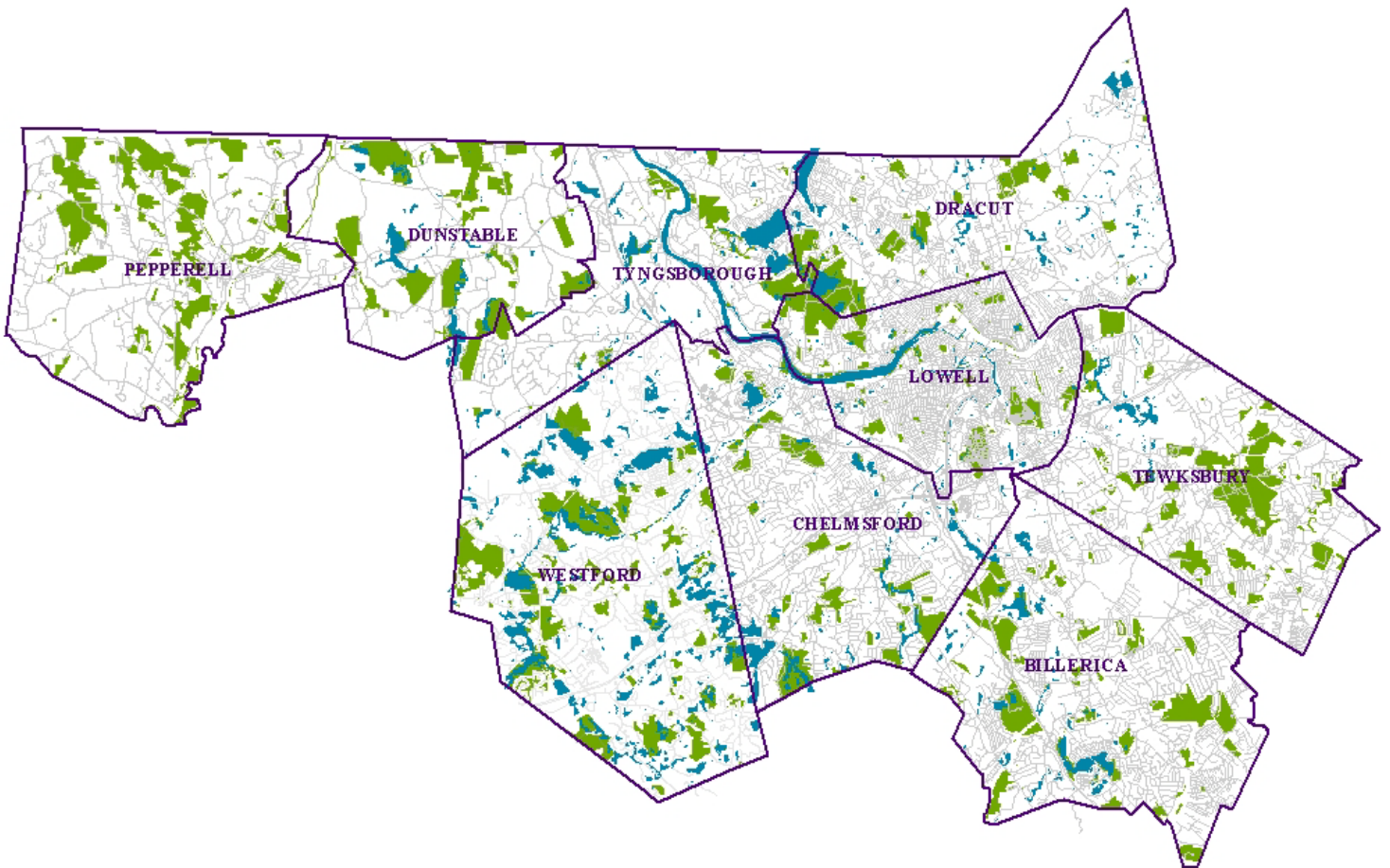


**GREATER LOWELL ANNUAL
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
(CEDs)
UPDATE FOR 2008**



Prepared By:
Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Francisco J. Carvalho	Barbara O’Neill
Professor Victoria Fahlberg	Jeanne Osborn
Gerard Frechette	Theresa Park
Robert Halpin	Ellen D. Rawlings
Robert Hanson	Osvalda Rodrigues
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NMCOG thanks the Council for their ongoing support and leadership and acknowledges the contributions made by the following individuals:

James Silva, Chairman
Beverly Woods, Executive Director
Jay J. Donovan, Assistant Director
Courtney Knapp, Chief Editor
Janet Thompson, Support Staff

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NMCOG

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

July 14, 2009

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A Multi-Disciplinary
Regional Planning
Agency Serving:

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Chelmsford
Dracut
Dunstable
Lowell
Pepperell
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Dear Mr. Taylor:

I am pleased to submit the *Annual CEDS Update for 2008* for Greater Lowell. In partnership with the Economic Development Administration of the Department of Commerce, NMCOG has continued to maintain a comprehensive economic development program, and has supported local economic development projects and promoted regional economic development initiatives. Throughout the year, NMCOG maintained a grassroots planning process and worked with economic development stakeholders to ensure that the ten goals identified in the region's Five-Year CEDS are implemented in a manner that proactively responds to economic opportunities and threats. This work is particularly important during these very difficult economic times.

