strategies of organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring to

achieve goals. The EMSI vision statement is included in the appendix.

Holding events is a common Main Street strategy to develop downtown foot traffic, and EMSI is no exception. EMSI hosts an outdoor concert series, a monthly dance event, and a public art commissioning project for artist-designed bicycle racks.

EMSI assumed responsibility for the Easton Farmer’s Market in 2006 and has grown the number of vendors from 1 to 40, created 15 annual market festival events (the Zucchini 500 Race, Garlic Festival, etc.) and regularly includes artists and craftspeople as vendors. They feature music every week with local artists, paying a \$100 fee for a two-hour performance. On a recent Saturday, there were a variety of artist vendors, and galleries and artist studios surrounding the Centre Square Farmer’s Market attested to the significant foot traffic and market created by the weekly event.

EMSI has also worked with artists on their promotion committee to create low cost/high impact cultural projects. They had tried previously to work with the owners of buildings with empty storefronts to allow artists to exhibit work. After discovering that many owners didn’t want artists in their buildings citing concerns about liability, code issues and security, EMSI decided to simplify.

Looking for a way to both draw shoppers downtown after the holiday season and to build relationships with the owners of buildings with empty storefronts, Ken Jones and Ron Morris, through their work with Main Street, conceived of a project to put paper snowflakes in store windows. EMSI put out a call to community groups to solicit snowflakes, aiming for 10,000 hand-cut decorations. They received over 27,000

snowflakes from community centers, elder care facilities, other programs and groups of friends. The effort ballooned and created related initiatives: the Mayor declared a “snow day,” and invited the public to come downtown for free hot chocolate. In the second year of the initiative they built a half-pipe snowboarding structure downtown. There were snowflakes in 99% of the windows in downtown Easton.

EMSI also recently coordinated with Morris and Jones on creating a flash mob performance at the Farmer’s Market. Morris composed a song and recruited 100 people to attend 2 rehearsals and perform one Saturday in July. Morris noted that most of those people weren’t artists, but people who cared about downtown. “The arts let people show up and participate. That is revitalization. If you want a successful community, you have to show up!”

EMSI also sponsors Lafayette Day. Held each September in conjunction with the Riverside Arts Festival each September, EMSI coordinates downtown merchants to offer specials and fun events to welcome new and returning Lafayette College students.

Bushkill Creek Corridor Initiative

Designed as a series of interrelated economic, community, and recreational development projects along the Bushkill Creek in Easton, the Bushkill Creek Corridor Initiative weaves a variety of large and small cultural initiatives into a multi-faceted revitalization approach.

As a result of planning done in the late 90’s and early 2000’s, and because of the excellent working relationship between the City of Easton and Lafayette College, in 2004 the State of Pennsylvania made a \$9

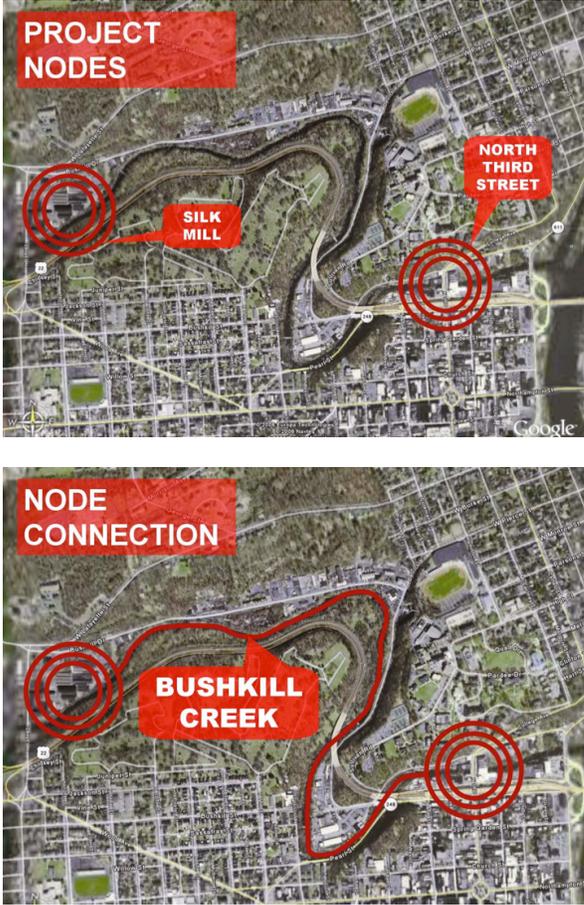


Figure 6: Bushkill Creek Corridor Project – showing Silk Mill and Third Street Corridor sites. Art Trail follows Bushkill Creek. Source: City of Easton Power Point Presentation.

million matching grant to Easton through the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP). RACP is a commonwealth grant program administered by the Office of the Budget for the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, and historical improvement projects. The \$9 million was divided equally between three related projects:

- The Third Street Corridor development by Lafayette College;
- The R&H Simon Silk Mill Redevelopment Plan; and
- An Art Trail that would connect the Third Street and Silk Mill projects

along the banks of the Bushkill Creek.

Third Street Corridor & Lafayette College

Lafayette College was established in Easton in 1826 and offers undergraduate degrees in Liberal Arts and Engineering. Located in the College Hill Neighborhood, Lafayette is adjacent to, but separated from downtown Easton by Bushkill Creek and Route 22.

Gary Evans, a former Lafayette Vice President and executive assistant to the President, who continues to serve the President on a part-time basis, notes that in 1995, the Trustees held a retreat to put together objectives for the college's next capital campaign. Evans said: "As the meeting was winding down, Trustee and Binney-Smith President Rich Gurin brought up the point that there were no objectives that related the college to downtown. This took the board by surprise, and we determined that we should find things that could benefit downtown Easton."

A committee subsequently identified an area of North 3rd Street between downtown and the campus as a potential area of focus. Though it wasn't part of the college, it was the first thing people coming to Lafayette would see: dilapidated and empty buildings. Capital campaign funds were used to purchase buildings, and ultimately, aided by additional support from the Williams family, Lafayette opened the Williams Visual Arts Building in 2001 to accommodate the rapidly growing visual art program.

Encouraged by the success of the Williams Visual Arts Building, the college continued dialogue with the City about potential development in the area adjacent to the new arts facility. With the \$3 million share of the RACP Grant designated for Lafayette

College and the Third Street Corridor, the College purchased and demolished several buildings along the Third Street corridor, creating an open-air arts plaza adjacent to the Williams Visual Arts Building and overlooking the Bushkill Creek.¹⁷



Figure 7 Williams Visual Arts Building (left), the Lafayette Arts Courtyard and the future black box theatre and support spaces (right). Sketch by Spillman Farmer Architects

In October 2010, Lafayette announced plans for the Williams Arts Campus on North Third Street. Building off the successful development enabled by the RACP funding and with an additional \$10 million gift from the Williams family, the campus will include an experimental black box theater, a state-of-the-art film theater, a sound stage, and a high-tech media and teaching lab. The campus will serve as a gateway for the community, the facilities will accommodate the growing number of students attending Lafayette who are studying the arts and will provide economic and cultural benefits to the City.

Speaking at the announcement of the project, Governor Ed Rendell noted that "Investing in projects such as this that

¹⁷ October 8, 2010, Lafayette Announces New Williams Arts Campus on North Third Street, Lafayette College News, www.lafayette.edu

support arts and education is an important part of what it takes to strengthen our economy and improve the quality of life in our state.” “This project is going to transform idle properties into a larger, more vibrant center of learning and culture that welcomes visitors to Lafayette’s campus. It will put people to work in the process, and once completed, it will create a new entertainment venue that will draw more people to Easton.”¹⁸

Simon Silk Mill

The R&H Simon Silk Mill is a complex of industrial buildings located on the Bushkill Creek in what is now Easton’s West Ward neighborhood. Construction started in 1883 and continued into the 20th century, resulting in a 15.9 acre site consisting of 18 extant buildings with 307,000 square feet of space.

The mill operated until the 70’s and was abandoned for many years. Gretchen Longenbach, the City’s economic development director, initially looked at the site prior to coming to the City on behalf of a private sector client. Because of the scale of the site and the unknowns related to environmental and structural issues, she noted that no developers were willing to spend the time and energy to do the due diligence to see if a project would be viable.

The City determined that they would need to make an investment to initiate due diligence measures and outline a viable action plan to attract private developers. The 2003 Bushkill Creek Corridor Enhancement study first examined the feasibility of using the Mill complex buildings for a mixed-use development project with a significant cultural focus. With 2004 Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) funds from the

State, the city commissioned environmental site assessment studies to determine remediation scope and expense. The Redevelopment Agency of Easton, on behalf of the City, made their initial property purchase in 2006; the City acquired other Mill properties by eminent domain and condemnation.

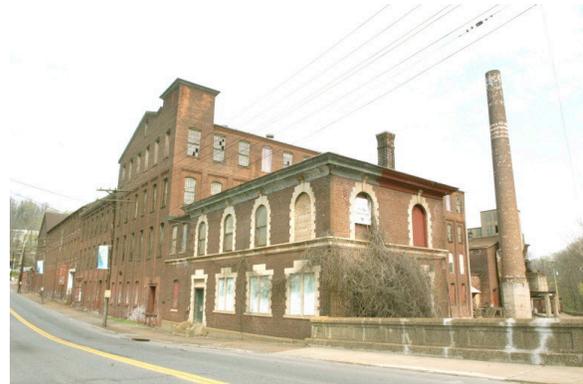


Figure 8: Simon Silk Mill. Express-Times Photo, Sue Byers

Since 2006 the City has pursued a deliberate path of soliciting market studies, plans and a site analysis for the concept of an arts-focused development project, and secured funding from a variety of sources to conduct site remediation work. The site plan outlines a multi-phased project called “Silk: A Creative Community.” Key concepts of the project include:

- An integrated complex of buildings and open space dedicated to the development and advancement of the creative and cultural industries.
- A self-sustaining community that generates creative, intellectual, and economic capital.
- A place where creative people want to be.
- A mix of market rate residential, retail, commercial, office, production facilities, and food services that cater to the creative industries.
- A variety of education and cultural venues that nurture and allow the expression of the creative industries and draw visitors, including:

¹⁸ October 8, 2010, Lafayette Announces New Williams Arts Campus on North Third Street

- artist galleries
- community arts center
- performance venues
- meeting facilities
- hotel and overnight accommodations¹⁹

A 2007 RFQ for site development proposals did not yield a workable partner; a more recent process led to the engagement of a New Jersey-based VM Development Group. The Memorandum of Understanding between the City and VM outlines benchmarks and timelines for the developer to demonstrate financing, for the city to complete remediation and other site work, agreements on phasing and other project elements.

VM will take ownership of the buildings involved in the first phase once the City completes infrastructure work, but the developer will not pay the purchase price for the site until the City guarantees their first Certificate of Occupancy. Depending on the performance of the developer, they will have the right of first refusal for subsequent phases of the project. The slow process is deliberate: the Redevelopment Authority will gradually relinquish control of the site, with the goal being (with the exception of the new City-maintained road that will go through the site) 100% private ownership and management. Longenbach described this process as making a lot of sense: the City secured a lot of grant money and was able to offer a good deal to the developer, who should get some benefits from taking a risk in a blighted area.

Karl Stirner Art Trail

The 2003 Bushkill Creek Corridor Enhancement study proposed that a recreational path along the banks of the Bushkill Creek connect the Third Street

¹⁹ Silk: A Creative Community, Final Report, Easton Redevelopment Agency, 2010.

development by Lafayette College and the Silk Mill project. The multi-use, 2.5-mile long paved path creates an urban park that is friendly to joggers, strollers and wheelchairs, and will feature public art, a dog park and access to trout fishing. A public committee, the Bushkill Creek Corridor Arts Council, will select sculpture for sites along the trail.

Ed Kerns, a Lafayette College art professor and Vice Chair of the Corridor Arts Council, “calls the trail a ‘game changer’ for the city and College, saying it has the potential – along with the arts campus and silk mill project – to elevate the area’s reputation as an arts destination to the highest level of national recognition.”²⁰



Figure 9: A map of the Easton's Karl Stirner Arts Trail. Credit: Christina Georgiou

Becky Bradley notes that this “isn’t a trail where you go once to see big art. We tied the arts trail into things people would do every day and made a commitment that the art evolve and change.”

²⁰ Three Art Projects Combine to Bring the Natural and Artistic Beauty of Lafayette and Easton to Life, August 31, 2011. Lafayette College News, www.lafayette.edu

Lafayette College City Engagement

While Lafayette has made a commitment to develop academic buildings in the area that bridges the historic campus to Easton’s downtown, there are extensive partnerships and programs between Lafayette and the City that do not involve construction, but engage faculty and students with the community. Many of these have an arts and/or downtown revitalization focus.

Service Learning

Lafayette offers a variety of ways for students to engage with City organizations and residents as part of their college experience.

As part of their commitment to the City, Lafayette College used the Visual Arts Building to connect the college to the community. Started in 2001, “the Community-Based Teaching Program (CBTP) serves as a source of engagement and dialogue among Easton’s burgeoning artist population, the College, and the local community.

The program is divided into two components: The Lafayette Experience—an accredited course for select area high school students led by Jim Toia, the program’s director—and a weekly supervised workshop session available to all Easton and local area residents. Using the design studio facilities of the Williams Visual Arts Building, Lafayette fosters artistic growth and development in the Easton community.”²¹

Tech Clinic is a hands-on course founded in 1987 that brings together students from different majors to help solve real-world problems of a business, nonprofit organization, or government body. The clinic runs two separate projects each year

with different teams made up of 6-7 students each representing all four of the College’s academic divisions.

The most recently concluded Tech Clinic project examined environmentally friendly ways to revitalize the West Ward neighborhood in Easton. Working with the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership and the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley, the team held a community gathering to spruce up the neighborhood in and around Raspberry Park and recommended the installation of an urban exercise trail with loops themed after different activities such as community gardening and community art.

Lafayette’s Landis Community Outreach Center serves as an umbrella structure to coordinate the service learning and volunteer work of Lafayette students. Many different outreach opportunities are available; some of these are arts-focused.

Faculty and Staff Activity

Lafayette faculty and staff members are engaged in Easton in a variety of ways. Some of the ways in which faculty in the Fine Arts participate have already been outlined: as members of the Bushkill Creek Corridor Initiative, as part of service learning and community outreach programs, or as hosts to local cultural groups. Staff and faculty serve on economic development committees. Gretchen Longenbach described how a member of the college finance department helped the city with economic projections for the Silk Mill project and provided critical support for the multiple grants submitted for project support.

Ellis Finger and gallery director Michiko Okaya worked extensively with various City departments as part of the National Endowment for the Arts/Mayor’s Institute

²¹ <http://wvab.lafayette.edu/community-based-teaching-program/>

for City Design 25th Anniversary grant for the Arts of Urban Environments Festival. Lafayette was the only educational institution supported in the 22 funded projects.



Figure 10: Art of Urban Environments Festival Logo, Lafayette College, 2011.

Finger notes that he had a “crash course in learning how different administrative and bureaucratic components work together. I knew the Mayor, but I didn’t know how City Hall worked!” Okaya spent hours working with the City and private property owners securing permissions to install art works. As a result of the Festival, some works will remain and a group including College and community representatives is seeking funding to expand one of the works, “Tributary Dreams” by Alan P. Marrero of Seattle.

Okaya and Finger both see the Urban Environments Festival as another example of the good partnership between the City and the College.



Figure 11: Tributary Dreams, Alan Marrero, 2011, Easton, PA.

Financial Support

Gary Evans described the close relationship between Lafayette College and the City of Easton.

He noted that some of the parameters of town-gown relationships are based on Pennsylvania state law that requires colleges to pay taxes on income generating properties, and that college-owned facilities not compete with for-profit businesses: for example, college dining facilities would not be used for a community event unless there was no place in town big enough to host the event. He said that Lafayette seeks other ways to be supportive. The College had recently covered the cost for a stoplight on a street adjacent to the campus.

Certainly the largest commitment stems from Lafayette’s involvement in securing the funding for three years of a contract

with Block by Block, the Louisville, KY based business that set up the Easton Ambassadors program. Ambassadors duties include:

- Graffiti removal
- Flower watering
- Vacuum litter
- Power Washing
- Trash pick-up
- Weed removal
- Snow removal
- Hospitality assistance
- Map distribution
- Motorist assistance
- Umbrella escorts
- Cell emergency services when needed

Lafayette provided a \$300,000 challenge grant to finance the first three years of the Ambassador program, and led fundraising to secure the \$600,000 match. Launched in 2008, the program employs four full-time workers and four part-time workers, and is widely regarded as highly successful. Evans notes that the program “transformed the City. It is prettier and safer.”

Functioning under the umbrella of the Greater Easton Development Partnership, the City is in the process of considering adoption of a Neighborhood Improvement District (NID) to provide ongoing funding for the Ambassadors program. The NID would also help finance the Easton Main Street Initiative.

Gretchen Longenbach said that the Bushkill Creek Corridor project would never have gotten off the ground without the participation of Lafayette College. The College’s building improvements in the Third Street Corridor provided the RACP match. The College continues to support the project overall by helping cover half of

the cost of the contract with Taggart Associates²².

The college produces a brochure that outlines the impact of the college: the city income tax, property tax and other expenditures. Evans notes that the Mayor calls Lafayette the City’s best asset, and the College is happy to play a role in investing in the City.

Cultural Resources

Easton does not have an arts council, but relies on a coalition of public and private businesses, committees, and partners to organize, produce, and promote various cultural initiatives.

ACE: Arts Community of Easton was founded in 1999 to “encourage and promote the arts of all disciplines, to foster an appreciation of the arts and enrich the quality of life of the Easton area by offering arts education opportunities and community programming.”²³ ACE has no paid staff, but functions with a variety of working committees to produce programs, networking, cultural events, and community arts projects.

Centre Square in Easton is home to Two Rivers Landing, a building that opened in 1996 to house two cultural institutions tied to Easton’s industrial status: the Crayola FACTORY, a hands-on visitors center celebrating creativity, and the National Canal Museum, focusing on the history of America’s towpath canals. The Canal Museum administers and promotes the Emrick Technology Center, which explores the region’s industrial heritage, and the Hugh Moore Park which includes a

²² Bethlehem consulting firm overseeing development of the Bushkill Creek Corridor for the Easton Redevelopment Authority

²³ ACE Membership Brochure

Locktender's Home and boat rides on the canals.²⁴

One block up Northampton Street from Centre Square, the Sigal Museum opened in the summer of 2010. Home to the 100-year old Northampton County Historical & Genealogical Society, the building houses the Society library and is home to significant collections of pre-European settlement artifacts, decorative arts and textiles, farming implements, and colonial furniture.

Further up Northampton Street, the 1500-seat State Theatre Center for the Arts provides performances and serves as a home for summer camps and the Brown-Daub Gallery (programmed with the Arts Community of Easton). In 2003, the State Theatre produced the first FREDDY Awards, recognizing achievement in regional high school musical theatre performance. The 3-hour performance is broadcast on local television. The 2008 FREDDY© program was the subject of a feature-length film documentary, "Most Valuable Players," by Canyon Back Films, Los Angeles. Released in 2010, the documentary was recently broadcast on the Oprah Winfrey Network's (OWN) documentary film club.²⁵

Both the Williams Center for the Arts and the Williams Visual Arts Building host regular performances and exhibitions. Open to the public as well as to students, these Lafayette College facilities and programs serve as a community-wide resource. The Williams Center for the Arts regularly hosts ACE Board Meetings, and the Williams Visual Arts Building features

the work of local artists. Michiko Okaya, gallery director, serves a central networking function, helping connect students to artists in the community.

