

MERRIMACK VALLEY COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

What is it?

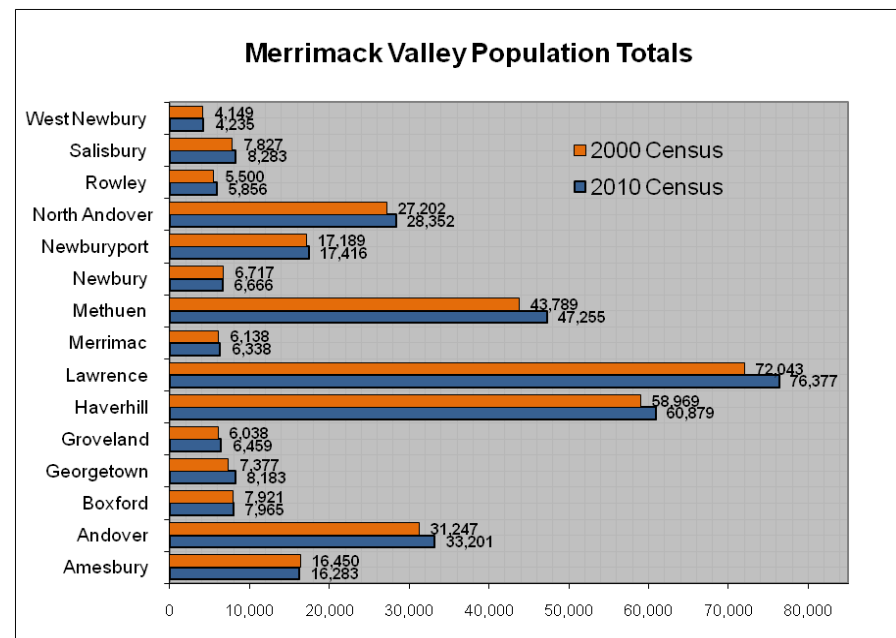
The Merrimack Valley is designated an economic development district (EDD) by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce. EDA is the main economic development agency of the federal government and works with EDDs throughout the country to promote regional cooperation and job growth.

MVPC is the designated liaison between EDA and our constituent communities. MVPC receives an annual planning grant from EDA, which allows us to develop and manage the Merrimack Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) program. Developed in collaboration with leaders from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors, the CEDS outlines controlled, smart growth strategies for the entire region.

There are four essential planning elements of the CEDS:

1. summary of economic development conditions of the region;
2. in-depth strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of the region;
3. strategies and implementation plan;
4. performance measures used to evaluate the successful development and implementation of the CEDS.

The Merrimack Valley CEDS focuses on three areas of implementation: regional marketing, workforce development needs, and local capacity building.



Merrimack Valley CEDS Implementation

Enhanced Marketing of the Region

On October 6, 2014, the Merrimack Valley Mayors and Managers Coalition (MVMMC), in conjunction with MVPC, announced the release of the updated and streamlined Merrimack Valley Means Business (MVMB) marketing initiative. Representing the communities of **Amesbury, Andover, Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, Newburyport, North Andover, and Salisbury**, the Coalition has been working with MVPC on ways to better market the

The screenshot displays the MVMB website interface. At the top, a navigation bar lists the participating communities: AMESBURY, ANDOVER, HAVERHILL, LAWRENCE, METHUEN, **NEWBURYPORT**, NORTH ANDOVER, and SALISBURY. Below this, a featured project is highlighted for the City of Newburyport. The project is titled "Newburyport Smart Growth District & Adjacent Newburyport Business & Industry Park" and focuses on "Residential, Mixed-Use, Commercial, and Industrial Development Opportunities" with "Direct Access from Route 1 and the MBTA Commuter Rail Station." A map shows the "Proposed 40R Smart Growth District" in red, bounded by U.S. Route 1 to the north, I-95 via Scotland Road to the west, and the Newburyport MBTA Commuter Rail Station to the south. Other landmarks include the "100 Hale Street Property" and "Downtown Newburyport (1 mile via rail-trail, bike or car)". A legend identifies symbols for Interstate, Public Station, Local Station, Proposed Station, Interstate, Major Road, Harbor/Market, and River/Fair. Contact information for Donna D. Holaday, Mayor of Newburyport, is provided, along with Lombardi, Director of Policy and Administration, and R. Port, Director of Planning and Development.

region to prospective developers and businesses.