The *Annual CEDS Update for 2008* identifies the priority projects that are vital to the region's economic recovery. NMCOG will continue to work with the local communities, state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations and the private sector to advance priority projects, such as the Hamilton Canal and Hamilton Crossing projects in the City of Lowell, in order to bring badly needed economic investment and job opportunities to the area.

NMCOG values its strong partnership with the EDA and appreciates the assistance and support provided by you and your staff. We look forward to continuing this relationship and welcome the opportunity to further strengthen our partnership.

Should you have any questions regarding the *Annual CEDS Update for 2008*, or the CEDS process in the Greater Lowell area, please feel free to contact Jay Donovan, Assistant Director, at (978) 454-8021, extension 16.

Sincerely,

Beverly Woods
Executive Director

CC: Matthew Suchodolski, Economic Development Representative for Massachusetts

I. Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee

The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) fulfilled its partnership role with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce through the maintenance of a continuous, comprehensive economic development planning process, support of local economic development projects and the promotion of regional economic development projects. NMCOG has worked with other economic development stakeholders in the Greater Lowell region to implement the ten goals established in the Five-Year CEDS and to respond to economic opportunities and threats. The activities undertaken this year principally focused upon completing the Annual CEDS Update for 2008 “grass-roots” planning process and document, identifying and approving priority projects in the region and supporting the economic development initiatives of the private sector and local municipalities.

The Greater Lowell CEDS Committee met four times during the past year and continued to play an active role in approving the RFP package for priority projects, prioritizing projects in the region and endorsing the Annual CEDS Update for 2008. The NMCOG Council relies upon the recommendations of the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee to move ahead on approving priority projects and the CEDS documents. The Greater Lowell CEDS Committee also provides a forum for representatives of the private sector, state government, community colleges, nonprofit agencies, local officials and other economic development stakeholders to offer their views and input. NMCOG will continue to publicize its CEDS activities through the use of its web site and the sponsorship of various forums that address significant economic development issues.

The Greater Lowell CEDS Committee met initially on October 23, 2007 (see Agenda and Minutes in Appendix II) to discuss the EDA planning contract, the 2007-2008 Work Plan and other economic development activities being undertaken by NMCOG in support of the region’s CEDS program. Mr. Donovan outlined the components and timeframe for the 2007-2008 Work Plan and responded to questions from Committee members. Mr. Donovan discussed the establishment of the Northern Middlesex Economic Development District, Inc. (NMEDD) as the non-profit arm of NMCOG. The purpose of this entity is to support economic development and affordable housing initiatives in the region, particularly for the suburban communities which do not have the support network that the City of Lowell has for these initiatives. Three additional CEDS Committee meetings were being scheduled for February, April and June to meet the requirements of the CEDS program. Mr. Donovan updated the Committee on the three supporting components for the CEDS program – the Expedited Permitting contract, the Economic Development component of the Westford Comprehensive Master Plan and the MassHighway Economic Development component.

The next CEDS Committee meeting was held on February 26, 2008 (see Agenda and Minutes in Appendix II). The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the economic development activities in the region, hear about upcoming events and learn about the CEDS RFP Process for Priority Projects. Mr. Donovan provided a copy of the January Quarterly Report for the Expedited Permitting contract and offered extensive comments on the status of the individual projects under this contract. Mr. Donovan and Norman Khumalo then

discussed the Westford Comprehensive Master Plan with the Committee members and, in particular, NMCOG's work on the economic development component. Bob Halpin provided an overview of the Creative Economy project sponsored by the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council (MVEDC) and outlined how important this effort was to the regional economy. Mr. Halpin announced that the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, MVEDC and the two regional planning agencies-- NMCOG and the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC)-- would be co-sponsoring two forums in North Andover and Billerica on the biotechnology industry in Massachusetts and what companies require from local communities for their relocation decisions. Mr. Donovan outlined a timeframe for the completion of the Annual CEDS Update for 2008 that included the issuance of the RFP for Priority Projects in April and a final vote by the CEDS Committee in June.

The third CEDS Committee meeting was held on April 8, 2008 (see Agenda and Minutes in Appendix II). The principal agenda items for this meeting were the RFP Process for Priority Projects, the meeting with the new Economic Development Representative (EDR) from EDA, the update on economic development activities and a listing of upcoming events. Mr. Donovan reviewed the RFP Priority Projects package with the Committee members, which consisted of a cover letter, Priority Project criteria and a one-page CEDS project description form. The Committee voted to approve the RFP Priority Projects package with the understanding that the project information would be returned to NMCOG by May 2, 2008 and the Committee could then vote on the Priority Project list at their next meeting. Mr. Donovan briefed the Committee on the recent meeting with Alan Brigham, the newly appointed EDR for Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. Mr. Brigham met with officials from the City of Lowell and NMCOG, and also had an opportunity to tour the Hamilton Canal site. Mr. Donovan stated that he looked forward to working with Mr. Brigham on securing funding for a number of CEDS projects in the region. Mr. Donovan updated the Committee on the Expedited Permitting contract and the Updated Westford Comprehensive Master Plan. Mr. Halpin provided a brief update on the Creative Economy project. Mr. Donovan announced the upcoming BioReady Communities Forum at Millipore in Billerica on April 30th, the Chapter 40B regulations session on May 15th and the Regional Housing Summit sponsored by Congresswoman Niki Tsongas on June 2nd. Mr. Halpin added that Congresswoman Tsongas would be hosting a Clean Technology and Alternative Energy Summit at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill on May 19th. Theresa Park announced that the City of Lowell would be holding a Small Business Fair on April 29th. Mr. Halpin stated that the Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development (MAED) and MVEDC would be hosting a presentation on the Market Assessment for the Merrimack Valley in Andover on April 18th. Mr. Donovan then provided a brief status report on the non-profit arm of NMCOG.