List and links to significant Easton cultural resources:

- State Theatre for the Performing Arts www.statetheatre.org
- Crayola Factory www.crayola.com/factory
- Arts Community of Easton www.eastonart.net
- National Canal Museum/Hugh Moore Park www.canals.org
- Northampton County Historical Society/Sigal Museum www.sigalmuseum.org
- Lafayette College Williams Center for the Arts www.williamscenter.lafayette.edu
- Williams Visual Arts Building www.wvab.lafayette.edu
- Movies at the Mill www.moviesatthemill.com

Partners

The City has a close and positive relationship with Lafayette College. Gary Evans said that the Mayor and the President meet every 2-3 weeks to keep each other informed of developments. The Mayor personally welcomes incoming freshmen and their parents, providing his cell phone number and urging parents to call him with any concerns. Representatives of both the City and College express gratitude for financial support and expertise offered.

Easton's economic development structure is lean and active. Gretchen Longenbach serves as the City's Economic Development Director, and also as the Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority of Easton and the Director of the Greater Easton

²⁴ Hugh Moore was founder of the Dixie Cup Company, formerly based in Easton. He helped the city purchase 260 acres of land on the Delaware River and established the Canal Museum in 1970. It moved to Two Rivers Landing in 1996.

²⁵ www.freddyawards.com

Development Partnership, which serves as an umbrella organization for the Easton Main Street Initiative, The Easton Ambassadors, and the Farmer’s Market. Economic development works closely with planning, and both Longenbach and Bradley serve in the Mayor’s cabinet.

Bradley and Longenbach emphasized extensive collaboration with regional partners in Northampton County and the Lehigh Valley.

Lafayette partners extensively with community groups and schools to realize many service learning initiatives. The most recent Technology Clinic project partnered with the Easton Area Community Center, the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership and the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley to create a flower installation in a neighborhood pocket park. The Arts of Urban Environments Festival also worked with the Easton Area Community Center, St. Anthony’s Church and the Diocese of Allentown to install artworks.

The Community Based Teaching program works closely with Easton and neighboring Phillipsburg and Belvedere high schools to identify high school students for training and portfolio development. The program recently worked with a local advertising agency to create billboards with socially driven messages.

Startup Funding

In a recent interview, Mayor Panto notes “we’re well under way with the Silk Mill thanks to really the federal and state government. We’ve been very successful. We did not have any money in our general fund budget to do anything but core services – streets parks, parks, police, fire,

those sorts of things. Everything we do with economic development is through grants.”²⁶

Both economic development director Gretchen Longenbach and Planning Director Becky Bradley affirmed that Easton aggressively pursues grant funding, but that the efforts are based in extensive planning and community process, and that the approach is strategic. Conceding that their timing has been good, Longenbach also noted that once you get the first grant for a project, other agencies are more comfortable with the idea of funding your project. She also noted that Easton benefitted from the fact that there had been a perception that Easton’s time had come, after Allentown and Bethlehem had received major grant funding for redevelopment projects.

The Silk Mill project has required a patchwork of funding for studies, environmental remediation and initial infrastructure work. Easton secured numerous grants and a few loans (\$527,000 in loans out of \$4.86 million in project funding, as of 2009) from multiple Federal, State, Regional, and County sources.



Figure 12: Simon Silk Mill, Project Development Signage, October 2011.

²⁶ Sal Panto interview by Samantha Kimball for The Elucidator, Summer 2011.

Questioned about the ongoing reliability of grant sources, Longenbach said she thought that Easton was “on the other side of the bell curve” in terms of reliance on grants, now that the balance of the infrastructure improvement funds were secured.

Other Startup Funding

The City has a loan program to encourage the development of upper-story housing units.

The Main Street program offers matching grants for signs and façade improvements. The Greater Easton Development Partnership offers Business Improvement and Development Loans, 2% interest loans up to \$30,000 to create or expand businesses and retain and create jobs. Ken Jones and Ron Morris used this fund to purchase two new sewing machines, however all their startup costs were self-funded.

Sustained Funding

The City supports the cost of an economic development and planning staff, who work collaboratively with community partners on a variety of efforts.

The City funds arts programming at Riverside Park, and the Easton Main Street Initiative has had success attracting sponsors for the Downtown Concert Series, the Bicycle Rack project and to support musicians and special events connected with the Farmer’s Market.

There is a decided “pay-as-you-go” ethic in Easton, and Mayor Panto has repeatedly stressed that general funds do not support economic development. Under Panto, the City’s Bond Rating has improved from BBB to A- based on the city’s strong financial

performance during the past three fiscal years and enhanced revenue-raising flexibility following the approval of a new home rule charter.

The City of Easton is currently in the final stages of a process to consider establishment of a Neighborhood Improvement District (NID). The levy on downtown businesses and residential properties would provide financing to support the Main Street Initiative and the Easton Ambassadors Program. There was optimism among those interviewed that the NID would pass, and none could imagine ending the services provided by EMSI and the Ambassadors, however there was opposition among some property owners. “With the trend of cities being able to fund less, some way to supplement the system with fundraising for revitalization will be necessary,” according to Longenbach.

Administration

For the Bushkill Corridor Projects, Lafayette College will retain ownership of, manage and program buildings in the Third Street Corridor. The City will maintain the Karl Stirner Art Trail. Trailside permanent and temporary public art will be juried by the newly created Bushkill Creek Corridor Arts Council and installed as funds become available.

The Redevelopment Authority of Easton currently owns all 18 buildings on the Silk Mill site. Elements of the MOU with the VM Development Group are described on page 18. Designed to both minimize and reward risk taking, the arrangement accepts a long timeline for project development, with the goal being that the City will not own any of the Mill properties.

The Easton Main Street Initiative administers many cultural programs, in cooperation with the City and working with

extensive volunteer support. The Arts Community of Easton functions as an umbrella group for various initiatives, and also depends on a network of volunteers.

Impact

Many of the impacts of Easton's investment in arts and culture were outlined on pages 10-11 in the excerpt from Mayor Panto's speech. Kim Kmetz, Easton Main Street Initiative (EMSI) General Manager, notes that while downtown still has empty storefronts, Easton has not suffered a net loss of businesses during since the onset of the 2008 recession. Becky Bradley noted, "When the economy went down, we went up."

Since taking over the Easton Farmer's Market in 2006, EMSI has increased participation from one to 40 vendors, and the market raises \$400,000 in annual revenue with 30,000 visitors annually.

Mercantile Home Owners Ron Morris and Ken Jones measure their success by the number of people who come in to the store and the number of jobs they are able to sustain. While they are partly supported by Ken's work as an art consultant, and admitted that there are some weeks where "we need to sell more flower bouquets at the Farmer's Market," their sales are consistent and growing, and they now support one part-time and two full-time employees. They estimate that 70% of their buyers are local. "The community is a huge part of our growth. People came in to our space and we noticed what they were looking for. We could respond and grow our brand. And overall, the scene is flourishing."

Public Policies

A large number of studies and plans have been produced that articulate Easton's

public policies that support arts-focused revitalization.

Downtown Easton is both a locally and nationally designated historic district. Zoning codes were completely rewritten and adopted in 2007 to reflect smart growth principles and to encourage downtown development. Planning Director Bradley notes that the zoning code's emphasis on massing and scale, on historic preservation and transportation equity do not come at the cost of flexibility. "Cities need to change and evolve," she notes. "We don't want to price artists out." She attributes Easton's success to having sound plans.

Panto echoes this attitude. "We are not afraid to try new things. We are not afraid of change. We embrace it but only after the research and evaluation has been done."²⁷

Challenges

Most of the people interviewed reported few challenges in pursuit of Easton's various arts-focused initiatives. Strong leadership, extensive planning accompanied by meaningful public participation, and the willingness of all parties to work hard were cited as contributing to successful outcomes. This is indicative of the positive attitude among leaders in Easton.

Part of the positive outlook is accepting that pushback is inevitable and that the City will never be able please everyone. Longenbach anticipates some increased conflict now that the quiet, behind the scenes work is nearly completed. "When buildings start going up it will disappoint some people. We've quietly gone through the less glamorous stuff because people didn't think it would work."

²⁷ Remarks of Mayor Sal Panto, Jr. 2011 Campaign Kick-Off, Thursday February 17, 2011 | Gold Room, Grand Eastonian Hotel

Gary Evans also noted a lack of pronounced challenges. “In the area of the Williams Arts Campus, we were the only buyer. The City was happy we wanted to fix up the area.” The primary challenge cited by Evans is that now that people are accustomed to the services of Easton Ambassadors, people forget what the City used to be like. “If the City is clean, safe, and hospitable, newer businesses wonder ‘Why should I pay?’ Newcomers aren’t as committed.”

Others noted that there are divisions within the artist community: some are engaged and some like to stay to themselves.

Ken Jones and Ron Morris said that press coverage was lacking and it is difficult to get information into the right hands. While full of praise for the many independent papers and blogs, they noted that none of the local newspapers have arts reporters, and tend to give light coverage to arts events and focus instead on crime and conflict.

Implications and Recommendations for Torrington

Becky Bradley praised the Mayor and City Council for hiring professional staff and letting them do their work. She attributed Easton’s success to thorough planning, extensive public engagement, close collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions and regional entities, and strategic, coordinated pursuit of grant funding. “We made a serious commitment to quality and to creating a sustainable environment, and we’ve put our money where our mouth is. We made serious public investments to meet new codes, and we’ve built consensus on everything we’ve done.”

She noted that in their investigation of other Mill development projects, Easton

knew they didn’t want their project to be like anyone else’s. “It needs to be relevant locally. We need to make it EASTON.” She said the fact that their downtown didn’t have chain stores was hugely important to their revitalization. She also recommended that Torrington will need to “follow the money.” Plan first, read about your opportunities, and make it work. Easton leveraged one project against the next, and the dovetailed projects made their overall work more successful.

Longenbach said a key factor to Easton’s success was the sense of community among the artists. “Because of their nature as artists they improve the physical space around them, opening galleries and businesses.” She said it’s important for the City to back off at times. Supporting artists is different than courting developers. “You (the City) can’t say that you are cool. Word of mouth between artists is critical. You have to let them do their thing. Most are really community oriented.”

Kim Kmetz said “Find the 10 people willing to work with you, and let the other ones go. We spent a lot of time trying to get everyone on board, and you’ll always have naysayers who say ‘we tried that 20 years ago.’ We get energy from people seeing Easton with a fresh set of eyes, who see our assets. We jump in and take a risk.”

Future Directions

The City has funded and begun infrastructure work on the Simon Silk Mill.

The Karl Stirner Art Trail is nearly officially open: fencing along the trail is nearly complete, wayfinding signs need installed and the City is in the process of laying concrete pads along the trail to host future acquisitions of public art works.

Lafayette College is proceeding with site work and analysis for the Third Street Corridor buildings.

There does not appear to be any movement to establish local arts agency.

For More Information

All those interviewed expressed willingness to have further conversations regarding Easton's arts-focused redevelopment work.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the following individuals who gave generously of time and expertise for this report.

Becky Bradley, MPA, AICP, Director of Planning, City of Easton

Gary Evans, Special Assistant to the President, Lafayette College

Ellis Finger, Director, Williams Art Center, Lafayette College

Kim Kmetz, Manager and Megan McBride, Assistant Manager, Easton Main Street Initiative

Ken Jones and Ron Morris, artists and owners, Mercantile Home

Gretchen Longenbach, Director, Department of Community and Economic Development; Executive Director, Redevelopment Authority of Easton, PA; and Director, Greater Easton Development Partnership

Additional conversations were held with the following people during an Easton visit

PEEKSKILL, NEW YORK: Artist District and Artist Relocation Strategy

Peekskill is a small city of about 25,000 people on just over 4 square miles in the Hudson River Valley, in northwestern Westchester County. It is about 40 miles north of New York City.

Peekskill's primary creative economic development strategy has been the creation of its Downtown Artist District and the active recruitment of artists into 80 artist lofts and studios. Open studio tours, a regional gallery tour, and downtown festivals, farmers markets, and concerts all help draw people downtown. The Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art and the renovated historic Paramount Center are regional draws. All this has brought life and investment downtown and established Peekskill as a "...thriving center for both fine and performing arts."²⁸

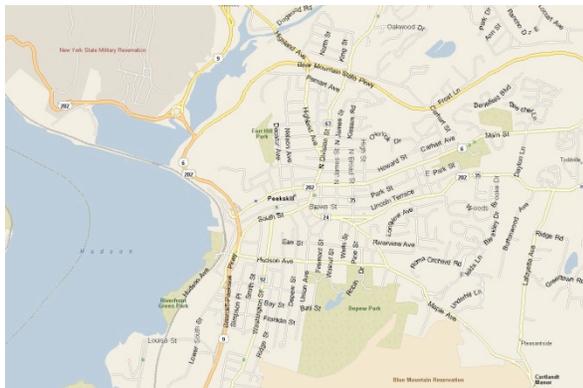


Figure 13: Map of Peekskill New York

In an interview for this study, the City's Director of Planning, Anthony J. Ruggiero said, "Now, we're a thriving metropolis. But we struggled in the eighties. Our downtown was boarded up with lots of Section 8

housing and much troubled usage. In response, the Common Council rezoned residential uses out of downtown. It became impossible to live downtown, except in senior housing. In the early 90s, faced with dwindling population, the City wanted activity back downtown. Instead of permitting general residential uses, we created the artists' district. Only artists [and seniors] can live downtown."

This created an opportunity for property owners and developers. The only way they could create new housing was to do so for artists. Ruggiero said, "Revitalization was the aim. Our downtown upstairs were mostly vacant."

Ruggiero said the City has been the driving force in creative economic development. The Planning Department, Mayor, and Common Council have been the lead. The Business Improvement District (BID) has been a key partner.

The signature project is the Artist District, now celebrating its 20th anniversary. The City's Artist Live/Work district Resource Guide, describes how the initiative evolved in the early nineties.

"The Common Council decided to make artist studios and galleries an important part of the City's revitalization strategy.

The city wanted to turn its unused downtown spaces into something useful. Similar to Lowell, MA's strategy, in order to have a vibrant downtown area one must have a population living there, so that the activity does not only happen from nine to five. In creating spaces where artists both live and work, the city created a situation in which there would always be people downtown, 24 hours a day.

At the same time the Common Council wanted to get people into downtown

²⁸ <http://www.peekskillartists.org/peekskill>

Peekskill, rising real estate prices in New York City were driving artists to move further away from even the outer boroughs. Peekskill took an active role in pursuing displaced artists by taking out ads in SoHo art magazines and offering them low interest rates. This helped artists buy buildings and convert them into useful spaces. Once a few artists had moved to Peekskill, a buzz was created and more artists moved in.

Artist and Flat Iron Gallery owner Wendie Garber participated in the city's artist-led revival from the early days when the city was first revitalizing. She arrived in 1992 looking for a studio and soon opened her second-floor Flat Iron Gallery in downtown Peekskill.

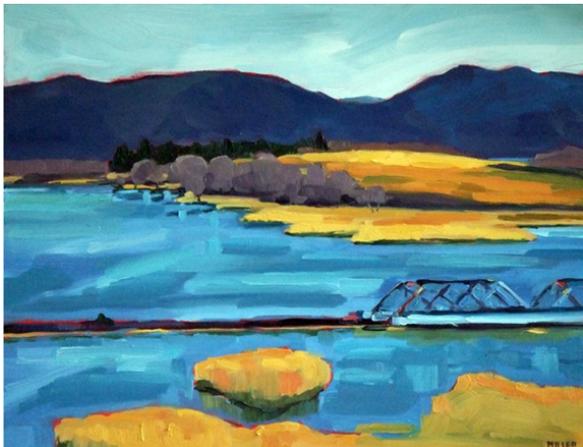


Figure 14: Jessica Miller's "Near the River" shown in Flat Iron Gallery

Garber described the early days of the City's revitalization. "Our mayor, Fran Gibbs had a vision. All the mom and pop stores were closing. There were lots of empty spaces, especially on the second and third floors downtown. She realized we needed a different premise, a different focus to bring people into town – artists, galleries, and specialty shops. The City hired city planner Ralph DiBart who had the same vision. The Common Council created the Artist District and the City persuaded landlords and developers to offer housing

and studio space to artists. Ralph was very active in developing the artist district. Ralph was key to our success."

The City recruited established artists who couldn't afford New York City rents. "We got a great mixture of local artists and those moving in from all around, including Manhattan, Florida, and California. And not just visual artists. Writers, set designers, musicians, and all kinds of artistic types."

Peekskill New York Profile

Peekskill is a lively and scenic city, described by its chamber of commerce to be in the midst of a revival. It is increasingly multicultural. Peekskill was an early American industrial center known primarily for its iron plows and stove products. Its manufacturing base operated well into the late 1900s.²⁹

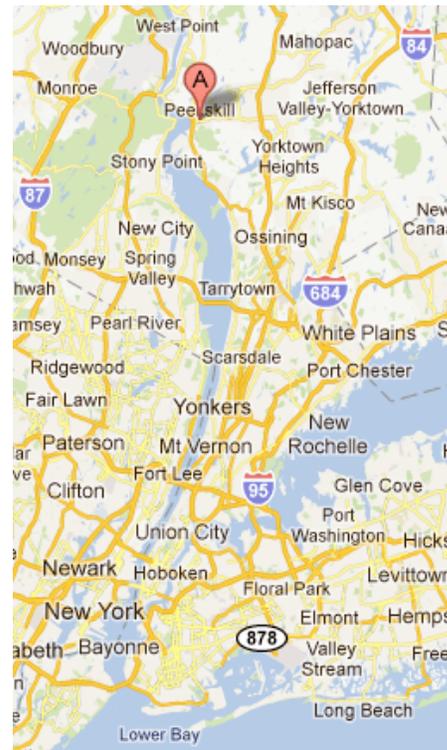


Figure 15: Map of Dutchess County and New York City Region

²⁹ <http://www.peekskillartists.org/peekskill>

The Peekskill train station provides commuter service to New York City, 41 miles (66 Km) away via Metro-North Railroad. The Bear Mountain Bridge, five miles to the northwest, gives road access to Bear Mountain State Park across the Hudson River, and to the United States Military Academy at West Point via US 6 and US 202. The Croton Expressway portion of US 9 ends in Peekskill. NY 9A and NY 35 also run through the city.

Peekskill Demographics

Peekskill has a significantly higher cost of living than the national average. The city's population is growing. The city's recent growth has been driven by a 77% increase in the Hispanic/Latino population and a 27% increase in the Asian population.

(All data are from 2009 unless indicated.)

Population in July 2009: 24,724

Population change since 2000: +10.2%

Employed civilian labor force: 13,297

Unemployed: 6.6%

Race/ethnicity: (categories above 5% of population)

White alone: 9,600 (39.3%)

Hispanic: 9,082 (37.2%)

Black alone: 4,452 (18.2%)

Education for population 25 years and over:

High school or higher: 75.0%

Bachelor's degree or higher: 21.8%

Graduate or professional degree: 9.6%

Residents living below the poverty rate:

Peekskill: 14.0%

New York: 14.2%

Estimated median household income:

Peekskill: \$57,343

New York: \$54,659

Estimated per capita income: \$28,119

Jan. 2011 cost of living index in Peekskill: 153.3 (very high, US average is 100)

Daytime change in population due to commuting: -2,920

Workers who live and work in this city: 2,307 (21.5%)³⁰

Creative Economic Development Strategies

Peekskill's public and private sector leaders have engaged in a three-part strategy tapping the city's artists, art galleries, and cultural heritage. Specific initiatives include cultural and heritage tourism, an historic arts district, artist live/work spaces, and open studio tours.

