

Common Assets

The Creative Economy



- The region's creative economy assets include
 - World class non-profit arts and cultural institutions
 - A large number of self-employed artists and performers who choose to live in the region
 - A small number of for-profit arts businesses that produce creative goods and services
 - And, in some parts of the region, these resources have come together to form truly "creative" communities
- There are different Sub-Regional Creative Strengths
 - Northern Berkshire County has considerable assets, most notably:
 - Mass. MOCA, Eric Rudd's new 40-unit artist's condo, the Clark Art Institute, the Williamstown Theater Festival and the Williams College Museum of Art
 - In Franklin County
 - Shelburne Falls has become a center for artists and arts venues and galleries
 - Historic Deerfield is nationally known for its museums
 - Greenfield has always had a strong Business Fund for the Arts and arts focus
 - Turners Falls has begun to focus its community and economic development on arts and the downtown, and the development of older industrial buildings for artist live-work space
 - The New Salem, Athol, and greater Gardner areas are not as rich in creative assets, but there are a considerable number of artists and small but visible arts organizations, like the 1794 Meeting House, that gives the arts a presence. And, Orange has taken some small steps to attract artists and arts organizations to the downtown
- Maximizing the potential
 - There has been no "varsity" effort to capitalize on creative assets to the greater benefit of the region's economic base or identity

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Natural Resources Related Assets

- The region abounds in resources:
 - State parks
 - Open space
 - Rivers (the Hoosic, Millers, Deerfield, Connecticut)
 - The Quabbin
 - Newly-created bike trails
 - The Appalachian and Metacommet Trails
- Although the agricultural industry has declined in the last 15-20 years, it continues to be an important source of jobs and income for farm families, and agriculture serves as a complement to quality of life, recreation and the tourism industries
- Maximizing the Potential
 - There was broad support for using these natural resources for recreational, economic, and eco-tourism purposes
 - Unless something is undertaken on a regional and larger economic scale, the recreational use of the natural environment will be confined to a series of unconnected activities that are important and valuable in their own right, but lacking in real substantive economic impact
 - There was concern about over development - "we don't want the Disney-fication of the region"
 - There is no region-wide effort to better market and explore the economic potential of the region's natural resource base and no leadership has come forward to spearhead an initiative.

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Entrepreneurial Talent and Potential



- The data and interviews suggest that the region has a substantial number of entrepreneurs
 - The data notes the high presence of self employed people in different sub-regions throughout the Northern Tier
 - Interviews also suggest that within a number of cities and towns throughout the region, there are many individuals working from home
 - There is anecdotal information of people moving from New York and Boston and either telecommuting or working out second homes
 - The region, as noted above, is populated by artists working in their lofts or at home, and they represent an important component of the self-employed
- There are hidden technology companies in the region
 - The report “Tracking and Leveraging the Hidden Tech Population to Promote Economic Development and Build Social Capital,” identifies scores of technology professionals have either been laid-off or retired and moved to the western part of the state, which they view as an attractive alternative to the pace of life in other large urban centers. These individuals, perhaps, have the potential of turning a small enterprise into another Yankee Candle, and therefore should be courted and cultivated