At the final CEDS Committee meeting on August 19, 2008 (see Agenda and Minutes in Appendix II), the Committee approved the CEDS Priority Project list and recommended that the NMCOG Council approve the Annual CEDS Update for 2008 and submit the document to EDA. The NMCOG Council, based upon the recommendations of the CEDS Committee, approved and ratified the Annual CEDS Update for 2008 on August 20, 2008 (see Annual CEDS Update Approval in Appendix III).

II. Activities for 2008

In implementing the Five-Year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) established in 2004, the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) has continued its partnership with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) in encouraging and supporting economic growth in the Greater Lowell region. NMCOG has actively encouraged the economic development stakeholders in the region to work within the CEDS process and provided technical assistance to our local communities in their economic development initiatives. NMCOG has actively promoted regional economic development projects and has established and expanded its partnerships with local communities, the Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board, Community Teamwork, Inc., the Lowell Plan, small business groups and One Lowell, Inc. These partnerships have contributed to the economic vitality of the region and our ability to move projects forward. NMCOG continues to build upon the economic development framework established this past year and to identify additional economic opportunities in the Greater Lowell region.

This section provides a summary of the activities of the economic development stakeholders in the Greater Lowell region during 2008, and is divided into three parts: Project Development, Goal Attainment, and Capacity Building. The Project Development component identifies specific projects that have been completed during the past year. In the Goal Attainment component, this past year's activities are summarized by goal as a means to show how we've addressed each specific goal outlined in the 2004 Five-Year CEDS. This component also summarizes how we've fulfilled our responsibility as a partner to EDA in encouraging the creation of well-paying jobs in the Greater Lowell region. The Capacity Building component summarizes the staffing capacity at NMCOG in meeting its requirements and outlines some of the barriers that the organization has had to overcome in order to move ahead on its economic development initiatives. This component focuses on how staff capacity at NMCOG has been improved and outlines what needs to be accomplished in order to move ahead and complete the Five-Year CEDS in 2009. This past year has seen many changes at NMCOG and EDA and, hopefully, the changes in 2009 will not be as dramatic. We look forward to working with the new team at EDA and fulfilling our role as a true economic development partner.

A. Project Development

During the past year, NMCOG maintained its partnership relationship with EDA through the development of the Annual CEDS Update for 2008. Through the use of the EDA Planning Investment grant, NMCOG was able to initiate its "grass-roots" CEDS planning process and to reach out to economic development stakeholders in the region. The Greater Lowell CEDS Committee held four (4) meetings during the year, while NMCOG staff received ongoing input from its nine municipalities, non-profits and the business community. Evaluation has been maintained as an ongoing process and NMCOG has worked to improve the way that it implements the CEDS program. During the period from February 2008 (partial) through June 2008, NMCOG received 83,094 requests for information from its web site. This request for information had as much to do with NMCOG's dual roles as staff support for the Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO), and through the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review process (to ensure that development projects "minimize damage to the environment"), as it did with its role in the CEDS planning process. It

is unknown how many public agencies, non-profits and small businesses have come to rely upon the demographic data and information developed through the Five-Year CEDS and our annual CEDS planning process. However, the NMCOG office receives several calls per month on development opportunities in the region based upon the information that is available on the NMCOG web site.

NMCOG co-sponsored and participated in a number of public forums through the course of the program year that focused upon its role as EDA's partner in the CEDS process. NMCOG hosted a Citizens Planning Training Collaborative program on the Chapter 43D initiative designed to expedite the permitting process at the local level in order to attract development opportunities. This program was held in conjunction with the Massachusetts Permit Regulatory Office (MPRO), the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD) and the Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development (MAED) on October 22, 2007. NMCOG co-hosted the Zoning Reform Task Force meeting in Andover on November 9, 2007 with the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC). NMCOG also participated in a regional marketing session with MAED, the state's selected marketing consultant and the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council (MVEDC) in order to provide feedback on the state's marketing program for the Merrimack Valley. The Lowell Center for Sustainable Production at the University of Massachusetts Lowell and MVEDC co-sponsored "A Roundtable Discussion to Advance Clean Technologies in the Merrimack Valley" on November 13, 2007 at the Osgood Landing Commerce Center in North Andover. NMCOG staff attended the Smart Growth Conference in Worcester on December 7, 2007 and actively promoted the Priority Development Site (PDS) in Billerica. NMCOG supported the efforts of Representative Bill Greene and the Town of Billerica with their "Growing Your Business in Billerica" forum held on December 11, 2007. This forum attracted private industry from Billerica and state development agencies, including the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED), MPRO, MOBD, MassDevelopment and MAED. As outlined in the MidPoint Progress Report, NMCOG hosted the Chapter 40B Regulations session with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) at UMass Lowell on May 15th. NMCOG co-sponsored the BioReady Community Forums with the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, MVEDC and MVPC at Wyeth in Andover on April 2, 2008 and at Millipore in Billerica on April 30, 2008. Both the Executive Director and Assistant Director played major roles in designing and co-sponsoring the Regional Housing Summit held by Congresswoman Tsongas on June 2, 2008, which provided an extensive overview of the housing situation in the Merrimack Valley. NMCOG also attended the workforce development session sponsored by the Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board (GLWIB) on June 26, 2008 entitled "Regional Workforce Strategies for the Merrimack Valley".

