

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

The development of Mansfield's economy is influenced by its economic development resources. These include its human resources, entrepreneurial climate, physical infrastructure, economic institutions, and general quality of life. Effectively utilizing these resources and filling critical resource gaps can support and accelerate economic development efforts.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

Programs and services available to technology businesses are described in the "Potential Growth Opportunities" section above. Other regional and state programs and services for businesses include the following:

- **Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs).** The SBDC's central office and one of its regional centers are located at UConn's Storrs campus. SBDCs provide businesses with assistance on a range of business functions, including business plan development, financial planning, loan packaging, marketing, employee management, and regulatory compliance. They also provide specialized assistance in government contracting, international trade, and for minority, women and veteran businesses.
- At the state level, the **Connecticut Development Authority** (now including Connecticut Innovations) offers financing programs addressing a range of business needs. In addition to the Bioscience Facilities Fund described earlier, these include loans and loan guarantees for small and mid-sized businesses; grants, seed financing, venture capital, and loans for early-stage and technology-intensive businesses; targeted programs providing export financing, loans and loan guarantees for advanced energy projects; and loans for IT companies.
- The **Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development** offers two business loan programs, the Small Business Express Program and

loans to manufacturers for projects with strong economic development potential. DECD, both directly and through partner organizations, provides technical assistance to businesses on a range of issues, and also works with qualifying businesses to provide state tax incentives.

CAREER EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

- Workforce development services for jobseekers and employers in Mansfield are provided by the **Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (WIB)**, one of five regional workforce investment boards in Connecticut. The career center serving Mansfield is located in Willimantic. Services to job seekers include job search assistance, career counseling, job development and placement, seminars on a wide range of topics, training referrals, and training funds for individuals with high barriers to employment to be used for training by certified training providers. Services to employers include employee recruitment assistance, reimbursement for on-the-job training, and workforce literacy assistance. The WIB also provides services to at-risk and out-of-school youth.
- **Windham Technical High School** is the regional technical school serving Mansfield and 19 other communities. The school serves high school students who seek a combination of traditional academics and training in a trade or technology field. The school offers students training in architectural technology, electrical, automotive technology, electronics, carpentry, health technology, heating, ventilation and air conditioning, manufacturing technology, and culinary arts. It also offers adults training as dental assistants.
- **Eastern Connecticut State University**, in addition to its bachelor's and post-graduate degree programs,

offers short-term (six months or less) on-site and on-line training in a range of career fields.

- **UConn** offers a range of adult learning opportunities, both on-site and on-line.

CULTURE, RECREATION AND TOURISM RESOURCES

- **Mystic Country** (www.mystic.org) (Eastern Regional Tourism District) is the state's designated marketing organization for eastern Connecticut, operated by the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut. The organization hosts a detailed tourism website, produces and distributes a printed visitors' guide, provides advertising opportunities for tourism businesses, and assists meeting and event planners. With the highest-profile tourism attractions, notably the casinos, Mystic Seaport, and the Long Island Sound coastline, concentrated in the southeast, the northeast suffers from a less intensive focus than was the case when it had its own marketing organization.
- **The Last Green Valley Inc.** (www.tlgv.org) is a 35-town National Heritage Corridor in eastern Connecticut and south-central Massachusetts that promotes heritage and natural resource tourism as part of its mission. TLGV hosts an extensive website that includes a calendar of events and an interactive map, publishes guides and maps, and sponsors special events such as the annual Walktober. It also provides co-operative advertising opportunities for its business members.
- **WindhamARTS** was organized to foster and promote the arts and cultural life of the Windham Region. It has been named by the state as Northeast CT's Designated Regional Service Organization for the arts. The organization hosts an on-line arts calendar.

In addition to these regional organizations, the Windham Region Chamber of Commerce and the Tolland County Chamber of Commerce publish downloadable

and printed brochures that provide extensive listings of tourism venues and events, lodging, restaurants and other visitor information. However, the chambers have not been actively involved in tourism development strategies or focused marketing initiatives.

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING

The quality of public infrastructure to serve businesses and the availability of housing to meet workforce needs are important factors in economic development. In Mansfield, the limited availability of water and sewer service, and its absence in many areas zoned for business development, as well as the limited range of housing choices present potential barriers to future economic development. Housing and physical infrastructure are addressed in detail in other sections of the Plan (see Chapters 7 and 9).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY & GRANT PROGRAMS

Economic development functions in Mansfield are handled by the Town Manager and the Director of Planning and Development. Mansfield does not have a dedicated staff position for economic development.

- Town staff are assisted by a recently re-established **Economic Development Commission**, whose mission is to conduct research into local economic conditions and trends, make recommendations regarding economic development, and coordinate the activities of and cooperate with organizations to promote economic development.
- Two chambers of commerce serve Mansfield businesses—the **Windham Regional Chamber of Commerce** and the **Tolland County Chamber of Commerce**. Both chambers provide tourism information and also focus on business networking, advertising and promotional opportunities and legislative affairs. As relatively small chambers, neither plays an extensive role in economic development.

- In 2014, Mansfield joined the **Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG)**, which provides a wide variety of services to its member communities, including transportation planning assistance and coordination with CTDOT. Another possible resource with this move to the Capitol Region is the **Metro-Hartford Alliance**, the economic development organization for the Hartford region, including all members of CRCOG. As part of its efforts, Metro-Hartford Alliance prepares the Hartford Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which prioritizes projects and is required to obtain project funding from the Economic Development Administration. Mansfield is currently covered by the 2010 Eastern Connecticut CEDS, which will remain in effect until the Hartford Region CEDS is updated to include Mansfield and other new CRCOG communities.
- At the state level, the Office of Policy and Management manages the **Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP)**, which funds economic development, community conservation and quality of life projects for localities that are ineligible to receive Urban Action bonds.
- The State Department of Economic and Community Development manages the **Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program**, which provides funding and technical support to communities with populations of less than 50,000 for projects that achieve local community and economic development objectives.