The City's online promotion of its arts lofts describes their approach. "Peekskill took an active role in pursuing displaced artists by taking out advertisements in SoHo art magazines and offering them low interest rates. This helped artists buy buildings and convert them into useful spaces. Once a few artists had moved to Peekskill, a buzz was created and more artists made the move north."

Today, the City of Peekskill counts 80 artist live/work lofts. This includes downtown apartments offered for rent by independent property owners and developers and the City's Peekskill Art Lofts that opened in 2002. The Peekskill Art Lofts are an affordable 28-unit limited equity

³⁰ <http://www.city-data.com/city/Peekskill-New-York.html#ixzzIQ23PzVW44>

cooperative apartment complex built for qualified artists.³¹ The City’s arts lofts are for sale. A recent notice advertised an open-space, one bedroom live/work coop loft of 1,279 square feet for under \$18,000³².



Figure 16: Peekskill Art Loft Interior

The City determines eligibility of artists seeking to occupy housing and studios in the Artists District and Art Lofts. Artist Certification Committee member Anthony Volpe reports there are over 100 artists living in the immediate area of downtown Peekskill.

Artist Live/Work District

Private landlords and developers offer artist apartments and studios in the upper stories of downtown commercial buildings. The municipal ordinance creating the Artist District limits access to these apartments to artists. In addition, the City created an affordable, grant-funded cooperative loft project³³.

The following description is an excerpt from the City’s Artist Live/Work Resource Guide.



Figure 17: Peekskill Art Lofts

“As an economic development incentive, landlords can be offered tax incentives, grants, facade improvements, and loans to renovate buildings that can be used as live/work spaces by artists.

To lease one of these artist lofts for living and working, the City’s Artist Certification Committee must certify an individual as an artist.

The City of Peekskill Department of Planning and Development currently manages the developmental process to maintain and grow live/work spaces for artists on the upper floors of commercial buildings³⁴.”

The goals of the Artist Live/Work, Historic, and Central Commercial (C-2 zone) Districts

“(1) This district is designed to provide for office buildings and the great variety of large and small retail stores and related activities which occupy the prime retail frontage in the Central Commercial District and which serve the entire area. The district regulations also preserve, protect and enhance the character of the Central

³¹ www.peekskillartlofts.com

³² http://www.downtownpeekskill.com/services/available_artist_space.html

³³ Peekskill Art Lofts Coop go to www.peekskillartlofts.com

³⁴ Artist Live/Work district Resource Guide, retrieved August 31, 2011 from http://www.cityofpeekskill.com/sites/default/files/artist_live_work_district_resource_guide_3.31.11.pdf Department of Planning and Development Office of Economic Development Peekskill Artist Certification Committee In partnership with Peekskill Arts Council, Peekskill Business Improvement District, Hudson Valley Gateway Chamber of Commerce

Commercial District as a center of retail trade and services for the City and surrounding region and thereby justify and protect the major public investments made and being made toward the revitalization of the retail core. This district should encourage the concentration of retail stores, restaurants and related activities and achieve continuity of frontage devoted to such purposes which strengthen and complement one another and thereby enhance the area's attractiveness to shoppers and business persons and promote the most desirable use of land in the retail core, and thus conserve the value of land and buildings and thereby protect and enhance a vital part of the City's tax base.

(2) The Common Council finds that certain artistic and creative endeavors may be safely and appropriately located in conjunction with other C-2 commercial uses where such artistic endeavors do not create excessive noise or additional safety hazards.

(3) Another goal of the C-2 District is to provide expanded opportunities for such artists and craftspersons and to provide the necessary incentives for such persons. In order to achieve this objective, accessory living space may be permitted on a limited basis to those persons who are certified as artists by a qualified arts organization and upon a finding that the practice of an art form or craft is deemed to be compatible with adjacent uses and further deemed not to be hazardous or obnoxious.”

To obtain an artist loft for living and working, the City's Artist Certification Committee must certify an individual as an artist according to the following definitions.

Definitions

“ARTIST -- An individual who practices one of the fine, design, graphic, musical, literary, computer or performing arts; or an individual whose profession relies on the application of the above-mentioned skills to produce creative product; i.e., an architect, craftsperson, photographer, etc.

ARTIST LOFT -- The work space of an artist that includes an accessory residential space intended only for the artist utilizing the work space.

ARTIST STUDIO -- The work space of an artist in which art is produced. Artwork that is produced within an artist studio may be sold at that artist studio.”

Artist Lofts Criteria

Please see the appendix for detailed criteria for artist lofts.

Certification as an Artist in the City of Peekskill

Artist Tony Volpe is a member of the Artist Certification Committee. He says, “The certification process works well. It protects artists from non-artists moving into areas reserved by the City for artists. We don’t evaluate the quality of the art. We simply determine if applicants are serious artists.”

City criteria define artists: “To qualify to reside in an artist loft in the artist district of Peekskill, at least one of the household members must meet the definition of “Artist” as defined in § 300-57 of the City of Peekskill Zoning Ordinance.

The Artist Certification Committee determines eligibility of applicants based on review of information submitted by the applicant (see appendix for list).

Open Studios

Peekskill artists organized their own studio tours. The New York Times has taken note of what has, after 13 years, become a well-established artists' studios program.



Figure 18: Artists Ask the Public to Peek In, May 28, 2010, New York Times.

“When the current series of Open Studios in Peekskill began, back in 1998, about a dozen artists invited the public into their work spaces, according to Larry D’Amico, an artist who is the president of the Peekskill Arts Council’s board of directors. This year, the 13th annual Open Studios, on June 5 and 6, includes work by more than 100 artists on display in about 40 studios, along with 17 exhibitions at galleries, restaurants and the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art. The event is organized by the Arts Council with support from the City of Peekskill and the Peekskill Business Improvement District³⁵.”

Art Along the Hudson

Peekskill is part of a network of ten art cities along the Hudson River, promoting cultural tourism through Art Along the Hudson. The regional cultural tourism promotion was first organized in 2005. “Each month the art cities along the Hudson River in New York, celebrate the arts - 100 miles of art! The year has been

filled with great art shows, events, open studio tours, awards and more!”

<http://www.artalongthehudson.com/>

Art Along the Hudson is organized by volunteers coordinated by the Beacon Arts Community Association in nearby Beacon, New York. The program was recognized by the Dutchess County Economic Development with its 2011 Business Excellence Award for Tourism.

Their website describes the program³⁶:

“Art Along the Hudson celebrates the arts in ten artistically-focused communities on the Hudson River, including Peekskill, Garrison/Cold Spring, Newburgh, Beacon, Poughkeepsie, New Paltz, Rhinebeck/Red Hook, Kingston, Hudson, and Woodstock. It is also promoting eight Hudson Valley Studio Tours offering art lovers great opportunities to meet the many artists living and working in the Hudson Valley.

The 2011 marketing effort includes:

- Brochure: Each city has a panel of the brochure promoting the art venues in their area, contact information and a brief descriptive paragraph. There is also a section about the Studio Tours and maps. 60,000 brochures were printed and are being distributed along the NY Thruway, Hudson Valley Hotels, and Columbia, Putnam, Orange, Ulster, Dutchess and Westchester counties.

- Website: www.ArtAlongtheHudson.com. Each city has a page on the website, the brochure information plus links

³⁵ “Artists Ask the Public to Peek In,” Arts Westchester, New York Times, By Susan Hodar, May 28, 2010 <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/30/nyregion/30artswe.html>

³⁶ <http://www.artalongthehudson.com>

for each art venue. There is also a special section on Studio Tours.

- Social Media: Facebook group
- Media ads: the Hudson River Museum and Gallery guide, the Metro North Getaway Guide, Amtrak Annual Guide, Art in America and selected other seasonal publications.
- Radio: WAMC public radio and WKZE.
- Each year a kickoff and art show event is held bringing together government officials, business leaders, tourism experts, educators, media representatives, principals from art organizations, artists and art enthusiasts. Over 250 supporters of the arts attended this year's event at the Paramount in Peekskill.

All the coordination work is done on a volunteer basis. Each community and studio tour contributes funds to support the marketing effort. Additional sponsors this year included Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union, Crafts at Rhinebeck, Ulster Savings and Entergy, and our fiscal sponsor is the Dutchess County Arts Council.”

Art Along the Hudson

10 Communities
10 Celebrations
Plus Hudson Valley Studio Tours

2011-2012

Beacon
Garrison/ColdSpring
Hudson
Kingston
New Paltz
Newburgh
Peekskill
Poughkeepsie
Rhinebeck/Red Hook
Woodstock



Visit ArtAlongTheHudson.com
For Maps, Sites and Events



Figure 19: Art Along the Hudson Brochure

Cultural Heritage Tourism

On August 8, 2011, the Peekskill City Council conducted its final review of the Cultural Heritage Tourism strategy prepared by Fairweather Consulting with Pete Mathieu & Associates and the Shepstone Management Company. “The strategy included an inventory and assessment of the City’s cultural and heritage-related assets, an analysis of the tourism market segments that the City could serve and an approach for positioning Peekskill as a cultural and heritage

destination³⁷.” The core strategy and theme is “Surprising Peekskill.” The plan aims to link three target markets with Peekskill’s cultural assets. Target segments are passionate cultural heritage travelers (seeking serious cultural experiences), well-rounded cultural heritage travelers (seeking recreational experiences), and the keeping-it-light cultural heritage travelers (seeking fun experiences). The draft plan is posted: http://www.cityofpeekskill.com/sites/default/files/chtstrategicplandraft_4-11-11v4noappendices.pdf



Figure 20: Houses in the Fort Hill Neighborhood of Peekskill.

Cultural Resources

Peekskill’s major cultural resources include the Downtown Artist District and Historic District, the Paramount Center for the Arts, the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, and the Peekskill Museum. Major events include the annual Arts Along the Hudson gallery tour, the Open Studios events, and Peekskill Jazz and Blues Festival.

Wendie Garber said, “The BID handles the big street events, the outdoor festivals. We have a farmers market every Saturday, a flea market Sunday mornings, and evening

³⁷ <http://www.fairweatherconsulting.com/2011/08/18/peekskill-moves-ahead-with-its-cultural-heritage-tourism-strategy/>

musical events sponsored by the BID. Visual art events are mainly sponsored by the artists themselves and Peekskill Arts Council.”

The Peekskill Arts Council is managed entirely by volunteers and has no building. Tony Volpe said that visual artist Larry D’Amico led the arts council as a dedicated volunteer for 17 years but has recently stepped back to focus on his own studio work. The arts council’s capacity has subsequently diminished.

The nearest institution of higher education is Westchester Community College (WCC) in Valhalla, part of the SUNY system. WCC has a digital arts center in Peekskill.

List and links to significant Peekskill cultural resources:

- The Downtown Artist District <http://www.cityofpeekskill.com/planningdevelopment/artist-district>
- Art Along the Hudson <http://www.artalongthehudson.com/>
- Open Studios <http://www.cityofpeekskill.com/economicdevelopment/event/13th-annual-peekskill-arts-council-open-studios>
- Paramount Center for the Arts www.paramountcenter.org ³⁸
- Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art <http://www.hvcca.org>
- Peekskill Arts Council³⁹ <http://www.peekskillartists.org/>
- Peekskill Museum www.peekskillmuseum.org
- The Field Library and Field Library Gallery <http://www.peekskill.org>

³⁸ The nonprofit Center for the Arts operates as a year-round multi-disciplinary center for the arts, with live performances, arts-in-education programs, films, and visual art exhibitions, serving over 63,000 people annually from throughout the mid-Hudson Valley Region.

³⁹ “The Peekskill Arts Council is a nonprofit organization founded in 1995. After the successful implementation of the artist district project which brought professional artists to live and work in Peekskill, it became clear that a formal entity was needed to pursue the initiation of arts related projects to serve the Peekskill community.”

- Galleries
 - The Hat Factory
<http://www.peakskillhatfactory.com/>
 - Westchester Art Workshop
www.hvcca.org
 - The Flat Iron Gallery
www.flatiron.qpg.com
 - Peekskill Coffee House
www.peakskillcoffee.com
 - The Bean Runner Café
www.beanrunnercafe.com
 - Division Street Grill
www.divisionstreetgrill.com
 - Driftwood Gallery
<http://driftwoodgallerystudio.com>
 - Innovative Arts
- Peekskill Jazz and Blues Festival
<http://www.downtownpeekskill.com>
- Taconic Opera www.taconicopera.org
- Westchester Community College, SUNY
www.sunywcc.edu (17 miles away in Valhalla, NY)

Partners

The City's Planning Department, Mayor and Common Council, and the Business Improvement District work closely together, though there is no formal partnership structure. The City and BID both promote arts and entertainment events.

Startup Funding

Planning Director Anthony Ruggiero reports the Artist District initiative has been accomplished without significant local municipal investment. Property owners and developers have primarily funded the downtown lofts and studios in the Artist District.

The City secured grant funding to develop its Art Lofts. These are organized as a limited equity cooperative. Funding



Figure 21: Corner of Division and Park Street in Downtown Peekskill

included a \$3.7 million grant from New York State's Division of Housing and Community Renewal. Westchester County and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provided over \$875,000 in infrastructure funds. Funding also included \$2.2 million in private bank financing⁴⁰.

The City has a façade loan program, supported by three rounds of Main Street grant funding. Eight buildings revised facades and added artist housing.

Ruggiero said the primary incentive for developers is access to artist renters downtown where most other residential uses are not allowed. No zoning variances are required. As the housing stock is old, the City does not require elevators for access to upper floors.

⁴⁰ Mayor announces downtown art tech loft opening, June 7, 2002, <http://www.johngtesta.com/pdf%20files/Art%20Tech%20Loft.pdf>

Sustained Funding

The City's primary cost has been a portion of the economic development specialists' salary and marketing expense for the district. Ruggiero could not estimate the exact cost, but indicated that it was modest.

The Peekskill Business Improvement District invests in programming⁴¹. The City of Peekskill has no designated funds for the arts. The City may act as fiscal agent for some pass-through-funds.

The Peekskill Arts Council and museums apply to Westchester Arts Council for funding. The City has helped with matching funds for special cases, but this is not routine.

Administration

The City of Peekskill Planning Department coordinates the Artist District. Art Along the Hudson is coordinated from nearby Beacon by Linda Hubbard, director of the Beacon Arts Community Association and whose office serves as a tourist bureau. Open Studios are administered by volunteers from the Peekskill Arts Council. The Peekskill BID manages public music, festival, and food events.

Impact

The Downtown Artist District is well established and has been sustained for 20 years. The City considers the Artist District a success.

Eighty artist lofts or studios are occupied. There has been little attrition, except some artists who were living downtown eventually bought homes in Peekskill and moved out of the Artist District. Others retained a studio downtown. Other artists, inspired by

the critical mass of artists, moved to Peekskill and bought homes, but not necessarily within the district. Theatre professionals from New York City moved to Peekskill.

Gallery owner Wendie Garber reports, "It's a very nice, diverse, and creative community now. Many of us still live here and support the local businesses. There are new restaurants. Many are doing very well. The night life has become more active than during the day." She continued, "At night, you can walk down the street to everything. Restaurants are quite good and many have live entertainment. We have a farmers' market by the Paramount. Visitors might visit the market, then stop into a coffee shop, then visit a gallery or our beautiful riverfront and then stay for dinner and a show at the Paramount. Once people park, they can walk to everything."

The success of the Artist District inspired two new creative institutions to locate in Peekskill. The Westchester Community College (17 miles away in Valhalla) established an annex downtown for digital arts. In 2004, art collectors Livia and Marc Straus established The Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Arts in Peekskill. Garber reports, "They came because they saw Peekskill was an arts district and they wanted to be affiliated with that. It's a good location for the center with easy access to the City and nearby Dia Beacon." The Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Arts "is committed to the enrichment of Peekskill, a multicultural community that has recreated itself as a major center for art and culture. HVCCA operates a 12,000 square foot exhibition space in Peekskill and is the primary sponsor of the Peekskill Project, an annual, city-wide exhibition of site-specific artwork⁴²."

⁴¹ We could not reach anyone in the Peekskill BID who could provide details.

⁴² <http://www.hvcca.org/Founders.html>

Ruggiero said, “More people are coming downtown. People are investing. We have had a lot of restaurants opening, many offering live entertainment. Restaurants coming up from New York City. Two new restaurants and an Irish pub just opened. These are bringing in different clientele.” The gallery and restaurant owners have been encouraged by the success of the Artists District.

The Planning Department’s previous economic development director conducted an internal evaluation of impact. However, as the specialists’ position is currently vacant, this report was not available for the current study. There have been no external evaluations, though the October 2010 edition of Westchester Magazine ranks the City of Peekskill as the 19th “Best Place to Live” in Westchester County.

Public Policies

The Artist District is defined in § 300-57 of the City of Peekskill Zoning Ordinance.

The City has a locally and nationally designated historic district. The boundaries of the Artist District largely coincide with the historic district.

Peekskill’s creative economic development Creative has evolved outside the City’s comprehensive plan. Planning Director Ruggiero indicated that the comprehensive plan is 50 years old and out of date.

Challenges

Artists did not flock to the studios just because the zoning changed. Ruggiero reported, “We didn’t have a local base of artists, so we had to actively recruit artists. Galleries didn’t exist when we started.

Two years ago the Planning Department hired an economic development specialist,

who became the downtown artist marketing director. He actively used social media, Craig’s list and did tours. He would recruit a group of 20 artists and show available lofts. He would connect artists with owners. While this was successful, it took patience. “For every 100 artists toured, he closed one rent deal.”

The City’s economic development specialist, Chris Marra, was very active in promoting and working with the artists. Artists said he was very supportive to artists and missed him when he left the city to become director of the Housing Authority in Secaucus, New Jersey. The specialist’s position was vacant for a time and was just filled in September 2011. Artist marketing and support are part of the specialist’s responsibilities.

The Artist District web site illustrates available studios.

According to Ruggiero, some artists complained “you recruited us and then set us adrift.” The economic development specialist responded by organizing social events. Ruggiero said the specialist will continue to work with the artists.

Tony Volpe said it was hard for some artists to meet others. He organized social events in coffee houses and bars. But many artists looked to him and others to plan these gatherings and didn’t show much initiative. He observed that visual artists are used to working alone.

Wendie Garber was among the earliest artists moving to Peekskill. She found it easier to meet other artists in Peekskill. “One of the reasons artists came here because they felt isolated where they were. Many were working alone in a home studio. They wanted a sense of a community. Peekskill is small, so it was easy to meet artists. In a bigger city it would be harder. Peekskill Arts Council developed and we

created open studios together. We met through coffee houses and openings. It was easier.”

Ruggiero reported that there are growing pains when you introduce artists into an older downtown. The City just permitted outdoor music and entertainment for restaurants. The City has been hearing complaints from artists and seniors who live upstairs that the music is too loud. Artist Tony Volpe said, “It’s noisy living downtown, but what the heck.” Volpe also observed that the City bans overnight parking, which is a significant burden for downtown residents.

Wendie Garber said, “We’ve had growing pains. Some people have gotten discouraged. Some gave up. I hung in. Our gallery is doing pretty well. We diversified early.”

As an artists’ community the City has a lot of sculptures displayed in parks. Ruggiero said that wall murals are also being added downtown.

Future Directions

The City is poised to implement its new Cultural Heritage Tourism plan. The Planning Department will lead in this.

Ruggiero said a new downtown retail study will discover new potential uses for downtown buildings. They will seek new entertainment and arts uses. The City may also consider other housing options.