NMCOG fully supported local economic development efforts by its member communities. NMCOG actively supported and participated in the economic development efforts of the City of Lowell, particularly related to the Hamilton Canal District. NMCOG provided technical feedback on the City's PDS application to the Interagency Permitting Board, as well as fully participating in the three Hamilton Canal Vision sessions held throughout 2008. NMCOG supported the Chapter 43D activities of the Town of Billerica in promoting the expansion of EMD Serono to grow by 100 jobs, as well as lending its support to the infrastructure improvements along the Middlesex Turnpike. Through the efforts of NMCOG, Billerica was able to secure \$ 150,000 from the Interagency Permitting Board to move ahead on its expedited permitting activities and to study the infrastructure barriers to further development along Route 3

from Route 128 to I-495. NMCOCG actively participated in the Town of Chelmsford's Economic Development Initiative and promoted the designation of a PDS site in the community. NMCOCG began discussions with the Town of Chelmsford to update their Master Plan, including the economic development section. NMCOCG supported the Town of Dracut in its efforts to attract businesses through the use of the state's Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP), which allows for the development of Tax Increment Finance (TIF) agreements between the Town and private business. NMCOCG worked with the Town of Pepperell on the reutilization of the former Pepperell Paper Mill site by conceptualizing a process whereby the Town would establish a Mill Site Reuse Committee and then proceed to access funds from the State under Chapter 43D in order to develop a site master plan and marketing study. NMCOCG provided ongoing technical assistance to the town on this project, including outlining the benefits from the EDIP program, and in preparations to submit a PDS application for the site. NMCOCG worked with the Town of Tewksbury to establish the Tewksbury Economic Development Committee as a means to promote economic development and to attract private investors to the community. NMCOCG continued to work with the community on its Lowell Junction project, which involved the communities of Andover and Wilmington as well. NMCOCG completed its work on the Economic Development section of the Comprehensive Master Plan for the Town of Westford.

NMCOCG continued to focus upon providing technical assistance for regional economic development projects. The Hamilton Canal and Lowell Junction projects were the principal regional projects supported by NMCOCG this past year. As outlined in the Major Project section of this document, NMCOCG also worked with MVEDC on the Creative Economy project, which was designed to focus upon another potential economic growth area within the regional economy. Through its involvement with the Town of Billerica, NMCOCG began focusing on potential "branding" opportunities related to Route 3 and worked closely with the Towns of Billerica, Bedford and Burlington on addressing common infrastructure issues related to the Middlesex Turnpike. The co-sponsorship of the BioReady Communities forums in Andover and Billerica attracted community representation from across the region, while many of the projects involving NMCOCG focus upon the Merrimack Valley, such as the Regional Housing Summit held by Congresswoman Tsongas. In implementing the CEDS Priority Projects since 2004, NMCOCG has worked with its economic development partners to complete 25 projects, including the widening of Route 3, the I-495 Corridor Study, LRTA annual transit projects, housing initiatives and sewer and water projects. Additionally, there are 15 additional projects underway that will significantly improve the region's infrastructure. This information is summarized in the CEDS Priority Project section on page 34.

B. Goal Attainment

NMCOCG has maintained its role as EDA's regional economic development partner through the maintenance of "a continuous, comprehensive economic development planning process" for the Greater Lowell region, support for local economic development projects and promotion of regional economic development projects. Through the use of the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee, NMCOCG has received input from the major economic development stakeholders in the region. Through the use of its professional staff, NMCOCG has implemented the Five-Year CEDS goals established in 2004 and will be initiating the Five-Year CEDS process for 2009-2013. The goals established in next year's Five-Year CEDS are likely to be different from those established in 2004 due to changing economic conditions and evolving regional focus.