MVMB.biz features an easy-to-use property search tool, highlights priority development projects, and provides quick links to key municipal officials, zoning links, and important information on doing business. The goal of the initiative is to attract new economic development by strengthening the regional business support network, enhancing the marketing of development opportunities in the Valley, and bolstering

The screenshot shows the MVMB website home page. The header includes the MVMB logo and navigation links: HOME, THE VALLEY, OUR COMMUNITIES, SEARCH PROPERTIES, NEWS, and CONTACT US. A search bar is located in the top right. The main content area features a photograph of people on bicycles in Lawrence, MA, with the text "MERRIMACK VALLEY MEANS BUSINESS" and a description of the initiative. A "SEARCH PROPERTIES" button is visible.

The screenshot shows the MVMB News section. It features a "Merrimack Valley Means Business" logo and a "CONNECT WITH MVMB" section with social media icons for Twitter and Facebook. The news items include: "JANUARY 14, 2015: Labor Force Outlook Brightens in the Region", "JANUARY 5, 2015: Request for Proposal: Develop and Operate Wireless Communication Structures", and "DECEMBER 12, 2014: Draft 2014 Merrimack Valley Priority Growth Strategy Available for Public Review and Comment".

the collection of timely market data. MVMB.biz supports the statewide "Massachusetts: It's All Here" marketing initiative, which promotes business development through the streamlining of key location information. The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) is eager to form additional partnerships to expand the capabilities of the website.

Identifying Industry Clusters and Workforce Development Needs

Through the CEDS process, MVPC has identified four industry clusters driving economic growth in the region:

- Food Manufacturing
- Electronics
- Life Sciences
- Metal Fabricators

NAICS	Description	Location Quotient: MVPC vs. State, 2006	Location Quotient: MVPC vs. State, 2011	Location Quotient: MVPC vs. U.S., 2006	Location Quotient: MVPC vs. U.S., 2011
	Manufacturing	2.07	2.43	1.84	2.14
311	Food Manufacturing	2.32	2.76	1.51	1.81
325	Chemical Manufacturing	2.26	2.21	1.85	1.88
326	Plastics & Rubber Products Manufacturing	1.78	1.08	1.47	0.84
332	Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	1.36	1.53	1.29	1.46
334	Computer and Electronic Product Mfg	2.04	2.52	4.66	5.54
3342	<i>Communications Equipment Manufacturing</i>	3.37	3.76	6.11	4.13
3344	<i>Semiconductor and Electronic Components</i>	2.35	2.08	4.03	3.71
3345	<i>Electronic Instrument Manufacturing</i>	2.15	3.78	5.68	9.73
3391	Medical Equipment and Supplies Mfg	1.93	2.34	3.15	3.34

Data Source: Employment and Wages (ES-202)

The key findings of an outreach campaign to cluster businesses is summarized below:

Key Findings

- Workforce Challenges: Certain Skills are Difficult to Find
- Excellent Highway Access
- Industrial Space is at a Reasonable Cost
- Longer Term Concerns Over Rising Costs and Global Forces
 - Health Care
 - Taxes, Workers Comp, Regulations, etc.
 - Access to Capital

Going Forward

- Roundtables/Networking Group for Cluster Businesses
- Energy and Health Care Consortiums
- Targeted Workforce Assistance
- Enhanced Marketing of Industrial/Business Parks
- Addressing Constraints
 - Wetlands/Sewer
 - Road Conditions
 - Access to Capital

Local Capacity Assistance

Through the CEDS process and in response to ever tightening municipal budgets and resources, MVPC has developed a new regional resource entity to assist communities in the Merrimack Valley with their unique economic and community development needs. The *Merrimack Valley Support Team* will provide ongoing training to local staff on development matters and will encourage the sharing of resources and bolster communication and cooperation in the region. In addition to providing information on grant opportunities and helpful economic development tools, this *Support Team* will provide valuable assistance on closely related community development issues, such as downtown revitalization, streamlined permitting, complete streets, storm water management, and compact neighborhoods. The idea is to help increase local planning capacity to deal with the myriad of issues that local planners and economic development officials face.

The City of Methuen is first off the line to ask for assistance from the new MVPC initiative – *Merrimack Valley Support Team*. City officials have requested that MVPC assist them with their efforts to designate the downtown as a 40R Smart Growth District. Methuen would be the fourth community in the MVPC region to have a 40R district. Other districts are located in Amesbury, Haverhill, and North Andover. Chapter 40R of the Massachusetts General Laws encourages communities to create dense residential or mixed-use smart growth zoning districts in areas most suitable for development such as in existing city and town centers.

For more information:

The Merrimack Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, as well as other MVPC planning documents, can be viewed at:

<http://www.mvpc.org/information-center/plansstudies/>