Implications and Recommendations for Torrington

The City’s planning director recommended that any city hoping to replicate Peekskill’s model needs dedicated staff, dedicated funds for marketing, and an arts council

partner. He recommended that artists be directly involved in planning.

Wendie Garber recommended that any arts-related business must plan for the long term. The same is true for creative economic initiatives. “Don’t evaluate after one year. You have to invest for three to five years. Otherwise it’s hard financially. You must plan ahead with a market plan and sufficient finances to test the market. It is not going to have it happen in one year. Some Peekskill artists thought the City would be sending them customers. We have to promote our own work and businesses. Artists have to form together, form councils, do self and group promotion. Artists have to work hard. That’s hard for some artists, who just want to make their art. It takes time, persistence, and patience.”

Tony Volpe recommends that cities hoping to tap the potential of artists should work with and respect the artists. “Support the artists.”

For More Information

Anthony Ruggiero and Wendie Garber graciously offered to respond to questions or welcome visits by Torrington leaders.

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Anthony Volpe, artist, Artist Certification Committee member, and Peekskill Arts Council member

Wendie Garber, artist and owner, Flat Iron Gallery

Jean Friedman, Planner, Planning and Development, City of Peekskill

PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS: Creative Pittsfield

Pittsfield Massachusetts has positioned itself as Creative Pittsfield, redefining the struggling post-industrial city as a vibrant local cultural center within the Berkshires, already well known as a regional cultural destination.



Figure 22: Downtown Pittsfield with Creative Pittsfield Branding

Pittsfield Mayor James Ruberto has championed a broad revitalization strategy starting resulting in city branding, an arts overlay district, streetscape development, sidewalk dining, and lively downtown arts programming. The City's Office of Cultural Department director Megan Whilden, said that "We don't have a single strategy; it's more like a full court press."

Community Development Director Deanna Ruffer said, "The building the creative economy and supporting cultural development were part of the Mayor's campaign platform and defined as part of his administration from the beginning of his term in 2004.

Pittsfield is emerging from a negative image among its citizens and in the region. Whilden said, "Seven years ago, Creative Pittsfield was an oxymoron. People were

extremely negative about the city." That is changing.

A recent Sunday New York Times travel feature about Pittsfield in Massachusetts, "Hints of a Town, Now Revitalized"⁴³ is further evidence the city enjoys a new positive reputation.

"Founded 250 years ago, Pittsfield, Mass., is a model of old Americana: a mixture of handsome 19th-century buildings and stately early-20th-century homes, with the Berkshire Mountains just a stone's throw away. By the middle of the last century, it was a bustling urban town center with a steady stream of work provided by General Electric. But by the 1970s, the city had fallen on hard times, after G.E. moved operations south and left PCBs in the Housatonic River. It seemed that Pittsfield had been passed over by the golden touch that had brought wealth and tourists to surrounding Berkshire towns. But in the last few years Pittsfield has begun to reawaken. The bones of those old buildings are still as beautiful as they were midcentury. And there are now galleries, boutiques and restaurants opening up where 'For Rent' signs long dominated."⁴⁴



The results have been impressive: 400,000 visitors downtown annually, 45 new businesses downtown, 70 new market rate housing units, and \$100 million in private investments.

⁴³ New York Times, Sunday September 25, 2011, Travel section p. 11

⁴⁴

<http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2011/09/25/travel/20110925-surfacing.html?emc=eta>

Pittsfield is lively. One resident observed, “I grew up in North Adams but I moved here. It didn’t feel as young and fun as Pittsfield.”

Pittsfield Massachusetts Profile

Pittsfield, with about 42,000 residents, is the largest city and the county seat of Berkshire County, Massachusetts. Berkshire County constitutes the entire western side of the state. Pittsfield lies at the confluence of the east and west branches of the Housatonic River. Like much of western Berkshire County, the city lies between the Berkshire Hills to the east, and the Taconic Range to the west.



Figure 23: Map of Pittsfield Massachusetts (Source: Google Maps)

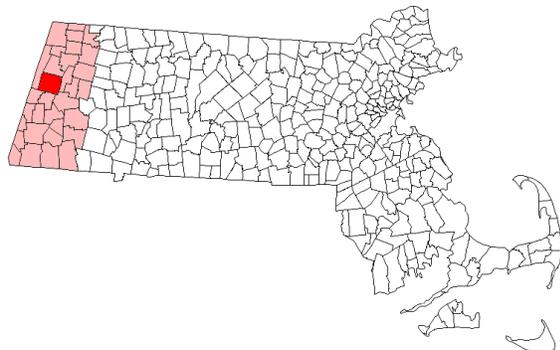


Figure 24: Location of Pittsfield in Berkshire County, Western Massachusetts (Source: CityData)

Pittsfield is the commercial, financial, medical, social service, and governmental hub of the region, an historically industrial city in which G.E. employed 15,000 workers until the company left town in the 1980s. It is the principal city of the Pittsfield

Metropolitan Statistical Area that encompasses all of Berkshire County. Until its current renaissance, the city was not much known for its arts and culture.

Pittsfield Demographics

(All data from 2009 unless indicated)

Population: 42,432

Land area: 40.7 square miles.

Population in July 2009: 42,432

Population change since 2000: -7.3%

Employed civilian labor force: 20,012

Unemployed in March 2011: 9%

Race/Ethnicity: (categories above 5% of population)

White alone: 38,174 (88.9%)

Education levels: For population 25 years and older:

High school or higher: 84.4%

Bachelor’s degree or higher: 20.5%

Graduate/professional degree: 8.1%

Residents living below the poverty level:

Pittsfield: 15.5%

Massachusetts: 10.3%

Estimated median household income:

Pittsfield: \$36,867

Massachusetts: \$64,081

Estimated per capita income: \$23,664

Jan. 2011 cost of living index in Pittsfield: 108.6 (more than average, US average is 100)

Daytime population change due to commuting: +5,705 (+12.5%)

Workers who live and work in this city:
14,389 (69.0%)⁴⁵

Creative Economic Development Strategies

Deanna L. Ruffer, Director of the City of Pittsfield’s Department of Community Development described the city’s urban renaissance in a May 2011 presentation at the Creative Community Exchange at Mass MoCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art).

Ruffer explained that the vision has been, “bringing people back downtown to live; diversifying our economy – including enhancing our role in the region’s cultural economy; and strengthening the ability of city businesses to compete for and attract the human capital critical to their ability to grow and succeed.”

She said her charge from Mayor James Ruberto was to “enhance the viability of the community as a desirable place to live, work, and play through urban planning and land use practices, housing programs, and economic development activities.”

Ruffer attributes Pittsfield’s success to a strong mayor elected in 2004. Ruffer quoted Mayor Ruberto, “We must make downtown happen.”

The timing was right and the business community was ready to be supportive. Downtown Pittsfield Inc. had been working for many years on strategically important projects. The downtown organization laid the groundwork for the restoration of the historic Colonial Theatre and the Beacon Cinema. Ruffer said, “Then when a

supportive administration was elected, we made rapid progress downtown, thanks to their behind-the-scenes work.”

Ruffer also advised, “Don’t overlook that we had two supportive governors and state and federal legislative delegations who all embraced the mayor’s vision. They gave their support to make it happen.”



Mayor Ruberto had three important priorities for Pittsfield’s revitalization:

1. Advocate for the million dollar investment in the Colonial Theatre;
2. Establish the office of Cultural Development;
3. Create downtown arts overlay district that fosters creative reuse of buildings, encourage people to invest downtown, and encourage business owners to think creatively

about their business.

Ruffer described five key community development strategies that have been key to the City’s success: branding, streetscape development, changing municipal rules, securing funding, and empowering Downtown Pittsfield Inc. as a strong partner.

Branding

Civic leaders wanted a brand identity for Pittsfield that was distinct and linked with the Mayor’s vision and communicated that

⁴⁵ <http://www.city-data.com/city/Peekskill-New-York.html#ixzzlQ23PzVW44>

Pittsfield was creative, entrepreneurial, tolerant, and compassionate. The image needed to be flexible. Branding would be an early demonstration of results.

Designers developed a distinctive letter *P* and the tagline, *Creative Pittsfield* as part of downtown streetscape master planning in 2005.

This brand and logo are incorporated in multiple ways, on the City’s webpages, e-newsletters, in special events promotions, and street banners. A variation of the brand identifies the City’s Office of Cultural Development and its programs.



Changing Municipal Rules

The City’s creative economic initiative amended three sets of municipal rules with a new downtown arts overlay district, a new sidewalk café ordinance, and streamlined special events planning and permitting.

The Downtown Arts Overlay District was a formal amendment in 2005 to the City’s zoning ordinance that overrode usage limitations of the underlying zoning and encouraged creative and adaptive reuse of vacant spaces. Previous city zoning limited many downtown buildings to commercial uses and prohibited residential housing on upper floors.

The Mayor’s office reports, “Since the approval of the new Arts Overlay District, projects developing new downtown residences have blossomed, in the form of new apartments, condominiums, and in turn, businesses looking to cater to the

increase in foot traffic the projects are creating⁴⁶.”

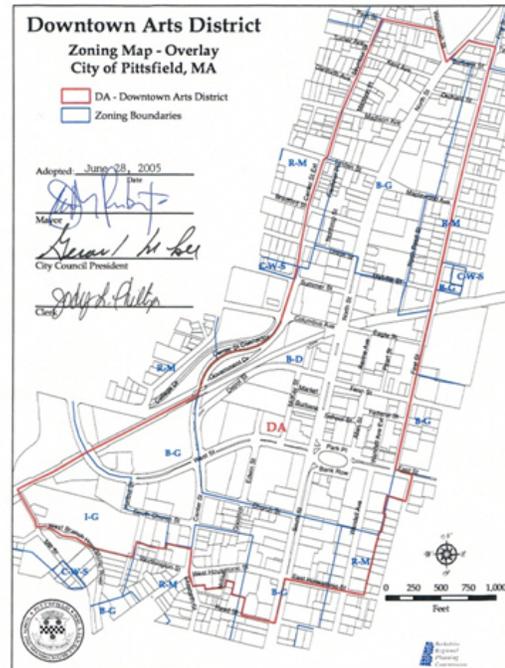


Figure 25: Downtown Arts District Overlay Zoning Map

Ruffer reports impressive results. It has sent a strong message to property owners and investors that the City is friendly and supportive of entrepreneurs. While permitting has been streamlined, the City has not lost control of development. This combination worked.

Ruffer cites the development of over 70 new downtown housing units. Cultural Development Director Meg Whilden said that 45 new businesses have started downtown.

Pittsfield has applied for official cultural district designation for the downtown arts

⁴⁶ http://www.pittsfield-ma.org/mayor/moving_pittsfield_forward.htm

overlay district from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the state arts agency.

The Sidewalk Café Ordinance was amended in 2009 to encourage more use of the public right-of-way in front of downtown buildings. Ruffer reports this turned out to be more cumbersome than expected, as outside tables trigger building code requirements like restrooms, and alcohol complicates things.

The Special Events Checklist was intended to encourage organizations to hold public events downtown and assure public health and safety, public integrity, and compliance with local and state regulations. When the Mayor welcomed more public events downtown, the Community Development Department created the inter-department checklist to simplify and streamline the applications process (see checklist in appendix).

Streetscape Development

Pittsfield’s main downtown streets are wide and, as state highways, carry lots of traffic. Streetscape development was intended to improve pedestrian spaces and safety and slow traffic. Streetscape designs created pedestrian nodes and safe crossing points.

Streetscape improvements were also designed to improve the city’s aesthetics. Ruffer said that naysayers pushed back on public investments for aesthetic improvements. “Seven years ago the mayor’s commitment to invest downtown was viewed with skepticism, now people say, ‘of course this makes sense.’ Seven years ago, people were fighting downtown development. But in 2006, leaders said ‘of course, we need to invest downtown. We need a thriving downtown for neighborhoods to thrive.’”



Figure 26: Pittsfield Streetscape Improvements



Figure 27: Pittsfield Streetscape Improvements

Securing Funding

The City of Pittsfield invested its own funds from a \$10 million G.E.-funded Economic Development Fund to leverage other public and private investments. The City invested in downtown cultural organizations including: the Colonial Theatre, Beacon Cinema Center, Barrington Stage Company, and the Berkshire Museum (see appendix for more information on each building).

Ruffer also retooled community development to be responsive to grant opportunities.

Ruffer explained that the City made creative use of several traditional economic development tools. These included

forgivable loans from the City’s handicapped accessibility program to fund accessible restrooms, ramps, and elevators. City loans helped support capital improvements and working capital. Tax increment financing (TIF) agreements invested funds in capital cultural projects and downtown streetscape improvements. Technical assistance grants helped small businesses with point-of-sale software and accounting services.

Downtown Pittsfield Inc.

Downtown Pittsfield has been a critical partner with the City. As a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization, it could serve as fiscal agent and sponsor for initiatives. Ruffer credits Downtown Pittsfield with playing a key role with anchor capital projects like the Colonial Theatre and cinema. As a membership organization, Downtown Inc. provided a critical link between the City and business and property owners.

Downtown Pittsfield’s website describes the organization: “Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. is an association of businesses, downtown property owners, residents, cultural and non-profit organizations joining forces to increase economic activity through promoting downtown as a great place to do business, obtain professional services, shop, dine, work, live, attend events, and enjoy recreational activities.”⁴⁷

The downtown organization’s director, Peter Lafayette said, “Creative development is part of our overall economic strategy. Our goal was to create an environment that is healthy to a broad range of businesses. We wanted to give people many reasons to come to town.” He said that arts and culture are key parts of that, but

restaurants and shops are also very important. Lafayette sees restaurants as creative businesses too, drawn by the cultural anchor institutions and contributing to the creative ambiance by hosting live entertainment. Now, thanks to the restaurants, there’s a lively music scene in Pittsfield.

Helena Fruscio, Berkshire Creative’s director reinforced the idea that Pittsfield has not depended on arts and culture alone. “Pittsfield isn’t all arts and culture. Food is a big part of it. Third Thursdays is a community project.”



Lafayette was involved in the early days, the head of a nonprofit, hired by the downtown group to develop a revitalization strategy for downtown. “G.E. had just left. We had 10-12 major buildings vacant. It

was pretty dismal. We visited other cities, Providence, Portsmouth, and Northampton. We were advised, ‘determine your assets and build on those.’ We had envied Northampton and they envied us because the Berkshires had two million annual visitors. We looked at our assets. We had the Berkshire Museum, the Lichtenstein Center, arts studios, and a dormant theatre. We decided the arts were important. We got a grant from USDA and hired a consulting firm [1998-99] to develop an arts development action strategy for downtown. They recommended we create an arts and entertainment district.”

Lafayette continued, “There were other big projects in the talking stage, a multiplex

⁴⁷ <http://downtownpittsfield.com/about-us/>

movie complex and redevelopment of the Colonial, closed for decades, and the Berkshire museum needed major infrastructure work. The plan recommended these as our key anchors. We looked to our anchors first and then restaurants and shops would fill in. This was our basis. At the same time we created more first class office space. We worked on all fronts.”

There were few restaurants in the nineties because no liquor licenses were available. After fights with existing bars and City Council, the City petitioned the legislature to create special downtown liquor licenses. “Thirteen new licenses made all the difference.”

Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. created the “Downtown Strategic Plan” in 2010. Committees are charged with implementing Downtown Pittsfield Inc.’s objectives⁴⁸

1. “Identify and recruit new businesses for downtown and help retain existing businesses.
2. Create smaller commercial sub-districts to enable more effective planning and marketing.
3. Develop and carry out on-going marketing and promotion efforts for residents and visitors that benefit downtown businesses and solidify downtown’s identity as the center of activity in Berkshire County.
4. Improve downtown’s appearance, convenience and safety working with downtown businesses and property owners and City departments.
5. Increase the presence and visibility of the arts, arts businesses and cultural organizations in downtown and help facilitate more partnerships and coordinated events.”

⁴⁸ <http://downtownpittsfield.com/about-us/>

Lafayette advised that a downtown business organization must be nimble and adapt with changes.

“In the nineties there were all these vacant buildings but no developers. So the downtown organization became a developer to jump start things. After six years there are no more vacant downtown buildings. Now we’re working with the businesses providing services, marketing, and events.”

Cultural Development

The City’s Department of Community Development has focused on the City’s vision, branding, infrastructure development, and city aesthetics. The Department of Cultural Development oversees cultural programming, special events, and marketing of the city’s arts, culture, and heritage attractions.

According to the Mayor’s office, “Mayor Ruberto created the Office of Cultural Development to enable Pittsfield to take advantage of its position in the heart of the culturally-rich Berkshires.” The Mayor persuaded City Council to create the office soon after his election. Whilden reported, the new office “...was controversial and the Mayor had to get a supermajority vote twice from city council.”

Megan Whilden, the Director of Cultural Development, said that her office’s programming complements the City’s infrastructure development. “My job is to create a welcoming atmosphere for artists and arts related businesses.”

The office of Cultural Development initiates and promotes cultural programming including Third Thursday, which brings 10-15,000 people into downtown Pittsfield each month from May through October. The events recall Pittsfield family traditions of

heading downtown on Thursday nights on GE's payday. Third Thursday has served as a container for many community events. The monthly festival provides the audience for local exhibitors and performers.

The street festival was inspired by New Bedford Massachusetts' pioneering AhHa! downtown festival.

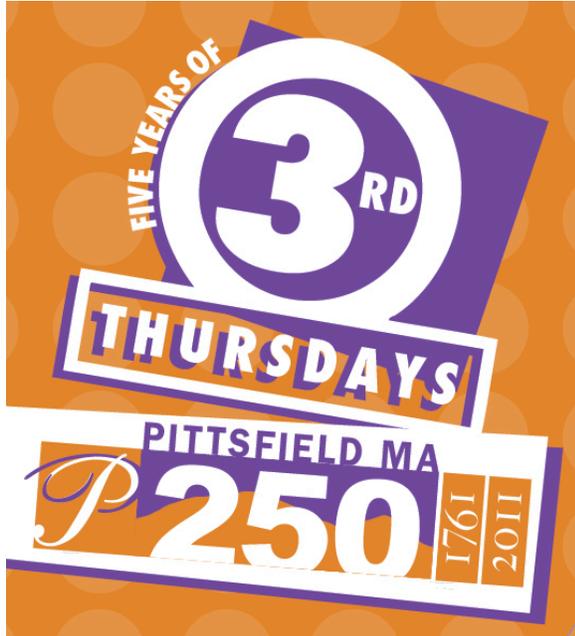


Figure 29: 2011 Third Thursdays Poster

Other City-sponsored events include a Jazz Festival and Latino-American Family Fiesta de Pittsfield.

Whilden's office is responsible for marketing and communications. She manages the Cultural Pittsfield Website and e-newsletter to promote Pittsfield's cultural events. "We communicate about everyone's events and good news in the arts and beyond. We use Facebook, the Web, and Twitter."

The Department of Cultural Development manages the Lichtenstein Center for the Arts, a municipally owned community arts center. The Center offers monthly

exhibitions, performances, classes, nine artist studios, and a ceramics studio.

The office works to strengthen artists, working with Assets for Artists and the Berkshire Cultural Resource Center, helping with professional development for artists. Artist enterprise zone is pending with the state legislator. If enacted, Pittsfield would take advantage of this.

The Cultural Development office has recently taken responsibility for the tourism commission. "We didn't want to promote to tourists too far in advance of our readiness. Now reality has caught up with our vision. The streets look good. Now, we're working with artists to create visible manifestations of our cultural activity. While there are a lot of cultural activities in town it isn't visible to pedestrians or drivers. We're thinking of creating a way-finding system."