The purpose of this section is to summarize how NMCOG and its economic development partners addressed the Five-Year CEDS Goals through the implementation of this past year's program. The following information summarizes what NMCOG and the other economic development stakeholders in the region were able to accomplish between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008:

Five-Year CEDS Goals:

- **Economic Development:** *Develop a regional economic development framework that supports the efforts of private industry, local communities and agencies, educational institutions, federal and state agencies and private foundations to create jobs and improve the quality of life in the region.*
 - Trinity Financial signed a formal disposition agreement on the Hamilton Canal project with the City for \$ 7 million. The Hamilton Canal district was under consideration as one of 16 Regional Growth Districts statewide. The State agreed to invest \$ 175 million in the Hamilton Canal District for a 250,000 square foot Judicial Center.
 - The Pepperell Board of Selectmen agreed to establish an Economic Target Area (ETA) and Economic Opportunity Area (EOA) under the state's EDIP program, as well as to submit a Chapter 43D application to the state to designate the former Pepperell Paper Mill site as a Priority Development Site (PDS).
 - The Town of Billerica welcomed Luminus Devices, Inc. to Technology Park Drive and the expansion of EMD Serono at its site adjacent to the Middlesex Turnpike. Luminus Devices, Inc., which manufactures and sells phlatlight products for high definition televisions, will spend nearly \$ 10 million to renovate 48,000 square feet and plans to create 80 new jobs the first year and 300 jobs over the next five years. EMD Serono will invest \$ 50 million in the construction of a 125,000 square foot facility and add 100 additional research jobs by 2012.
 - NMCOG worked with the Town of Tewksbury in the formation of the Tewksbury Economic Development Committee, which meets on a monthly basis to encourage private investment in the community. NMCOG also worked with the Town of Tyngsborough in the creation of overlay zoning districts along Middlesex Road and in the Town Center to attract new businesses.
- **Workforce Development:** *Increase the supply of skilled workers for industry in the region through the integration of the economic development and workforce development systems.*
 - The Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board (GLWIB) completed its FY'08 Business Plan. The business plan focused upon the WIRED initiatives in Greater Lowell, specifically the Health Care Works and the Health Care Learning Network and the Leadership Initiatives for Teaching and Technology (LIFT) projects. The plan also outlined the regional impact created by the shrinking labor force in Massachusetts due to the outmigration of working-age adults, the

increasing number of retirees, the increasing number of immigrants and the increase in high school dropouts. The business plan referenced the *Greater Lowell CEDS for 2004-2008* and summarized the Connecting Activities program for youth.

- GLWIB, in conjunction with the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB) and the Workforce Opportunity Council (WOC), submitted a Regional Innovation Grant proposal to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to address the severe decline in the manufacturing industry in northeast Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. Resources provided through this grant will assist in the development of the a Core Regional Leadership Committee focused on a regional strategic plan to address the re-employment needs of workers affected by the closure of the Alcatel-Lucent plant in North Andover and Hewlett Packard in Nashua, as well as layoffs at Parlex USA in Methuen and Kronos in Chelmsford. This committee will include representatives from workforce development, economic development, higher education and business.
- GLWIB and MVWIB co-sponsored a session on “Regional Workforce Strategies for the Merrimack Valley” in Lawrence on June 26, 2008. This forum included remarks by Secretary Suzanne Bump of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and Chancellor Martin Meehan of the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Dr. Paul Harrington, Associate Director at the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, made a presentation on labor market development in the Greater Lowell and Merrimack Valley Region.
- **Education:** *Improve the educational and workforce skills of primary, secondary and college students to meet the needs of industry in the future.*
 - Middlesex Community College received \$ 21 million from the State bond bill to expand its downtown Lowell campus and create a performing arts center in the Rialto Building on Central Street.
 - UMass Lowell received nearly \$ 60 million through the State bond bill to build a new \$ 40 million academic building on the South Campus (\$ 26 million), modernize the north quad (\$ 10 million), start a new medical device program (\$ 4 million), upgrade the M2D2 building at the site of the Institute of Plastics Innovations (\$ 5 million), upgrade civic and athletic facilities (\$ 10 million), improve stormwater management (\$ 1.5 million) and renovate Olney Hall on the North Campus (\$ 2.5 million).
- **Affordable Housing:** *Create more affordable housing throughout the region to ensure that businesses can expand and relocate to the region with assurance that their workforce will be able to afford their housing.*
 - Congresswoman Niki Tsongas held a Foreclosure Prevention workshop, which included housing councilors and experts from credit unions, banks, nonprofits, MassHousing and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

(HUD), on March 29, 2008 at Lowell High School. Due to the significant increase in home foreclosures, a foreclosure prevention office of the Home Preservation Coalition (HPC) opened in downtown Lowell on May 16, 2008.

