



Reconnecting Massachusetts' Gateway Cities City Profile: Pittsfield

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This profile provides key economic and demographic trends faced by Pittsfield relating to the MassINC / Brookings Institution report "Reconnecting Massachusetts' Gateway Cities: Lessons Learned and an Agenda for Renewal." To read the entire report, see www.massinc.org or www.brookings.edu/metro/massgateways.htm.

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Pittsfield has lost jobs in recent years, but at a slower rate than Greater Boston

Between 2001 and 2005 the City of Pittsfield lost 900 jobs—a 3.5 percent decrease—compared to Greater Boston's 6.0 percent, 99,000-job loss over the same timeframe. Employment gains in Pittsfield's surrounding towns from 2001 to 2005 held the entire Pittsfield region stable at around 42,300 jobs.

Since 1960, the city has lost over half its manufacturing jobs

From 1960 to 2000, Pittsfield lost 69 percent of its manufacturing employment, or nearly 9,200 jobs, while Greater Boston lost 138,000 manufacturing jobs—a 48 percent loss.

More recently, Pittsfield has lost knowledge industry jobs at a fast rate

Between 2001 and 2005, the City of Pittsfield experienced a 16.8 percent decline in knowledge industry jobs, while the Pittsfield region overall experienced an 11.9 percent loss. These rates of knowledge industry job loss far exceed the 7.9 percent, 38,000-job loss in Greater Boston.

But technology firms are beginning to locate there

In 1991, Pittsfield was home to 6 technology firms; by 2004, that number had doubled to 12 such firms according to CorpTech data. Likewise, the Pittsfield region added 10 tech firms, bringing its total up from 9 to 19. This percentage increase for Pittsfield and its surrounding towns—like most other Gateway Cities and regions—is overshadowed by the enormous gains in Greater Boston, where almost 1,600 new tech firms were established. In fact, Greater Boston increased its share of the state's tech firms from 53 to 60 percent in the 13-year period.

Nevertheless, Pittsfield's per capita income growth is relatively weak

Pittsfield's real per capita income growth of 26.0 percent between 1980 and 2000 was slightly above the Gateway City average of 24.7 percent, but less than half that of Greater Boston's 59.1 percent gain. The Pittsfield region fared somewhat better, with income growth of 31.5 percent.

And just one in five adults in the city holds a bachelor's degree

At 20.5 percent, the share of Pittsfield's 25-and-older population that holds at least a bachelor's degree is a little less than half of Greater Boston's 41.6 percent figure. Even Pittsfield's regional mark of 24.1 percent trails Greater Boston's attainment rate by a wide margin.

Meanwhile, Pittsfield's population is continuing to decline

Pittsfield lost population throughout the 1990s, experiencing a 5.8 percent rate of decline over the decade, in sharp contrast to Greater Boston's 4.5 percent increase. The city's population loss has continued, with its 4.2 percent population decline between 2000 and 2005 a more severe rate of loss than Greater Boston's 1.4 percent decline.

Few foreign-born residents call Pittsfield home

Pittsfield's foreign-born resident share, the lowest of any Gateway City, remained unchanged from 1990 to 2000 at 4.3 percent. This stands in sharp contrast to Greater Boston's 18.8 percent mark.

Housing prices in Pittsfield are rapidly appreciating yet remain relatively affordable

From 2000 to 2005, real median home prices in the City of Pittsfield rose 48 percent—significantly higher than Greater Boston's 37 percent increase. Yet even with the rapid appreciation, the median home price of \$143,000 in Pittsfield remains much more affordable than the \$429,000 price tag in Greater Boston.

Moreover, housing unit production is quickly rising

According to Census building permit data, Pittsfield is increasing its production of housing units. The city's 62-permit annual average between 2003 and 2005 represented a 53 percent jump over the 40-permit average in the years 2000 to 2002. This compared to a 55 percent increase in housing permit production for Greater Boston.