Assets for Artists Program

Pittsfield artists are eligible for support from Assets for Artists. "Since 2008, Assets for Artists has piloted an innovative matched savings grant program and financial and business training opportunities for low- to moderate-income artists in Berkshire County⁴⁹."

Artists are selected based on criteria that combine financial need and artistic accomplishment. A savings account is opened for each participating artist. Artists who make regular savings deposits to meet a savings goal, complete required training in personal finance and business and professional development are eligible to receive a savings match of working capital. Artists may use the capital to invest in their creative business or to help make a down payment on housing or a studio.

⁴⁹ <http://assetsforartists.org/>

Berkshire Creative

Pittsfield is the home of Berkshire Creative, a regional creative economic development organization serving all of Berkshire County. Berkshire Creative was developed as the primary recommendation of a regional creative economic development plan completed in 2007.

The small organization has just one staff member, but has a big impact with creative use of information technologies and social networking. Its website describes the organization thus: “Berkshire Creative stimulates new job growth and economic opportunity in the region by sparking innovative collaborations between artists, designers, cultural institutions and businesses. Berkshire Creative provides the creative economy with the news, information, resources, and representation they need to do better business in the Berkshires and beyond⁵⁰.”

Berkshire Creative works to brand the region, “Creativity Lives Here” and to provide information, training, networking, professional development, technical assistance, and advocacy for the creative sector. This includes for-profit creative businesses and nonprofit cultural organizations.

As of this writing (October 2011), Berkshire Creative’s director, Helena Fruscio, had just been tapped to become the Creative Economy Industry Director for the Commonwealth⁵¹.

While Fruscio was wrapping up her duties at Berkshire Creative, she reflected on Pittsfield’s creative development.

“One key thing to the success of Pittsfield is they created a culture of acceptance. The Mayor and office of Cultural Development say, ‘Do what you want to do and it’s OK if you do it here. You can own it.’ Megan is good at not judging. But helping it happen. It’s OK to organize an eccentric event, like a hula hoop festival, or scarecrows, or a zombie pub crawl.”

Fruscio said that the office of Community Development has made it an easy thing to grow a business in Pittsfield. “The combination of acceptance and ease of moving forward means things can progress quickly in Pittsfield.”

She said, “People are buying into Pittsfield’s future. Everyone wants to own their own piece of Pittsfield. Jim Benson owns Mission, a tapas bar in Pittsfield. He’s opened several businesses, and started the Word by Word festival that celebrates the spoken word.”

Fruscio credits Maggie Mailer, founder of the Storefront Artists Project, as a pioneer who inspired Pittsfield’s creative renaissance. Downtown storefront studio spaces inspired later retail development. Fruscio said “Mayor Ruberto went to one of the early Storefront events and that helped him buy into the idea of using the arts to revitalize downtown.”

Fruscio said Berkshire Creative responded to creative workers feeling isolated in the Berkshires. “We tried to make sure people got out to meet each other through our Spark! networking events. We’re the hub of information matching people with resources that are already here.” She said it’s important to not duplicate services. “I make sure people know about the SBA [Small Business Administration]. I carry his card. I

⁵⁰ <http://berkshirecreative.org/berkshire-creative/>

⁵¹ <http://berkshirecreative.org/2011/09/22/berkshire-creative-director-named-massachusetts-creative-economy-director/>

don't need to teach business planning. We aggregate instead of duplicate.”

Berkshire Creative Resources

Berkshire Creative connects creative entrepreneurs to resources. Programs that benefit Pittsfield artists and creative businesses excerpted below from www.berkshirecreative.org:



Figure 30 Berkshire Creative Spark! Networking Event

ONLINE NEWSLETTER Bi-weekly email connects busy people to news and resources to help them do better business in the Berkshires.

SPARK! NETWORKING EVENTS Signature networking event, bringing people from all sectors of the economy together to spark innovative ideas and collaborations.

BE CREATIVE BARCAMPs Event model adapted from the tech field consisting of short, user generated, informal presentations on variety of topics from projects to ideas to innovations.

ONE-ON-ONE BUSINESS RESOURCE MEETINGS Free business resource consultations to connect you with the resources you need to do better business in the Berkshires.

BERKSHIRE FILM + MEDIA COMMISSION Organization with the mission to promote and facilitate filmmaking and new media opportunities in the Berkshires.

BERKSHIRE MADE Cooperative effort by a select group of Berkshire artisans to promote their high quality, locally made creative work.

CREATIVE CHALLENGE Program to connect creative people with Berkshire-based manufacturers interested in the production of new creative products or refinement of existing products.

TRICKS OF TRADE SEMINARS Eighteen part, creative professional development seminar series produced in collaboration with MCLA's Berkshire Cultural Resource (BCRC), IS183 Art School of the Berkshires.

Higher Education

Two area colleges have brought classes into downtown Pittsfield at the Downtown Intermodal Center. Ruffer said the colleges' presence represents a persistent commitment to downtown Pittsfield. The Intermodal Center makes classroom spaces available to the colleges with affordable rent.

Berkshire Community College

Berkshire Community College (BCC) office of LifeLong Learning offers courses, workshops and seminars throughout the year both on- and off-campus. Courses are offered at the main West Street campus in Pittsfield, in downtown Pittsfield at the Downtown Intermodal Educational Center, and other venues. BCC offers courses in workforce development, life-long learning, and core classes for some majors such as criminal justice, and a fast-track bachelor's program. BCC offers an Entrepreneurial Studies certificate program.

BCC Dean of Lifelong Learning & Workforce Development, Bill Mulholland observed, what prompted BCC to start the downtown Intermodal site. "The downtown center is a unique educational model as it is a collaboration between a public four-year college and a community college with its workforce development training center. This facility provides access to associate,

bachelor, and master's degree programs at a place very accessible because it is central county and at the hub of the transportation center. It is also part of the Berkshire Compact for Higher Education's goal to provide access and provide a trained workforce. Its location is also very conducive in providing outreach to minority populations.”

He said, “It is costly but our president is committed to providing access to higher education in a way that best serves our students. He believes that the community college should always have a presence in the downtown. We are now expanding to the Conte building.”

Mulholland concluded, “BCC's gain is that we serve our students and the business community in providing the best possible access to higher education and training, which is part of the college's mission.”

Peter Lafayette observed that BCC is expanding its downtown location. “Something is working. They need more room.”

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) in nearby North Adams also offers classes at the Downtown Intermodal Center.

MCLA supports the Berkshire Cultural Resource Center (BCRC). BCRC provides professional development training, resources, and support to the artists, art managers, and creative workers of Berkshire County. BCRC is a collaborative project of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, MASS MoCA, and the City of North Adams.

Cultural Resources

“The City of Pittsfield, the hub of culturally-rich Berkshire County in western Massachusetts, is a lively and creative small city home to dozens of visual, performing and literary artists, the Tony Award-winning Barrington Stage Company and its groundbreaking Musical Theatre Lab; the leading living history center for Shaker culture, Hancock Shaker Village, the world-class historically renovated Colonial Theatre, the rich collections in art, natural history and science of the Berkshire Museum, and much more!”⁵²



Figure 31: Ferrin Gallery Exterior

Leslie Ferrin, owner of the Ferrin Gallery, observed that Pittsfield is very attractive to artists. While she observes there are not a large number of artists in the city, housing and studios are affordable and there are lots of support services. There are some artist studios downtown in upper stories. Ferrin thought this was an under-used resource that could be promoted to attract more artists to Pittsfield.

PITTSFIELD PERFORMING ARTS

⁵²

http://www.cityofpittsfield.org/city_departments/arts_and_culture/index.htm

[Albany Berkshire Ballet](#)
[Barrington Stage Company](#)
[Berkshire Ballroom Dancers Association](#)
[Berkshire Children's Theatre](#)
[Berkshire Highlanders Pipe Band](#)
[Berkshire Hills Chorus/Sweet Adelines](#)
[Berkshire Museum](#)
[Berkshire Music School](#)
[The Colonial Theatre](#)
[Pittsfield City Jazz Festival](#)
[Pittsfield Squares](#)
[South Mountain Concerts](#)
[Terpsichore Dance Center](#)
[Town Players of Pittsfield](#)
[Youth Alive Drum & Dance Group](#)

PITTSFIELD VISUAL ARTS

[Art,On.No Artist Collective](#)
[Berkshire Museum](#)
[Berkshire Community College Koussevitsky Art Gallery](#)
[Ferrin Gallery](#)
[Lichtenstein Center for the Arts](#)
[Sheeptacular Public Art Project](#)
[Storefront Artist Project](#)

PITTSFIELD LITERARY ARTS & HISTORY

[Arrowhead, the historic home of Herman Melville](#)
[Berkshire Athenaeum](#)
[Berkshire Family History Association](#)
[Berkshire County Historical Society](#)
[Berkshire Museum](#)
[Berkshire Writers Room](#)
[Hancock Shaker Village](#)
[Reverend Samuel Harrison Society](#)
[Historic Wahconah Park](#)
[Word Street](#)

Partners

The City's Community Development Department credits Downtown Pittsfield Inc. as their key partner in downtown

revitalization. Downtown Inc. helps with capital projects and sponsors events. Downtown Inc. receives city funding.

The Office of Cultural Development works semi-autonomously, but Whilden said, "We don't do anything by ourselves. Everyone is collaborative." Whilden said the Mayor was looking for an entrepreneurial approach for the City's cultural programming.

Startup Funding

The City had a \$10M Economic Development Fund financed by GE when they left the City. The City has invested \$4.35 million downtown over six years in four arts and cultural capital projects. These are the Colonial Theater, Beacon Cinema, Barrington Stage, and Berkshire Museum. These cultural institutions anchored the City's downtown revitalization.



Figure 32: Colonial Theatre's Restored Interior

The Colonial Theatre has been the most significant project (2006) and its major financing is instructive.

- \$5.3M private contributions
- \$400K Save America’s Treasures
- \$1M from City of Pittsfield Economic Development Fund
- \$170K CDBG funds; Pittsfield City TIF agreement; federal earmark; federal historic tax credits; federal new markets tax credit
- \$6.76M Mass state funds from multiple sources. (See details in Colonial Theatre fact sheet in the Appendix.)

The City has invested Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds in three downtown cultural projects, two of which are cultural facilities: the Colonial Theatre and Beacon Cinema⁵³. Ruffer reported some controversy with using TIF funds for cultural development as these were originally intended to secure manufacturing jobs. As creative industries supplant traditional manufacturing, such investments may be more productive.

Ruffer summarized the City’s creative economic investment strategies:

1. Make significant capital investments.
2. Make an internal structural change to create the Cultural Development Office.
3. Incentivize the property owners and private investors to follow the City’s lead.

The City also used traditional economic development incentives encourage entrepreneurs. These included: technical assistance, working capital and cash flow loans, point-of-sale systems, accounting services, and forgivable accessibility loans.

Sustained Funding

⁵³ Specific project and financing descriptions for major cultural facility developments are summarized in the appendix.

A City budget line of about \$100,000 supports the Department of Cultural Development. The office has secured a Massachusetts Cultural Council Adams Arts grant for creative economic development. The office has also secured National Endowment for the Arts Funding.

Administration

There is no single creative economic development initiative with a central administration. Rather, responsibilities for initiatives described in this report are dispersed between two City departments: Community Development and Cultural Development, and the nonprofit membership organization, Downtown Pittsfield, Inc.

Impact

Ruffer summarized the impact of six years of creative economic development, “We’ve become a cultural destination. If we hadn’t done all the basics, this wouldn’t have worked. We had to have enough to be described as a destination. We first developed our anchor cultural institutions, and then brought in restaurants and streetscape investments. We needed a critical mass before it is credible to promote the city as a cultural destination to tourists.”



Figure 33: Aerial View of Downtown Pittsfield Massachusetts

Ruffer reported impressive results in her presentation to the May 2011 Creative Community Exchange:

- Over 400,000 people are coming downtown each year attracted by special events, cultural programs, and downtown businesses.
- Over 70 new market rate housing units have been developed.
- Over 45 new businesses and restaurants have opened downtown.
- Over \$100 million in private investments have helped fuel downtown development.

She reports that public perception of Pittsfield has shifted significantly so the city has become a cultural destination within its region, the Berkshires, known as a cultural destination.

Whilden reports, “In the past six years there have been 45 to 50 new businesses downtown, restaurants, retail and arts, cultural. These have opened and stayed open. New business owners say they were influenced by the city’s cultural development. The positive energy is contagious.”

Whilden said that positive stories indicate an encouraging change in public opinion. Assertive marketing is working. Even in a tough economic environment, “Barrington Stage sold \$1million in single tickets this year, a first.”

Pittsfield participated in the 2002 Americans for the Arts economic impact study. This established a baseline before the cultural initiatives. They will be participating in a follow-up study to discover the impact of their work.

Public Policies

- Downtown Arts Overlay District, 2005
- Amendments to City’s Zoning Ordinance, 2005
- City capital investments from its Economic Development Fund, Tax Increment Financing Agreements; and CDBG funds
- Sidewalk Café Ordinance amended 2009
- Special events checklist with inter-departmental administrative tools to streamline events production
- Creative use of traditional economic development tools: Handicapped accessibility program, technical assistance grants and loans

Challenges

Pittsfield faces a turning point with the upcoming departure of Mayor James Ruberto, who has been a champion of the Creative Pittsfield economic development and branding approach. Four city councilors and mayor are up for election. An encouraging sign is that candidates’ posters say things like, “We’ve come a long way with downtown and neighborhoods and we need to continue.”

The City has not invested much in planning. Ruffer reports, “We’ve done this without a lot of planning money. We bootstrapped all our upfront costs. As a consequence, we don’t do enough impact analysis.”

Naysayers in Pittsfield criticize every creative investment, but many have been converted to supporters. Still, in the previous election the mayor narrowly defeated a challenger who campaigned to turn away from Mayor Ruberto's creative economic strategy to focus on recruiting another major manufacturer to replace G.E.

Leslie Ferrin said the recession has taken its toll on creative businesses. Her gallery is for sale as the cash flow is no longer adequate to support the business. She depends more upon sales at art fairs than people shopping in her Pittsfield gallery. She also observed that the CEO's of three major cultural institutions in Pittsfield have recently left their positions as the organizations adapt to worsening economic conditions.

All this work takes time. Whilden said this of the New York Times Pittsfield travel article, "You know what they say in the theatre world: it takes years and years to become an overnight success." Ruffer observed, "The work is never done."

Lafayette said that in spite of all their progress, it's still a tough environment to do business, "It all seems fragile at times."

Implications and Recommendations for Torrington

Deanna Ruffer recommends that leadership is key to any city's success with creative economic development. Mayor Ruberto has been unwavering in his vision and support. City Council has been supportive as well. The City enjoys strong leadership in its downtown partners. The City has taken good advantage of supportive state and federal legislators and the Governor and state agencies.

Plans are important. Plans for streetscape development, downtown development, and the Downtown Arts Overlay District helped to translate the Mayor's vision into action.

The City was willing to invest its own funds to demonstrate its commitment and to challenge other public agencies and private investors to follow suit.

Initiative administrators also had to develop the skills necessary to plan projects, secure funding, and administer complex projects.

Leslie Ferrin recommended that leadership is key. The Mayor has been a champion with a vision and relentless determination. Cultural and economic organizations need to work closely together. She also advised that Torrington should not plan to depend upon tourists. She's found that millions of tourists travelling through the Berkshires do not translate into local sales. "Make your town attractive to artists and they will help make the town lively."

Megan Whilden recommends, "Find what is great and build on that. Good graphic design is important. Informal arts are important, street art, live music, and funky, surprising things happen. Informal arts and night life are really important to our city's vitality." She advises, "You can't control the arts -- the arts are accidents. Planning makes you arts-accident prone. Create an atmosphere in which the arts can flourish and your city will prosper."

For More Information

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The following individuals gave generously of their time and advice with interviews:

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APPENDIX

Acknowledgements

Mayor Ryan Bingham and the University of Connecticut's Barry Feldman share a deep commitment to Torrington and a vision of the role that the arts can play in both the economy and quality of life in the City. Their support and leadership made this study possible.

The Torrington Development Corporation was a natural partner for a study that underscores the interconnectedness of cultural development to broader community revitalization goals and strategies. We're grateful for Jack Baer and Vic Muschell's leadership and support for the study.

The consultants want to thank all the members of the Connecticut Leadership Team for their time and expertise. Their commitment to Torrington and to cultural development has already demonstrated results and bodes well for the future of Torrington as a thriving cultural center.

The consultants were supported by key staff members from the three cooperating study partners. Bill Baxter, Executive Director at the Torrington Development Corporation served as the lead staff contact person for the study. Michael Menard, Director, UConn Torrington and Rose Ponte, Torrington's Economic Development Director were joined by Amy Wynn, Executive Director of the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council as primary contacts for the project. The staff team provided ongoing information and guidance to the consultants, and reviewed drafts of agendas, presentations and the completed study. Fiona deMerell, Program Assistant

for the Litchfield County Writers Project and Administrative Assistant at UConn Torrington served as the liaison between the Leadership Team, Staff Team and consultants. The passion, intelligence and humor of the entire staff team made the process smooth and enjoyable.

The consultants also wish to thank Jesselyn Dreeszen Bowman, Diane Bowman and David Low for research, editing and production support.

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Steve Criss, Warner Theatre and Arts, Culture Torrington

Sharon Dante, Nutmeg Conservatory

Cindy Donaldson, Torrington Economic Development Commission, Torrington Development Corporation and Founders Insurance Group

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Fiona deMerell, University of Connecticut, Torrington

Criteria for Selecting Profile Cities

The final scope of work for this project outlined the following criteria for selecting the ten profile cities:

- Successful arts-focused revitalization project/approach.
- Successful partnership engaged in project/approach that includes public, private and higher education parties.
- Project/approach has ideally been supported a minimum of 5 years (exceptional cities may be selected without this track record).
- Projects/approaches are financially sustainable or have a clear plan for pursuing financial sustainability (via earned or subsidized revenue streams, or stable debt-financed mechanisms).
- At least one city will be located in New England or New York State in a city with a comparable size and economic base and history to Torrington.
- A majority of the cities will not have had identity as “arts city” prior to project/approach.

Selected Arts-Focused Program Initiatives and Resources

There is an ever-expanding body of work that details innovative arts-focused revitalization initiatives. What follows is a highly selective list of resources relevant to Torrington. Most of the resources listed below feature extensive bibliographies and resource sections of their own.

American Planning Association, Arts, Culture and Creativity Briefing Papers

The American Planning Association collaborated with RMC Research Corporation to produce this 2011 series of 5 papers on how planners can work with partners in arts and culture to achieve economic, social, environmental and community goals.

The series starts with an excellent overview of the arts and culture sector and how planning goals can be connected to arts, culture and creativity. The remaining papers treat the following topics:

- How the arts and cultural sector strengthen cultural values and preserve heritage and history;
- How arts and cultural strategies create, reinforce, and enhance sense of place;
- How arts and cultural strategies enhance community engagement and participation; and
- How the arts and culture sector catalyzes economic vitality.

<http://www.planning.org/research/arts/>

The Creative Community Builder's Handbook

Authored by Tom Borrup, The Creative Community Builder's Handbook is an excellent resource that outlines major ideas behind culturally driven community

development, outlines ten strategies for community revitalization, and provides a step-by-step guide to assessing, planning and implementing creative community building projects.

Published by the Fieldstone Alliance in 2006, you can read more about the Handbook and Tom's other publications at his website, which includes other materials on asset-based community development with a cultural focus. (Disclosure Note: Craig Dreeszen has worked with Tom on a variety of projects and is included on his website as a team member.)