- Billerica's Housing Production Plan was approved on February 22, 2005. The Catholic Archdiocese received \$ 4.8 million in Section 202 funds from HUD for a 41-unit project behind St. Theresa's in Billerica Center. The Gilman Estates project was approved and consisted of three total housing units and one affordable unit. As of July 2008, Billerica had attained half of its 10% goal for subsidized housing.
- Chelmsford's Housing Production Plan was approved on July 10, 2005. The B Street Development was approved for three total housing units and one affordable unit. CHOICE Village was approved for 37 total affordable housing units. Hillside Gardens was approved for 59 total housing units and 15 affordable units. The Chelmsford Zoning Board of Appeals was considering a 48-unit Chapter 40B project on Riverneck Road. As of July 2008, Chelmsford had reached 6.8% of its 10% goal for subsidized housing.
- Dracut's Housing Production Plan was approved on April 13, 2004. The Pines at Marsh Hill was approved for 36 total units. As of July 2008, Dracut had established 5.8% of its year-round units as subsidized housing.
- Dunstable's Housing Production Plan was approved on February 9, 2005. No affordable housing units had been approved in Dunstable as of July 2008.
- Pepperell's Housing Production Plan was approved on November 8, 2006. Emerson Village at 196 Nashua Road was approved for 56 total housing units and 14 affordable two and three-bedroom units. As of July 2008, Pepperell had established 3.1% of its year-round units as subsidized housing.
- Tewksbury's Housing Production Plan was approved on June 23, 2006 and was certified for a two-year moratorium as of February 19, 2008. As of July 2008, 9.1% of Tewksbury's year-round housing units were subsidized.
- Tyngsborough's Housing Production Plan was among the first to be approved on July 11, 2003. As of July 2008, 7.7% of the year-round housing units were subsidized.
- Westford's Housing Production Plan was approved on August 6, 2004. Habitat for Humanity constructed a single-family home at 18 William Avenue. The Westford Affordable Housing Committee and the Board of Selectmen selected the town-owned Boston Road parcel as a priority site for affordable housing. A group home for handicapped challenged individuals at Hawk Ridge was begun in the spring of 2008. The Abbot Worsted Mill became an adaptive reuse project resulting in 110 loft-style apartments. As of July 2008, Westford had established 4.4% of its year-round units as subsidized units.

- **Racial and Ethnic Diversity:** *Increase the opportunities available to minority and low-income communities in the region to participate in the expansion of the regional economy.*
 - ONE Lowell was awarded \$ 93,397 from the Department of Health and Human Services to decrease truancy among ethnically diverse middle and high school students in Lowell. ONE Lowell has been effective in reducing drop-out rates and juvenile crime and increasing economic opportunities among at-risk students. More than 200 highly truant immigrant students increased their attendance through their School Success program.
 - The International Institute of Lowell, which has been operational since 1918, continued its refugee resettlement, education programs and legal services, which includes a legal clinic and citizenship program.
 - ONE Lowell sponsored their first ONE Lowell World Cup soccer tournament in 2007 and approximately 1200 people attended the event. There were teams from sixteen different countries represented. The purpose of this event was to build bridges between immigrant communities, as well as between the immigrant community and the established community.
 - The Foreclosure Prevention Task Force met monthly and included representation from several banks, Community Teamwork, Inc., the Coalition for a Better Acre, the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association and ONE Lowell.
 - Hundreds of Cambodians became citizens during the year through the efforts of ONE Lowell, the International Institute and other immigrant organizations.

- **Pockets of Distress:** *Target assistance to those neighborhoods and communities in the region that have not shared the economic benefits of the regional economy.*
 - In April 2008 Jeanne D'Arc Credit Union began construction of its 49,999 square foot corporate headquarters at 257 Morrisette Boulevard adjacent to downtown Lowell. Jeanne D'Arc has served minority neighborhoods in Lowell for many years.
 - Retail Management and Development began its \$ 15 million project to revitalize Sunrise Shopping Center in July 2008.
 - Lowell General Hospital announced preliminary plans to invest \$ 140 million to add a 230,000 square foot building, create a new lobby and emergency room, add 125 new beds and new operating rooms and provide additional parking. The hospital will be able to better serve the minority populations in Lowell as a result of this expansion.

- **Regional Transportation System:** *Develop the infrastructure needed to build upon the strengths of the regional highway system and the public transportation network to enhance access to the economic centers of the region.*
 - The Lowell Junction project moved forward with \$ 12.6 million through the Life Sciences bill, \$ 1.4 million in Massachusetts Opportunity Relocation and Expansion (MORE) program funds and \$ 1 million in Public Works Economic Development (PWED) funds. Wilmington Town Meeting approved the 23-acre Simon Property Group PDS site.
 - The Town of Billerica initiated several transportation projects. Construction was initiated on the Route 4 (Nashua Road) bridge replacement project, which was expected to be completed by the summer of 2009. Work began on the \$ 5.5 million Concord Road Phase II project with anticipated completion in December 2008. In September 2007, the \$ 6 million Cook Street and Alexander Road Improvement Project began and was expected to be completed by November 2009.
 - Billerica also completed and began numerous infrastructure projects. The town spent \$ 575,000 in the winter of 2008 to demolish the defunct water treatment plant. A new drainage system and five reconstructed roadways were completed in the Michael Road area (including Crooked Spring Road, Theresa Avenue, Hardwood Drive and Sheldon Street) starting in July 2007. Sewer contract 33 at River Pines Phase II was completed in the summer of 2007 and consisted of installing 6.9 miles of 8” sewer line, 1.1 miles of low pressure sewer, 300 feet of 6” water main and 0.3 miles of force main sewers. Sewer contract 34A (Route 129 area) began on October 9, 2007 and will be completed in the spring 2009. Sewer contract 34B is in the final design phase and construction funding will be requested at Spring Town Meeting 2009. Funding for the \$ 1.7 million Shawsheen River Pump Station upgrade was approved at spring 2008 Town Meeting and will begin in November 2008. Water main improvements and replacements were constructed at various locations throughout the town commencing in July 2007 and will be completed by November 2008.
 - The Town of Chelmsford approved \$ 15 million for the construction of the next phase of sewer program in East Chelmsford. The North Chelmsford Water District announced plans for a \$ 7.8 million, 13,000 square foot water treatment plant to be built near Edgelawn Avenue. Chelmsford joined other communities along Route 3 to promote the area through branding the corridor in conjunction with EOHED.
 - Bridge improvement projects in Lowell were announced in June 2008 and consisted of \$ 10 million for the Hunts Falls Bridge/Rotary, the \$ 3.7 million Rourke Bridge rehab and the \$ 800,000 University Avenue bridge maintenance program. The Lowell National Historical Park began work on the \$ 1.4 million canal walkway along the Western Canal and also received \$ 490,000 in federal Alternative Transportation funds to replace sections of the trolley track, bridges

and passenger decks. The extension of the Lowell Trolley System was viewed as a key component of the Hamilton Canal District Plan.

- Construction of the \$ 7.97 million Pepperell covered bridge began on November 20, 2007.
- The Town of Tewksbury received \$ 400,000 for the design and construction of traffic signals at the intersection of Route 133 and River Road in June 2008.
- Westford Town Meeting appropriated \$ 55,000 to design and permit a new well on Country Road.
- **Quality of Life:** *Maintain the community character in the region by preserving and protecting the region's natural, cultural and historic resources and encouraging concentrated development.*
 - Every community in the Greater Lowell area, except for Billerica and Lowell, continue to finance open space and historic preservation funds utilizing Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds.
 - NMCOG worked with the Town of Billerica to complete its Open Space and Recreation Plan in January 2008. NMCOG also began work on contracts with the Towns of Dracut, Tewksbury and Tyngsborough to complete their Open Space and Recreation Plans.
 - After twenty years of planning, design and acquisition work, ground was finally broken for the Bruce Freeman Bike Path in October 2007. Construction commenced in June 2008 and is expected to be completed in the summer of 2009.
 - Canoe launch and public access improvements on the Concord River in Billerica were implemented as mitigation for the Route 4 Bridge project. This project was a collaborative effort between the Town, the Army Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Lampson Field Improvements (basketball courts, a new parking area and lighting) were completed in August 2007.
 - The Town of Chelmsford purchased 22 acres of farmland off Robin Hill Road under 61A agreement for \$ 1.5 million.
 - The City of Lowell received \$ 150 million in brownfield funds from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to transform the parcel at 86 Fay Street into a neighborhood park. Environmental bond bill funds were approved for the \$ 2.5 million Bellegarde Boathouse and the \$ 700,000 Concord River Greenway.
 - The Town of Pepperell received \$ 320,000 for the purchase of 140 acres of wildlife habitat at the Keyes property along River Road and Canal Street.

- The Flint Pond Dam in Tyngsborough was funded for \$ 500,000 through the environmental bond bill.
- The Town of Westford adopted a Low Impact Development Bylaw and completed a Master Plan for the former East Boston Camps property. The town purchased the 111-acre Stepinski parcel for \$ 3 million. This property is contiguous to well fields and other town-owned land and will be controlled by the Water Department and Recreation and Conservation Commission. The town was also designing the Cameron Senior Center Expansion project.
- **Technology:** *Enhance the region's strengths within its "cluster industries" by promoting technological advancements and expanding the technological infrastructure in the region.*
 - The UMass Lowell Emerging Technology Center received \$ 10 million through the Life Sciences Bill in February 2008 to create a 97,000 square foot technology center for nanotech and biomedical research and a \$ 150 million 500 space parking garage to be located on the north campus.
 - UMass Lowell received \$ 12.4 million from the National Science Foundation in July 2008 for nanotechnology research as the Center for High-rate Nanomanufacturing, which is a collaboration of UMass Lowell, Northeastern University and the University of New Hampshire.
 - NMCOG co-sponsored the BioReady Community Forums with the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, MVEDC and MVPC at Wyeth in Andover on April 2, 2008 and at Millipore in Billerica on April 30, 2008. NMCOG also worked with MVEDC and state and university officials in the initial planning for the NanoScience & Technology Institute 2008 Annual Conference held in Boston in June 2008.
 - Nuvera Fuel Cells opened a hydrogen refueling station at 129 Concord Road in Billerica.
 - L'Energia Power Plant on Tanner Street in Lowell went back on line in February 2008 after \$ 24 million in renovations. The City agreed on a \$ 6 million PILOT payment over six years with the company.
- **Financial Investments:** *Target federal, state, local, non-profit and private funds to those projects that create jobs and improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods.*
 - Chelmsford Town Meeting approved a five-year TIF agreement with Arbor Networks, which specializes in security and network management. The company will invest \$ 2.5 million in the property at 6 Omni Way and will bring 110 existing jobs and create 25 new jobs at its Chelmsford headquarters. The Chelmsford Planning Board reviewed plans for a replacement for the former Skip's Restaurant site.