<http://communityandculture.com/materials.php>

Creative Placemaking

Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa wrote this white paper in 2010 for The Mayors' Institute on City Design and the National Endowment for the Arts, in partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors and American Architectural Foundation. Summarizing 20 years of culturally-focused community development, summarizing economic research and a variety of placemaking initiatives. Both the full study and executive summary are available for free download, and provide excellent examples and supporting evidence of arts-focused revitalization projects.

<http://arts.gov/pub/pubDesign.php>

From Rust Belt to Artist Belt

An initiative of Cleveland, Ohio's Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, *From Rust Belt to Artist Belt* is an initiative of conferences and resulting publications that examine artist-based community development in cities that were former industrial centers. Papers summarize conference proceedings, and

include many topics of potential interest to Torrington. For a good summary of zoning issues for live/work spaces, see the paper from the second Rust Belt to Artist Belt conference, page 38. Cleveland's Planning Director Robert Brown has had great success altering Cleveland's codes to incentivize live/work space development.

<http://www.cpacbiz.org/business/FromRBtoAB.shtml>

Partners in Creative Economy Planning Workbook

Written in 2007 by Craig Dreeszen with Tom Borrup and Maren Brown for the Arts Extension Service at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the *Partners in Creative Economy Planning Workbook* presents a series of planning questions within worksheets in a step-by-step process used to create a creative economy planning initiative. The workbook is typically used in conjunction with an Arts Extension Service workshop.

<http://www.artsextensionservice.org/index.php/publications/publications/list-of-publications>

Regional Technology Strategies

Regional Technology Strategies is a North Carolina-based consulting firm run by Stuart Rosenfeld. RTS has conducted a number of creative industry studies, many of which are available to download. (Many of these were developed in collaboration with Mt. Auburn Associates, another excellent creative economy resource.) In addition, Rosenfeld is the author of the 2006 book *Cool Community Colleges*, which examines how community colleges have embraced a creative economy focus in their curricula. CraftNet was conceived and is managed by RTS. It is an international alliance of community colleges in North

America, Europe, and Africa that work together to enhance their own arts and crafts-based teaching programs and to develop local and regional artisan-based economies. The RTS website's News and Events section regularly includes pertinent information about state and local government initiatives and higher education partnerships in creative economic development.

<http://rtsinc.org/publications/index.html>

Torrington Cultural Resources

Amy Wynn of the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council compiled the following information:

Evidence of Arts-Based Revitalization:

- New cultural businesses on Main Street
- Success of Arts Council Torrington efforts
- Main Street Marketplace
- Capital expansion of Warner Theatre/Center for Education & Nutmeg Conservatory
- Investors making available and subsidizing space for arts and cultural activities

Partners:

- UConn Torrington Campus
- Torrington Development Corporation
- NW CT Chamber of Commerce
- NW CT Arts Council
- NW CT Economic Development Corporation
- Torrington Partners
- Arts Culture Torrington

Major Arts & Cultural Resources:

- The Warner Theater
- Warner Theater Center for Arts Education
- Nutmeg Conservatory for the Arts
- Torrington School of Ballet
- Torrington Historical Society
- Arts Culture Torrington

- Artwell Gallery and Community Center
- Torrington Public Library
- Litchfield County Writers Project (UConn)
- Joyful Noise (Chorus Angelicus & Gaudiamus)
- Trinity Arts Series
- Torrington Civic Symphony
- Studio 59 performances
- Singer Songwriters Network
- CAFTA (Connecticut Academy for the Arts)
- Northwest Connecticut Arts Council
- Fifth Letter Productions (Theatre)
- Torrington Musicians Union
- Artists' studios in Main Street Buildings (visual and performing artists)

Additionally, regular cultural presence in Torrington comes through:

- McArdle School of Irish Dance
- MOMIX
- Nutmeg Symphony
- Yankee Chorale
- Mural project through A.S.A.P.

Comparative Demographics:
Torrington and the 3 study cities

| Arts and Culture as Economic Drivers Survey Project | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Comparative Demographic Information for Easton, Peekskill, Pittsfield & Torrington | | | | |
| Data is from 2009 unless indicated | | | | |
| | Torrington | Easton | Peekskill | Pittsfield |
| Population in July 2009 | 35,408 | 26,361 | 24,724 | 42,432 |
| Population change since 2000 | 0.6% | 0.4% | 10.2% | -7.3% |
| Land area | 40 sq.mi. | 4.26 sq.mi. | 4.3 sq.mi. | 40.7 sq.mi. |
| Employed civilian labor force | 18,383 | 10,156 | 13,297 | 20,012 |
| Unemployment in June 2011 | 9.8% | 7.2% | 6.6% | 9.0% |
| Race/Ethnicity (categories above 5% of population) | | | | |
| White Alone | 87.0% | 61.7% | 39.3% | 88.9% |
| Black Alone | | 16.5% | 18.2% | |
| Hispanic | 6.8% | 16.1% | 37.2% | |
| For Population 25 years and over | | | | |
| High School or higher | 78.4% | 71.7% | 75.0% | 84.4% |
| Bachelor's Degree or Higher | 15.7% | 14.9% | 21.8% | 20.5% |
| Graduate or professional Degree | 4.9% | 6.1% | 9.6% | 8.1% |
| Estimated median household income in 2009 | | | | |
| In the City | \$46,689 | \$39,475 | \$57,343 | \$36,867 |
| In their state | \$67,034 | \$49,520 | \$54,659 | \$64,081 |
| Estimated per capita income in 2009 | \$25,969 | \$17,235 | \$28,119 | \$23,664 |
| Residents with income below poverty level | | | | |
| In the City | 10.5% | 16.9% | 14.0% | 15.5% |
| In their state | 9.4% | 12.5% | 14.2% | 10.3% |
| Jan 2011 cost of living index (US Avg 100) | 133.9 | 100.5 | 153.3 | 108.6 |
| Daytime population change due to commuting | --2.1% | -2% | -13% | +12.5% |
| Workers who live and work in this city | 8,853 (51.4%) | 3,148 (27.9%) | 2,307 (21.5%) | 14,389 (69%) |

Easton Appendix

Selective Timeline

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1981 Friends of the State Theatre formed | 2003 Goldsmith appointed to state liquor control board – steps down as mayor |
| 1982 City provides a \$20,000 grant to Friends of the State Theatre to examine redevelopment possibilities | 2004 State awards \$9 million for improvements on N. Third Street, including Arts-focused development. \$3 million to Lafayette. Seeds Lafayette purchase of buildings on N. Third Street. Finances development of art trail |
| 1983 Williams Arts Center Opens – Ellis Finger is named Director | Phil Mitman becomes Mayor, serves a single term |
| 1984 Karl Stirner moves to Easton | Easton Main Street Initiative Begins |
| Sal Panto becomes Mayor – serves until 1992 | 2005 Becky Bradley becomes City Planning Director |
| Rich Gurin becomes President of Binney-Smith | 2007 ArtSpace report on Silk Mill |
| 1986 First capital campaign for State Theatre restoration | Easton Redevelopment Authority rejects only two proposals received to develop Simon Silk Mill |
| 1990 Second state theatre capital campaign | New Zoning codes adopted |
| 1992 Thomas Goldsmith starts first term as Mayor – serves until 2003 | Voters adopt a Home Rule Charter, which provides for a Mayor-On-Council form of government. The Mayor continues to be full-time position but also serves as the Chairperson of City Council and is a voting member of Council. |
| 1995 Lafayette Strategic Planning Trustee retreat that earmarked upcoming capital campaign funding to relate college to downtown | 2008 ArtsMarket Market Feasibility Study on Silk Mill |
| 1996 Crayola Factory Creativity and Visitors Center opens in downtown Easton | Easton Ambassadors Program begins |
| 1997 Easton City comprehensive plan adopted | Sal Panto re-elected Mayor |
| 2001 Williams Visual Arts Building opens | Easton Farmer’s Market management transferred to Easton Main Street Initiative |
| Lafayette College Community-Based Teaching Program begins | Work Begins on Art Trail |
| | Mercantile Home opens |

2009 State Theatre Bravo Capital campaign

First Movies at the Mill event

2010 New Williams Arts Campus on N. Third Street announced

2011 Arts Trail Opens, is named for Karl Stirner, long-time Easton resident and artist

Lafayette College receives National Endowment for the Arts MICD25 grant for Arts in the Urban Environment Festival

Easton Main Street Initiative Vision Statement

Downtown Easton’s riverfront location and wealth of historic architecture are constant reminders of its prominent role in the nation’s founding and its establishment as a place of business. In keeping this architecture preserved, Easton will continue to attract a creative and innovative group of community members to explore a variety of business, restaurant and art enterprises.

The Easton Main Street Initiative (EMSI) works with the business and building owners, city government, the Chamber of Commerce and the community to promote Downtown Easton as a shopping and browsing destination by encouraging a healthy business mix. Easton’s riverfront will be better recognized as a city focal point and gathering place. With a stronger pull to shop and browse, the flow of traffic from the riverfront will follow to Centre Square, the shopping destination. The EMSI also intends to place occupants in the abundant office space and to increase the number of people living and working in the downtown district. The development of upper floor space for market rate housing will promote Downtown Easton as a desirable living community.

Downtown Easton is a central hub of arts and entertainment in eastern Pennsylvania. Within this creative district,

arts tourism will continue to flourish. Lafayette College faculty and students alike explore all downtown has to offer, frequenting shops, restaurants, galleries and gathering places. By holding special events and targeting retail business to interest young adults, EMSI continues to foster the town-gown relationship and sense of community between Lafayette and Easton.

The Easton community continues to maintain its current level of safe, clean and green initiatives. By adding more kid-friendly businesses, family tourism will strengthen. Business and event promotions aimed at Crayola traffic and held during Crayola hours of operation will offer families with children more opportunities in Downtown Easton.

In offering more venues and opportunities for families, artists, business owners, building owners, and residents, EMSI will create a more visible and livable Downtown Easton.

Peekskill Appendix

Artist Loft Criteria

a) When an action will result in one building containing three or more artist lofts, the artist loft shall be subject to the issuance of a special permit by the Common Council. If the action results in one building containing not more than two artist lofts, then the artist loft shall be subject to the issuance of a special permit by the Planning Commission.

(b) Development standards.

[1] No artist loft may exist on the first floor of the structure in which it is located. This provision may be waived by the Planning Commission or Common Council only if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

[a] That artist loft is arranged in such a fashion that the residential portion is located on the second floor of the building.

[b] That retail functions occur on the first floor of the artist loft.

[c] That the appearance of the loft from the street shall be consistent with the retail nature of the surrounding area.

[d] That the entrance to the artist loft, including retail, studio and residential areas, is exclusive and shall not be shared with any other use in the building.

2] Each artist loft shall be separated from other artist lofts or other uses within a particular building. Access to artist lofts may be provided from common access areas, halls or corridors.

[3] Each artist loft must be individually equipped with an enclosed bathroom

containing a bathroom sink, water closet, shower and appropriate venting.

[4] Each artist loft must be individually equipped with a kitchen that contains a four-burner stove and oven, with a range hood vented to the exterior of the unit. Each unit must provide a minimum of five feet of countertop, a kitchen sink, and a minimum of 10 linear feet of storage cabinetry. Each unit must contain a garbage compactor and garbage disposal unit.

[5] Each artist loft must contain a livable floor area of no less than 800 square feet and no greater than 2,000 square feet.

[6] No more than 30% of the livable floor area of the artist loft may be devoted to residential space. In no event may said residential area exceed 600 square feet. Direct access between living and working areas must be provided, and no separate access/egress to the residential area is permitted except for emergency access/egress.

[7] Sprinkler systems must be provided in all common hallways and areas of any building containing an artist loft if the loft contains only one legal means of egress. Hard-wired smoke detectors with battery backups must be provided for all units.

(c) Other requirements.

[1] In order to ensure that the use is consistent with the other commercial uses, artist lofts shall not be used for mercantile classroom instructional uses with more than two pupils at any one time; storage of flammable liquids or hazardous materials; welding; or any open-flame work. Further, the creation of art shall be so conducted as not to cause noise, vibration, smoke, odors, humidity, heat, cold, glare, dust, dirt or electrical disturbance which is perceptible

by the average person located within the first-floor space or any other commercial or residential unit within the structure or beyond any lot line.

[2] The artist loft must be occupied by at least one person who is registered as an artist by the City of Peekskill.

[3] The artwork that is to be created within the artist loft must be compatible with other uses which occur or are to occur within the building in which the artist loft is to be located.

[4] No more than one person per 300 square feet of residential floor area may reside within an artist loft. No more than two persons may reside within an artist loft.

[5] Only one nonresident employee may be employed within an artist loft. This requirement may be waived for artist lofts that occur on the first floor of a structure that provide retail space on that first floor.

[6] Other than in a first-floor retail-oriented area, articles offered for sale within an artist loft must include those produced by the artist occupying said artist loft and may be offered with other like items.

[7] Air conditioners, clotheslines and other objects or equipment shall be prohibited from projecting from any window that is visible from a public street.

[8] One flush-mounted non-illuminated sign attached adjacent to or near the street entrance door to the artist loft may be used to identify the artist. This sign may list only the name of the artist with a one- or two-word description of the type of artwork or craft that is to be conducted within the artist loft. Where two or more artist lofts occur within the same building, the signs must be placed in an orderly fashion in relation to each other and must be part of a

coherent directory in which signs are ordered in a horizontal fashion.

[9] Work space and accessory residential space shall not be rented separately or used by persons other than those people legally residing within the artist loft.

[10] A minimum of one off-street parking space per artist loft must be provided on site. This requirement may be waived pursuant to § 575- 33G, Note 1, with the further requirement that the applicant obtain and maintain an annual parking permit in a designated municipal off- street parking facility.

Artist Loft Application Information

- One page application form that provides an explanation of how and to what extent the loft will be used to support the artistic endeavor and what your immediate & future aspirations are in your artistic field.
- At least three (3) letters of reference from professionals attesting to your artistic background and your recent work in the field.
- Detailed resume identifying applicable education, work and other related experience (with dates) that demonstrate an ongoing involvement in an eligible field.
- Portfolio or samples of work (slides, reproductions, disks, and websites are acceptable), including recent work with dates.
- List of exhibits and shows
- Any other illustrative materials (e.g., exhibit reviews, client lists, sales, commissions) supporting qualification in an eligible field.
- The process, procedures, and/or materials used in the creative process must be compatible with

surrounding uses and not be
hazardous or obnoxious.

Pittsfield Appendix

Documents in the appendix are all provided courtesy of the Department of Community Development, City of Pittsfield, Deanna L. Ruffer, Director.

Creative Communities Exchange City of Pittsfield Downtown Renaissance Checklist

**By Deanna L. Ruffer, Director
Department of Community Development
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The City of Pittsfield is a community of approximately 44,000. This project provides a review of the actions taken by the Department of Community Development to enhance the viability of downtown as a desirable place to live, work and visit. Utilizing a wide range of municipal tools and resources, as well as creative public/private partnerships, Pittsfield has established itself as a cultural destination in the heart of the Berkshires. Using a zoning overlay district, the city set the stage for action and investment. The City then became an active investor in key downtown projects and businesses. Thirdly, the City invested in the downtown infrastructure. All of this work has been designed to bring people back downtown to live, diversify our economy, and help city businesses compete for and attract the human capital that is critical to their ability to grow and succeed.

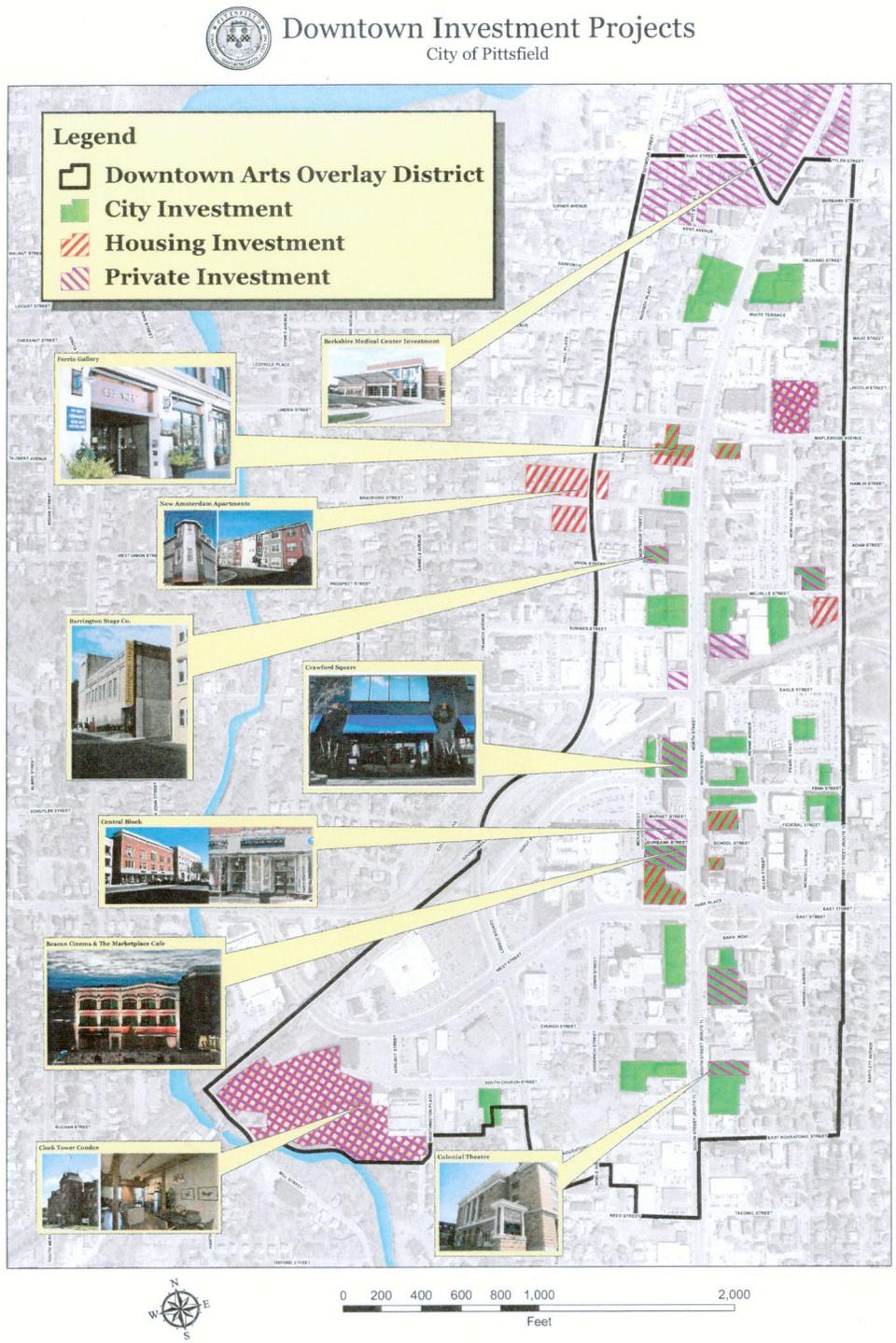
Checklist

- **Identify & recruit leadership**
 - Municipality
 - Mayor
 - Council
 - Decision making boards & commissions
 - Other departments
 - Community stakeholders
 - Potential developers
 - Non-profit organizations
 - Downtown property and business owners
 - Volunteer organizations
 - Major employers
 - Federal and state legislative delegations
- **Create vision and turn into a brand**
 - Define & articulate vision
 - Define who ultimate decision maker is for vision
 - Bring in objective, experienced creative design firm/team
 - Set clear parameters for process and decision making
 - Involve the public
 - Be prepared to arbitrate

- **Identify & evaluate local ordinances that could impact ability to achieve vision**
 - Dig deep, ask lots of questions and run lots scenarios
 - What uses are allowed “by-right”; what requires a special permit
 - Does zoning allow:
 - People to live downtown
 - Live where they work
 - Businesses and residents to be located in the same building
 - Creative products to be made (i.e. manufactured) downtown
 - What are parking requirements? Can they be reduced? Can parking be shared?
 - Can businesses use city sidewalks? What permits are required? What permit(s) and/or permission is required to hold a festival?
 - Involve and develop a working partnership with a wide range of departments and staff of city boards and commissions
- **Develop plans to secure funding**
- Prepare overall master plan for achieving vision, set goals and actions
- Identify the most important projects required to make vision a reality and determine:
 - What each will cost
 - Who will make them happen
 - How long it will take
 - Where they will happen
 - What actions are required to make each happen
- Develop strong working relationship with Federal and state legislative delegations and state agency heads and staff, including:
 - Getting their buy in to vision
 - Winning their confidence in community’s vision
 - Willingness to make the investments and commitments necessary to achieve vision
 - Ability to administer programs and grants and implement projects
- Identify and pursue funding
- **Identify partners and recruit**
 - Define responsibilities
 - Develop sustainable funding sources
 - Continually evaluate and refine roles and responsibilities

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Downtown Investment Projects



Traditional Economic Development Programs in Pittsfield

BACKGROUND:

The City of Pittsfield has offered small business loan and technical assistance programs for the past three decades. Assistance for handicapped accessibility in commercial buildings and tax incentives (through the Massachusetts Economic Development Incentive Program) were added in the mid-1990s. The City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) has been used to fund the loan, grant and handicapped access programs. The business assistance programs have supported manufacturers, service and retail businesses, and restaurants.

The Small Business Loan Program is a revolving loan fund that was modeled after the U. S. Small Business Administration's 504 loan program. Up to 40% of borrowing by a for-profit business can be financed. The maximum loan amount is currently \$100,000. This loan structure requires the participation of a primary lender, which gives a level of credibility to the proposals. Full review and underwriting of the loan and a due diligence investigation are still required. CDBG guidelines for public benefit must also be followed, including job creation for low-income people.

The Technical Assistance Grant program is primarily used in conjunction with the loan program, but may also assist businesses that are completely privately financed. A one-to-one match is required, unless the business owner is low-income. The business owner uses consultants of their own choosing. Up to \$5,000 may be awarded to each applicant.

The Handicapped Accessible Loan Program is intended to provide funding assistance to not-for-profit and for-profit property owners located in the City of Pittsfield for making handicapped accessibility improvements to commercial buildings. Applicants are eligible for a minimum of \$2,500 up to \$15,000 in funding assistance, structured as a deferred payment loan that is forgiven in 5 years. A one-to-one match is required for non-profits and three-to-one match for for-profits.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreements, which are a part of the Commonwealth's Economic Development Incentive Program, provide for tax incentives to businesses that are creating permanent full-time jobs and making investment in properties located in distressed areas. TIFs allow for the phase-in of local real estate taxes that result from the investment. They are tailored to the needs of the business and relate to the public benefits of the project. Most TIFS are 5—10 years in duration with a straight line phasing; the merits of the project will dictate whether a more restrictive or a more generous tax incentive is negotiated between the business and the City.



THE PLAN:

The small business loan and technical assistance grant programs are too small to be used for funding large downtown revitalization projects, but they can play a role in assisting small businesses that locate in renovated downtown buildings and to spur retail and restaurant activity.

The City seeks to support businesses that create core jobs and which will have secondary benefits to advance the City's other goals for downtown revitalization.

It is the vision of the Handicapped Accessible Loan Program to provide funding to commercial property owners, enabling them to make improvements that will help stimulate other investment in their building. Any new physical improvement to the building, which is made specifically for providing accessibility for persons who are handicapped, must comply with the standards defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. Eligible improvements include: exterior and interior ramps, entranceway modifications, doors and doorways, restrooms, emergency warning devices and elevators.

Downtown Pittsfield was designated in 1996 as an Economic Opportunity Area (EOA) where TIFs can be negotiated. The City has used the program for 15 projects that range from new construction to complete building renovation. The program is used to spur development and encourage additional investment in the downtown area.

THE PROCESS:

A community development corporation was established to administer the business assistance programs: the Pittsfield Economic Revitalization Corporation (PERC). Representation on PERC includes commercial lenders, accountants, small business owners and community leaders. Loan and technical assistance applications are analyzed by staff and reviewed by subcommittees prior to final approval at the board level.

The Handicapped Accessible Loan Program and the tax incentive program are administered by staff of the community development office. TIFs must be initiated by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. The City Council approval process entails a referral to a subcommittee where a detailed review occurs prior to final approval by the full council.

PARTICIPATION:

PERC partners with the business community, all the local commercial lenders, the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center business counselor, other regional and state quasi-public lending programs and Downtown, Inc.

Support is often made available to businesses that are part of projects where the City has provided other incentives, such as Handicapped Accessible Loan Program funds or TIFs.



FUNDING:

As noted above, the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) has been used to fund the business assistance loan and grant programs. Approximately \$100,000 per year, if needed, is allotted to replenish the small business revolving loan fund and approximately \$25,000 is added to the technical assistance grant program. State technical assistance funds are sought by PERC each year to expand the reach of the program. The Handicapped Accessible Loan Program is funded approximately \$50,000—\$100,000 per year. Other funding sources may need to be secured if the CDBG program sustains significant congressional cuts.

PERC is staffed by the City's community development office through an annual contract for services of small business program administration.

HURDLES:

Funding businesses that will be successful: In any market you will see good and bad business plans. It is important to have the right mix of professional experience on the business assistance review committee for loans and technical assistance grants.

Limiting the number of loan and technical assistance applications from the same sector: Once downtown development gains some momentum, it is possible to get too many requests for assistance from the same business sector. Restaurants are a good example. They are high risk and, as the market gets stronger, there is diminishing need for public assistance to make a business successful.

The Handicapped Accessible Loan Program funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Commercial tenants are not eligible to apply directly. Tenants interested in for improvements to their space must have the property owner apply to the program on their behalf. Once an applicant is approved, they are responsible for hiring their contractor and must follow federal guidelines; federal Davis Bacon wages need to be paid in every labor category associated with the project, with on-site interviews conducted and certified payroll reports submitted weekly until the project is complete.

Economic Development Incentive Program – a three way partnership between business, City and Commonwealth: Amendments in 2009 to the legislation governing the EDIP program, of which TIFs are a part, resulted in changes that made the state investment tax credit negotiable based on the level and quality of the project's job creation and investment. The changes allowed the potential for a larger investment tax credit, but it also inserted a degree uncertainty for project proponents as they plan their projects. The program also is subject to a high degree of public scrutiny at the local and state levels.

KEYS TO SUCCESS:

Reading the market: There has to be a well-defined market niche for the businesses that are supported with public funds. If funds are put in prematurely, i.e. before the market is sufficiently established, there will be failure. Good analysis of applications for business support is needed so that the public funds can realize the greatest result. You want to ride the crest of the wave.

Partnering with a private entity: The relationship between the City and PERC has proven beneficial to provide some distance between the public sector and involvement with the review of proprietary business plans and financial statements. It has also served to bring different points of view, expertise and impartial judgment to the application process.

Meeting downtown revitalization goals: The Handicapped Accessible Program and TIFs are used to encourage projects that meet the City's goals for economic development and downtown revitalization. City support is very meaningful to the private entities that are investing in the downtown. The value of the support goes beyond the actual dollar value. City support demonstrates the City's endorsement and gives the investor an incentive to encourage other private investment in downtown.

Colonial Theatre Restoration

Pittsfield, Massachusetts

BACKGROUND:

The 1903 Colonial Theatre was a popular vaudeville theater known as “one of the greatest acoustical houses in the entire world.” John and Ethel Barrymore performed there, as did Sarah Bernhardt, Al Jolson, and the Ziegfeld Follies. Following conversion to a movie theater in 1934, its doors were closed in 1949 and the elaborate architectural details were preserved while an art supply business was located in the orchestra level from 1952 to 2002.

THE PLAN:

Restoration of the Colonial Theatre had community interest. In the mid-1990s the downtown and business community saw the project as an important catalyst for downtown revitalization, in conjunction with redevelopment of the Central Block, a prominent but vacant commercial building on the main street.

THE PROCESS:

Community interest in bringing the Colonial back to life coalesced in the late 1990’s into the Friends of the Colonial Theatre and a grass roots fundraising effort. Public sentiment about the value of the project to Pittsfield’s downtown revitalization grew.

Restoration efforts got a boost in 1998, when First Lady Hillary Clinton visited Pittsfield on the Save America’s Treasures tour and officially dubbed the theater a National Historic Treasure. Along with the title came a \$400,000 grant toward its renovation.

In 1999, those efforts were taken over by the Colonial Theatre Association, a private, nonprofit group whose board included the Mayor and his wife, along with local lawyers, bankers, and other professionals. The association purchased the theater in August 2001 with plans for a complete makeover. Following the restoration, there was a public grand opening of the 810-seat theater in August 2006.

PARTICIPATION:

The project foundered during the initial planning phase until a combination of factors coalesced including: strong leadership and public support, the adoption of a state historic tax credit program and the adoption of the federal New Market Tax Credit Program, state and federal earmarks and the City of Pittsfield's financial commitment to bring sufficient resources to the table to make the project happen. Part of the process included economic studies that demonstrated the economic impact the project could have.

In 2002, Williams College economist Stephen Sheppard performed an economic impact study that found that a revived Colonial Theatre would inject more than \$2 million annually into the city's economy and increase property values by \$20 million to \$40 million. In addition to staff positions, the theater was projected to generate 100 new jobs in the city. Sheppard also pointed out that cultural economy wages are competitive with manufacturing, in part because manufacturing wages declined steeply in the prior decade.

Subsequently, once the restoration was completed and after two years of operations, the independent research firm Center for Creative Community Development conservatively estimated that the Colonial Theatre sustains a direct economic impact of \$4 million annually and 92 full-time jobs annually in the Berkshires region.

The City supported the project with \$1 million in economic development funding and a Tax Increment Financing agreement that forgives from 100% to 80% of the incremental increase in taxes during the seven-year term. The City support was key to the project's success. It, along with the community donations, demonstrated the community's commitment to the project, which allowed the project to draw more support from the state and federal governments.

Mayor James M. Ruberto said the decision to use public money on the private, nonprofit theater was the easiest decision he's made since taking office. "That 1 million [dollars] represented a collaboration with the financial community [and a sign] that the city's willing to put its money where its mouth is," he said. That, he said, made it "easy to go to the state and federal agencies and say, we believe this will be the core of our revitalization, and it can only happen if we collaborate."

FUNDING:

Multiple sources of funding were required to achieve the \$21.5+ million restoration project. Over several years the Colonial Theatre Association embarked on a massive fundraising campaign and received major local support from businesses and individuals. These community donations, conventional financing and usual state grant support were insufficient to completely fund the project.

Funding for the Colonial Theatre restoration project included:

| | |
|---|------------------|
| - Individual and Corporate Donations | \$5,333,099 |
| - Save America’s Treasures grant in 2000 | \$400,000 |
| - Federal Earmark (Senator Kennedy) | \$193,000 |
| - Federal Historic Tax Credits (as MHIC Equity) | \$3,000,000 |
| - Federal New Markets Tax Credits (as MHIC Equity) | \$4,244,436 |
| - Sale of \$1.6 million in State Historic Tax Credits | \$1,457,000 |
| - Massachusetts Development Finance Agency (MassDevelopment) | \$56,465 |
| - Massachusetts Historical Commission | \$2,500,000 |
| - Massachusetts Department of Administration and Finance | \$2,500,000 |
| - Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism | \$1,000,000 |
| - Massachusetts Technology Collaborative | \$20,000 |
| - City of Pittsfield Economic Development Fund | \$1,000,000 |
| - City of Pittsfield Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) | \$170,000 |
| Total Colonial Theatre Project Development Sources | \$21,874,000 |

The City of Pittsfield also funded the development of a public parking lot adjacent to the Colonial Theatre. \$750,000 from a 2003 transportation bond bill was used to acquire the parcel, relocate a business, demolish structures and build the thirty-nine space public parking lot.

HURDLES:

Leadership: During the gestation period of the project, well-intentioned and passionate people worked to lay the groundwork for the project. These efforts were essential to building public awareness but in the end they were ineffective due to the high cost of the project and insufficiency of private resources. A public-private partnership was needed to bring the impetus to marshal the necessary public resources to make the project possible.

Funding / Escalating Costs: During the planning process, which spanned several years, the project scope and cost estimates were completed and refined. The construction project had to be modified to control costs and additional resources had to be secured for it.

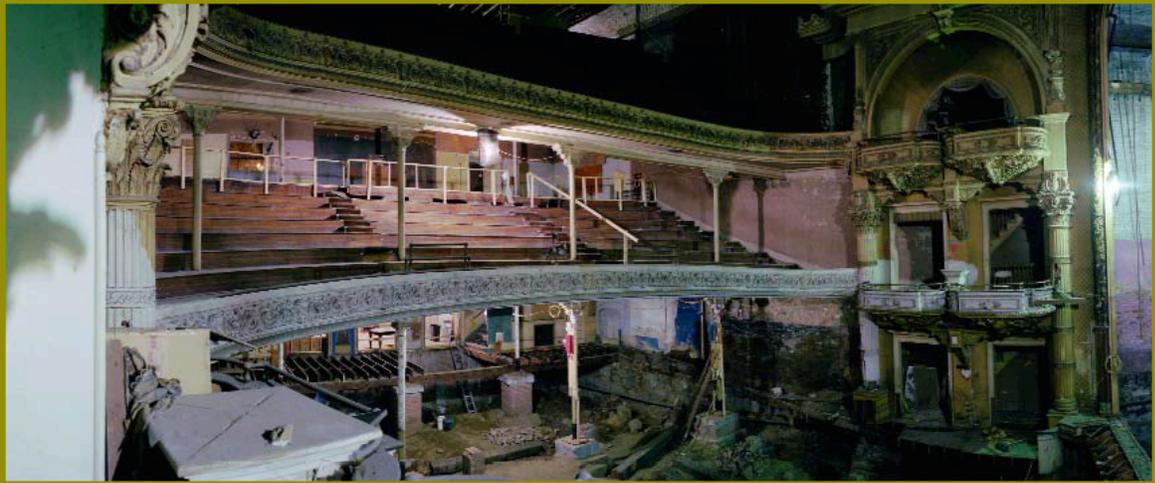
Continuing Operating Expenses / Endowment: The Colonial Theatre has struggled with cash flow for its operating expenses since it first opened. Ticket sales for this and like theaters nationally are not sufficient to fully support operating costs. The recent recession and a decline in ticket sales and contributed income that matched a national trend made the cash flow challenge more acute. In a first of its kind in the Commonwealth in November 2010, the Colonial Theatre merged operations with the Berkshire Theatre Festival, a well-established Berkshire County cultural institution, to reduce redundancy in operating expense and extend the geographic market for both institutions. Early results of the impact of the merger are exceedingly positive.

KEYS TO SUCCESS:

Community Buy-in: Local interest in seeing the theater restored started the process. It was supplemented by community leaders – business, banking and community group leaders as well as public officials – recognizing and promoting the economic development potential of the project.

Leadership: A strong public leader that adopted the project and made it a cornerstone of the City’s downtown revitalization plan was essential to realization of the project.

Public Participation: The project would not have been possible without the City of Pittsfield’s commitment of funds and tax increment financing as well as its efforts to garner state and federal support. The City Department of Community Development support of the pre-development phase of the project was also instrumental in its success.



Colonial Theatre under Restoration

Photo by Nicholas Whitman

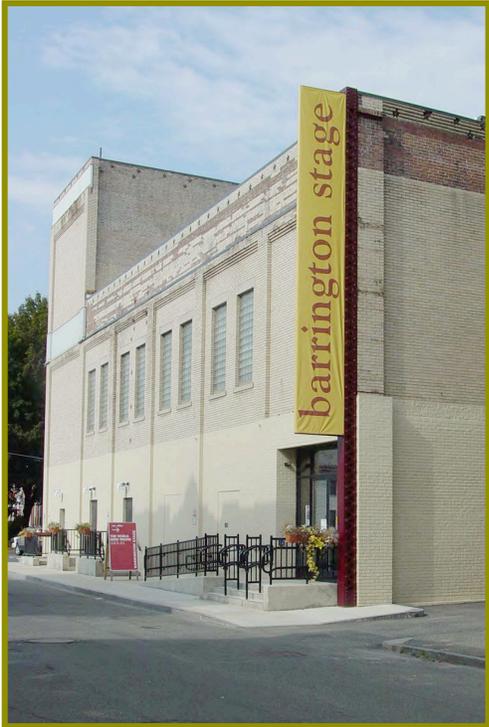


Colonial Theatre Restored

Photo by Nicholas Whitman

Barrington Stage Company and Berkshire Museum Projects

Pittsfield, Massachusetts



BACKGROUND:

Two cultural facilities sought City support for facilities in downtown Pittsfield:

1. Barrington Stage Company (BSC) is a non-profit professional theater company founded in 1995 that was already established in southern Berkshire County. The theater company’s focus is to produce and develop theater productions and engage audiences, especially youth. The company generates about 45,000 attendees each year. Its original musical production of “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee” played in New York City and won two Tony Awards.
2. The Berkshire Museum is an established institution that draws 75—95,000 visitors each year, has a \$2.1+ million annual budget, and employs 19 full-time and 14 part-time people. More than 12,000 students per year participate in their science education programs.

THE PLAN:

BSC made a decision to purchase a 520-seat former vaudeville and movie theater building in downtown Pittsfield in July 2005. BSC’s decision to consider a location in downtown Pittsfield was driven by the momentum already established in downtown revitalization efforts and the attention these efforts were getting regionally. This decision resulted in BSC moving from a southern Berkshire location, a part of the county that was historically much more recognized as a cultural destination.

Berkshire Museum defined needs to for substantial physical improvements to their building and related infrastructure coupled with a desire to be an active participant in the expanding cultural scene in downtown Pittsfield. Facility improvements were broken into three phases. Phase I included roof repairs. Phase II involved upgrades to HVAC for climate control and the creation of a new exhibit focused on innovation. Phase III plans consisted of classrooms, aquarium and visitor amenities.

THE PROCESS:

BSC approached the City for support from the Pittsfield Economic Development Fund, an economic development discretionary fund under the City’s control. They sought \$500,000 for renovations to the balcony area, which would add two hundred seats to the theater. The Mayor, having sole discretion over initiating proposals for use of this fund and with the assistance of the Community Development office, evaluated the request and crafted a proposal to present to the City Council for approval.

Berkshire Museum embarked on a \$10 million capital campaign to fund phases I and II of its improvement plan. The Kresge Foundation awarded \$500,000 as a challenge grant if Berkshire Museum could raise the remainder of the funds. The Museum sought \$900,000 from the Pittsfield Economic Development Fund to meet the Kresge challenge and fill the remaining funding gap to complete phases I and II of their capital campaign. After working through the request with the Mayor, the Mayor proposed that the City support the project with \$500,000 in funding. This was further reduced to \$250,000 by the City Council based on the confidence the Council had in the Museum’s ability to raise the remaining funds needed for the project.

PARTICIPATION and FUNDING:

The City’s funding for these non-profit organizations was structured as five year forgivable, deferred payment loans with defined performance targets for the project investment and implementation, job creation and community benefit programs.

BSC was required to:

1. create three full-time equivalent jobs at a minimum salary of \$25,000 per year;
2. provide \$500,000 in matching funds; and
3. commit that for five years at least 50% of its youth theater participants would be Pittsfield residents.

Berkshire Museum was required to:

1. Raise the remaining funds to meet the \$500,000 Kresge Foundation challenge grant, at which point the full deferred payment loan would be forgiven. This requirement was met.
2. If the challenge grant was not obtained, \$25,000 would be forgiven for each full-time job created and for each year an educational outreach program was conducted at a grammar school located in a low-income neighborhood adjacent to downtown. After five years any remaining balance would convert to an interest-free loan.

HURDLES:

Support for Non-Profit Organizations: It was a challenge to get City leaders and the community to understand that for-profit commercial enterprises generate economic activity and public non-profit organizations play a significant role in driving the city and county economy.

Recognition of Economic Value of Non-Profit Organizations: When each of these processes began, there was a lack of community appreciation for the economic benefits of cultural organizations as well as a lack of confidence that Pittsfield could be a major player in the region's cultural economy. As a result of the public process that accompanied the City's funding commitments, the community at large became more committed to both organizations and both became publicly committed to the community. In addition, through these processes both organizations developed a better sense of how to demonstrate the contributions they make to the community's and region's economy.

Support for Existing Institutions: There was resistance to support for the Berkshire Museum project because the museum had been in existence for more than 100 years and was so well established. This was overcome, to a degree, by explaining how the funding would open up the museum to new visitors and new collections following installation of a new air conditioning system.

KEYS TO SUCCESS:

The City was able to establish community benefits for these projects:

- Job creation: both number of jobs created and minimum salary levels
- Economic stimulus: support given to projects that fit the City's vision for downtown development & for establishing the City as a cultural destination
- Educational programs: programs that benefit the City's youth were required

Cinema Center Project

Pittsfield, Massachusetts



BACKGROUND:

In the early stages of developing the concept of Pittsfield’s downtown revitalization, it was recognized that most of the existing activity occurred during the workday hours. Downtown was dormant during the evening and weekends.

THE PLAN:

Entertainment was identified as a solution. It was determined that live performance theater, a movie theater and other cultural endeavors would bring people to the downtown during the off hours and result in a resurgence of restaurants and retail activity.

THE PROCESS:

Downtown, Inc., Pittsfield’s downtown business association, initiated the project by working with local business leaders to formulate a plan. The organization established a cinema center task force, raised funds and conducted a feasibility study. It also investigated a series of possible sites downtown for the project and ultimately selected the final one based on its high visibility on the main street and its proximity to a 1,000 car parking garage. It then contacted all major theater chains around the northeast region to determine their interest in a downtown complex. None were. They then solicited independent theatre operators and ultimately selected Richard Stanley. With support from the City, they approached local lenders to form a bank consortium, secured a building location and developed preliminary plans.

PARTICIPATION:

Success of the project required the participation of the downtown business community and its association, Downtown, Inc., as well as all of the financial institutions in the city and the City administration. The choice of a private developer that had experience in operating an independent movie complex in the heart of a downtown business district was fundamental to success of the project. Equally essential was that the developer recognized the community development role a movie complex could play in downtown revitalization.

The City’s participation in a private development project also had to be defined. A key role the City played was identifying and applying for State funds that were available only to municipalities that could be used for the project. It then needed to find creative ways to use the funds that complied with State requirements. The City obtained a façade easement on the building and funded the restoration of the historic façade, using two State grant programs. Public bidding processes were followed and the City’s work was completed with a construction contract separate from the private developer’s work. The public project was distinct, but embedded within and closely coordinated with the private project.

FUNDING:

A variety of private and public funding sources were required to complete the financing of the \$23 million project. The funding sources for the Cinema Center project included:

- \$1.5 million from the Pittsfield Economic Development Fund
- \$1 million from the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism
- \$192,758 from Pittsfield's Community Development Block Grant
- \$6,551,659 in New Markets Tax Credits through Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation (MHIC)
- \$2,944,725 from awards of \$3.38 million in State Historic Tax Credits through the Massachusetts Historical Commission
- \$4.6 million from the bank consortium
- \$4,418,968 in Developer Equity, Operating Reserves, Escrow Interest, Development Fee Note Payable - Subordinated
- \$1 million Community Development Action Grant (to the City of Pittsfield)
- \$825,000 Massachusetts Growth Districts Initiative Grant (to the City of Pittsfield)

In addition, the City of Pittsfield supported the project with a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) plan that allowed the incremental increase in taxes to be phased in during a nine year period. The TIF agreement was heavily front loaded, allowing for no increase for the first seven years.

HURDLES:

Building a State-of-the-Art Cinema in a Small Market Area: After unsuccessful efforts to attract a national theater chain to develop the project, a local cinema operator joined the development team. Throughout the development process it was necessary to justify the business plan. The plan was able to stand up to repeated scrutiny by having a developer with experience in the local marketplace and a keen understanding of how to be competitive. In the end, after the first year of operation, the cinema center was on target with its projection of 190,000 attendees in year one.

Fitting a Six-Screen Theater into an Historic Building: Re-use of an existing building resulted in a number of challenges, from architectural considerations to provision of adequate parking. The historic character of the building limited the changes that could be

made and ultimately required the project to be redesigned. The historic tax credit funding in the project brought with it the requirement that the U. S. Dept. of the Interior approve the plans for the building. The original layout called for too great of a change to the office section of the building and the Dept. of the Interior did not accept the plans. The building design was revised, which led to much higher construction costs. That set the project back a few steps and a significant amount of additional funding had to be secured.

Keeping Funding Commitments in Place during Setbacks and Delays: The State was very cooperative in holding the Community Development Action Grant in abeyance for the project. It was several years before the grant, originally committed in FY2006, was used in FY2009. Current requirements for shovel-ready projects do not provide for a State grant commitment to be held that long.

Local funding commitments remained in place, but the project received additional public scrutiny when a second request had to be made to fund part of the increased costs of the project.

KEYS TO SUCCESS:

Public Support during Pre-Development: The City supported the gestation of the project. The City's Department of Community Development supported planning during the pre-development phase of the project.

Leadership: The Mayor's support played a key role in bolstering community support and bringing State resources to the project and keeping local lenders and State officials committed to the project when planning took much longer than projected. Complex projects need a cheerleader that can force resolution when sticking points arise.

Perseverance: It was a challenge to maintain momentum through the multiple year planning process and set backs in the construction plans. The City and the State were required to maintain financing commitments through changes to the project's plan.

Selection of the Right Private Development Partners: Public – private partnerships can be challenging since each party has somewhat differing goals. Having a private partner that understands, accepts and promotes the public purpose of the project is ideal. Cooperation between the private developer and the City administration is necessary.

When an historic building is involved, it is important to have an historic architectural firm that is well regarded and that has had success with publicly funded projects. Coordination and cooperation between the private and public contractors also provides better results.

Partnership with the State: The State's designation of Pittsfield as a Gateway City and the establishment of the heart of Pittsfield as a Growth District helped to reinforce State grant funding applications for use in the project.

Pittsfield Special Event Checklist



CITY OF PITTSFIELD

SPECIAL EVENT CHECKLIST

Thank you for considering Pittsfield as the venue for your organization's special event. While every City and Town has different procedures, they are typically driven by State regulation. Pittsfield has developed the following checklist and Special Event Permit Application to help you plan out the logistics of your event. Event sponsors are responsible for obtaining all proper licenses and permits, and abiding by the rules listed on said licenses. It is our hope that this checklist will enlighten you about the permitting process and the various City Departments involved in event planning. We encourage you to determine what is required for your event as early as possible as there may be some permitting and inspections that take in excess of forty five (45) days to complete. Please check all of the applicable boxes provided below. Then proceed to the Licensing Board, who will put your application on file. Once the application is on file you must then proceed to the applicable departments to receive all necessary signoffs and approvals.

SPECIAL EVENTS PERMITS:

An application for a Special Event Permit must be filed with the Licensing Board Clerk by anyone who plans to host a festival or event in Pittsfield that will:

- Be held on or affect Pittsfield streets, sidewalks or property; OR
- Require Pittsfield services beyond those the City provides its citizens under ordinary, everyday circumstances; OR
- Have features that require issuing of one or more additional licenses or permits.

DISCLAIMER:

- Contents of this checklist are presumed accurate as of (September 2009). All information is subject to change.

Listed below are general items that could apply to any department's requirements for an event:

ADA AWARENESS:

- Special events should be accessible to people with disabilities. Building Inspections will assist you in ensuring that your event is accessible.

INSURANCE

- When alcohol is served or sold, an insurance rider in the amount of \$1,000,000 per occurrence with a \$1,000,000 aggregate is required. Be aware that such coverage usually requires a thirty-day lead time.
- When renting City property, an insurance rider in the amount of \$500,000 per occurrence with a \$1,000,000 aggregate is required.
- The vendor must submit an insurance certificate for all coverage, listing the City of Pittsfield as an additional insured, to the Purchasing Department prior to the event.

Contact Purchasing Department (413-499-9470) with any insurance-related questions.

NEIGHBOR NOTIFICATION

-
- If the special event will require street closings, traffic or bus route changes or other features that will affect the public, the event planner must notify all affected neighbors and prepare and distribute a press release and a site map to local media outlets before the event.

OVERTIME COSTS

- Overtime charges *may* be passed along to event organizers requiring inspection services outside of normal business hours.

RAIN DATE / PLAN CHANGES

- Event organizers must anticipate – and include in their application – changes in plans due to foul weather
- or other calamities.

TRASH COLLECTION AND REMOVAL

- Event sponsor may be responsible for trash collection and removal. Review details with property owner / manager.
- Visit the following web site for “Community Event Recycling Guide:”
http://www.cetonline.org/Publications/Event_Trifold_FINAL.pdf
- Dumpster permits are issued by Fire Department.
- A permit from Public Works & Utilities is required for any dumpster placed in a public right of way.

UTILITIES – ELECTRIC, PLUMBING, GAS

- Review requirements with property owner / manager.
 - Temporary electrical accommodations require services of Wire Inspector (Building Inspection Department-see below) to prevent overloading or other unsafe conditions.
- Each vendor will be restricted to one electrical appliance.
 - Temporary use of gas or propane will require permits from the Plumbing & Gas Inspector and Fire Department (Building Inspection Department & Fire Department-see below).

CITY DEPARTMENTS/CONTACTS AND REQUIREMENTS

Building Inspection Department (499-9440) Located at City Hall

inspectors@pittsfieldch.com

- Some events requiring entertainment license (i.e. carnivals) may also require Building Inspector services.
- All amusement rides, including climbing walls, require permits and inspection by State Building Inspectors

OCCUPANCY ISSUES

- Events utilizing space for purposes other than what the space was designed for (i.e. using a vacant storefront for an entertainment venue) constitutes change of use. Any building in excess of 35,000 cubic feet requires an architect evaluation for change of use. Review proposal (including sketches) with Building Inspector.
- In a building that has a current certificate of inspection for a place of assembly, the maximum number of people that can occupy the room or space is posted on the certificate.

TENTS

- Events that gather people outside in a tent or other structures that cover an area in excess of 120 square feet, including all connecting areas or spaces with a common means of egress or entrance which are used or intended to be used for the gathering together of ten or more persons will be required to obtain a permit from the Building Inspection Department.
- Organizers are encouraged to have the tent rental company secure necessary tent permits. E All tents, regardless of size, must be properly secured or weighted.
- See Public Works “Ground Penetration” as well

SIGNAGE

- Review with property owner / manager and Building Inspector.

Building & Grounds Maintenance Department (499-9476) Located at 81 Hawthorne Ave
build.maint@pittsfieldch.com

- See “Venues” for buildings, parks, school buildings & school grounds
- Buildings, parks, school buildings & school grounds have separate paperwork and may have fees.
- At the beginning of each school year, you can not reserve a school or school grounds until Sept. 15.
- You will need to make arrangements for special requests (bathrooms needing to be opened, etc.)*

Community Development Parks & Recreation Program (499-9370) Located at City Hall
parks@pittsfieldch.com

CITY PARKS

- Use of City Parks requires permission from the Park Commission. The Park Commission meets the third Tuesday of every month. Requests for park use should be filed 45 days prior to event date. Use of parks and facilities (i.e. restrooms) also require Building & Grounds Maintenance Dept. approval.

Fire Department (448-9764) Located at 74 Columbus Ave.
fire@pittsfieldch.com

CONCESSION TRAILERS

- A concession trailer fire safety inspection is required during or prior to the event. A cooking suppression system check is required (certification must be current within 6 months prior). If deep frying is used, you must have a K-Type fire extinguisher. For all other cooking, you must have a 10ABC or larger fire extinguisher.

FIREWORKS / BONFIRES

- Permit required from Pittsfield Fire Department
- Review with property owner.

GRILLS / PROPANE TANKS

- Permits required from Plumbing & Gas Inspector and Fire Department for the use of propane tanks or grilling at any public event including concession trailers. The Fire Department needs to know the number and size of propane tanks.

STREET CLOSURES OR DETOURS

- Notify Fire Department of street closures or detours 24 hours in advance

DUMPSTERS

- Dumpster permits are issued by Fire Department.

Health Department (499-9411) Located at City Hall
health@pittsfieldch.com

FOOD AND BEVERAGES

- All vendors that handle, prepare, transport, and/or serve food, non-alcoholic beverages, and pre-packaged retail food must file an application with the Pittsfield Board of Health.
- All food must be prepared in a Board of Health certified kitchen and transported to event in accordance with all applicable regulations and laws.

SANITARY FACILITIES

- Please specify the restroom facilities that will be used for food service vendors.
- Provisions for safe food handling practices with ready to eat foods include hand-washing stations, disposable gloves, etc.

Licensing Board/City Clerk (499-9363) Located at City Hall
licensing@pittsfieldch.com

ENTERTAINMENT LICENSE

- Outdoor concerts, carnivals, circus, fairs, etc., require permit from Licensing Board. E Alcoholic beverages served or sold require license from Licensing Board

RAFFLE

- A Permit good for one year is required from Licensing Board for any raffle.

SALES / CONCESSIONS

- A permit is required from the Licensing Board for planned sales or concessions. Fees are waived for non-profit organizations; however proof of non-profit status may be required.

Police Department (448-9723) Located at 39 Allen St.

police@pittsfieldch.com

STREETS/PUBLIC WAYS – BLOCK PARTIES

NOISE

- Pittsfield has a noise ordinance. Notify Pittsfield Police Department if event may exceed acceptable noise levels.

PARKING

- Review with property owner / manager
- May require permission from Pittsfield Police Department.

STREET CLOSURE

- Permission is required from Pittsfield Police Department for any street closures or detours.

SECURITY PATROLS

- Pittsfield Police Department. _____ # of Officers Needed

Public Works & Utilities (499-9330) Located at City Hall

dpw@pittsfieldch.com

GROUND PENETRATION

- Make arrangements with property owner / manager if penetrating the ground (tent stakes, etc.), and call Dig Safe at 1-888-Dig-Safe (344-7233), which covers gas, electric and telephone utilities.
- A report from Dig Safe is required prior to permit approval. Contact Public Works & Utilities for water,

| <i>VENUES</i> | <i>OTHER SERVICES</i> |
|--|--|
| <p>City Parks Controy Pavilion Berkshire Athenaeum <i>Auditorium</i> - movable seating for approximately 175 <i>Conference Room</i> - Twenty chairs around four large tables School Buildings <i>Auditoriums (5 in the public schools),</i> <i>Cafeteria</i></p> <p style="text-align: right; color: red;"><i>Alcoholic beverages are not permitted in school buildings, on school grounds, or on Park property.</i></p> <p>Gyms Classrooms School Grounds Wahconah Park</p> <p>Contact: Building Maintenance Department, 499-9476 Located at 81 Hawthorne Ave build.maint@pittsfieldch.com</p> <p>Ralph Froio Senior Center - Located at 330 North St. Contact: Council on Aging, 499-9346 coa@pittsfieldch.com</p> <p>Lichtenstein Center for the Arts Arts and civic organizations can rent the gallery space for events. Located at 28 Renne Ave Contact: Department of Cultural Development, 499-9348 culture@pittsfieldch.com</p> | <p>City Stage The City has one portable stage available for rental by the public which has a separate fee structure and paperwork.</p> <p>Tents The City has access to thirty 10' X 10' Artscape E-Z Up tents available for rental by the public through this department. Contact: Community Development Parks & Recreation Program, 499-9370 Located at City Hall parks@pittsfieldch.com</p> <p>Barricades Barricades are available from the Pittsfield Police Department. Contact: Police Department (448-9723) Located at 39 Allen St. police@pittsfield.net</p> <p>Non-Profit Organizations needing the assistance of volunteers for their event may be eligible for assistance from RSVP. Contact: RSVP – Retired Senior Volunteer Program, 395-0107, Located at 16 Bartlett Ave rsvp@pittsfieldch.com</p> |

sewer and storm water information.

- A permit is required from the department of Public Works & Utilities.

DUMPSTERS

- A permit from Public Works & Utilities is required for any dumpster placed in a public right of way.
- #### SIDEWALK CLOSURE / OBSTRUCTION
- A permit is required from Public Works for sidewalk sales or other obstructions.

WEB LINKS

Links to this document and all of the relevant City departments are available at: www.pittsfield.com

SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT APPLICATION

(To be posted or made available at event)

Return to: Licensing Board
City of Pittsfield, 70 Allen Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201

CITY OF PITTSFIELD

Questions or additional information, contact:
413-499-9363 (phone) or 413-499-9463 (fax)
licensing@pittsfieldch.com

Section 1: *Application must be received no later than **45 days prior to event.***

Event Name: _____ Event Producer: _____
Primary Contact Information: _____ Fax: _____
Primary Contact Name: _____ E-mail: _____
Day Phone: _____
Cell Phone: _____ Websit
Event Information: e:
Starting Date: ____/____/____ Time: _____ Ending Date: ____/____/____ Time: _____
____:____ M Total attendance expected: ____:____ M Rain plan: _____

Please describe the special features of the event within the "Summary of Event" and "Illustration/diagram" boxes provided on separate sheet.

List any streets to be closed for special event:

Section 2:

RELEASE/HOLD HARMLESS AGREEMENT (REQUIRED FOR USE OF CITY PROPERTY ONLY):

I, _____ a representative from _____, does hereby acknowledge that in the course of its use of property owned by the City of Pittsfield, namely _____ located at _____, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, for the purpose described above, and more particularly by virtue of the presence of its agents, servants, employees and invitees, (hereinafter collectively referred to as _____), in any manner whatsoever shall operate at its own risk on said property of the City of Pittsfield.

For and in consideration of the use of _____, _____ does for itself and on behalf of its agents, servants, employees and invitees, hereby, jointly and severally, remise, release and forever discharge the City, it's agents, servants and employees (hereinafter collectively referred to as the "City"), of and from all debts, demands, actions, and any and all claims or demands whatsoever of any kind for damages or injuries to property or person, which may arise by virtue of _____ use of _____. _____ further agrees to defend and indemnify and hold harmless the City from and against any claims of any nature whatsoever and the cost and expense, including, but not limited to, attorney fees and legal costs arising out of any claim in connection with its use of _____.

Said indemnification shall not include claims arising from intentional malfeasance by the agents or employees of _____ the City of Pittsfield.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20____, on behalf of _____
by _____, its _____
X _____ Date: ____/____/____

Signature of the agent duly authorized by the Special Event Permit applicant to bind it.