- The City of Lowell received some welcome investment news. In October 2007 Target announced that it would redevelop the Plain Street Shopping Center along the Connector by constructing a 137,000 square foot Target Store, which will generate \$ 1.6 million in tax revenue, support an annual payroll of \$ 4 million and create 200 jobs. At the same time, Lowe’s announced that it would construct a 153,200 square foot retail store on Chelmsford Street at a cost of \$ 17 million. Lowe’s will create 110 jobs and will support an annual payroll of \$ 3.5 million. The City of Lowell received a \$ 2.225 million MORE grant to fund needed infrastructure improvements related to the Lowe’s project.
- In July 2008 Beacon Power relocated to Tyngsborough through its renovation of the former Hussey Plastics building. The company received \$ 5 million from the MassDevelopment Technology Fund and the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative to expand its flywheel production facility and create 20 additional clean technology jobs.
- IBM expanded its Westford campus at Westford Technology Park and will create 42 new positions.

C. Capacity Building

The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) made a commitment to rebuild its economic development capacity with the hiring of Jay Donovan as a part-time (20 hours per week) Associate Planner in March 2002. Mr. Donovan had extensive experience working with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) through his previous work with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in Boston and the Rockingham Economic Development Council, Inc. (REDC) in Exeter, New Hampshire, as well as his work with various economic development agencies at the state level. NMCOG had not actively participated as a partner with EDA since the submission of its last Overall Economic Development Program (OEDP) in 1994. Through the hiring of Mr. Donovan, NMCOG was able to secure an economic adjustment grant for \$ 15,000 from EDA and to complete the “*Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008*”. Since that time, NMCOG has been able to apply for and secure short-term planning assistance from EDA in order to maintain its “grass-roots” CEDS planning process. Additionally, NMCOG has been able to broaden its economic development program through other funding sources, which has enabled it to provide ongoing economic development support for the City of Lowell and the eight surrounding towns in the region. Furthermore, NMCOG has played a prominent role with other economic development stakeholders in the Greater Lowell region in supporting regional economic development programs and tying these initiatives in with the transportation infrastructure program in the region.

NMCOG serves as staff support to the Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO) and provides ongoing planning assistance to the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) on its regional transit programs. Transportation funds from MassHighway, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the LRTA comprise nearly 70% of NMCOG’s entire budget. In 2006, the annual budget for NMCOG increased by nearly \$ 350,000 due to additional funding under the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program, the Stormwater Water

Management contract with the Town of Tyngsborough and the various transportation programs. Staffing levels at NMCOG did not keep pace with the additional funds being added to the budget, therefore, existing staff needed to assume more program responsibilities. Mr. Donovan was asked to manage the DLTA program in addition to his economic development and housing duties, even though he was still working on a part-time basis. In September 2007, Robert W. Flynn retired as Executive Director and Beverly Woods, the former Assistant Director and Transportation Manager, was appointed Executive Director in November 2007. As part of this hiring decision by the NMCOG Council, Mr. Donovan was promoted to full-time Assistant Director with the specific focus upon economic development and housing, as well as the overall management of professional staff. Shortly after the changeover at NMCOG, the Transportation Manager position was advertised and a new Transportation Manager was hired in March 2008. Unfortunately, the Transportation Manager left on medical leave as of June 2008. A Land Use planner was hired in May 2008 to assist with the DLTA program, but no additional staff was hired to assist with the economic development programs as of the end of June 2008, leaving NMCOG short-staffed two people from where it had been on July 1, 2007, and with \$ 350,000 in additional program activities to complete.

NMCOG has valued its partnership arrangement with EDA and has worked to address the economic development needs of the region, while responding to the requests at the federal level. During this past year, NMCOG has had two different Economic Development Representatives (EDRs) – Ms. Rita Potter and Mr. Alan Brigham. NMCOG has worked closely with both EDRs to promote the region and to educate the EDRs on the specific selling points of economic development projects in the region, consistent with the EDA rules and regulations. NMCOG hosted a visit by Mr. Brigham on March 18, 2008 and provided a tour of the Hamilton Canal project and other economic development initiatives in the region. Mr. Donovan attended the EDA Conference in Cleveland, Ohio entitled “Beyond Innovation: Partnerships and Comprehensive Strategies for Transforming Our Regional Economies” from May 12-14, 2008. At that time, Mr. Donovan met the new Regional Director, Mr. Willie Taylor, and invited him to be the speaker at the Annual NMCOG Meeting on September 17, 2008. The following day, NMCOG received confirmation from Regional Director Taylor that he would attend our Annual Meeting. This represented the first time that a Regional Director from EDA would visit our region and we looked forward to the visit.

In completing the annual CEDS process and developing the Annual CEDS Update for 2008, NMCOG has operated with limited staff and financial resources. The short-term capacity grant greatly assists with this effort and keeps the “grass-roots” CEDS process going on a “continuous, comprehensive basis”. Without these resources, it would be difficult for NMCOG to support this effort financially through other public or private funds. NMCOG is still in the process of completing its Economic Development District (EDD) application so that it can rely on a steady source of funding instead of depending upon competitive grants. We are also in the process of implementing our non-profit arm, the Northern Middlesex Economic Development District, Inc. (NMEDD), so that we can have access to other private, non-profit and public funds in the economic development and affordable housing areas. We rely upon the guidance provided by the councilors on the NMCOG Council and the members of the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee. These councilors and committee members have worked with their local communities and businesses to ensure that we have their full participation in our “grass-roots” CEDS planning process.

NMCOG has furthered its partnerships with the Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board, UMass Lowell and Middlesex Community College, the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council, Inc. (MVEDC), the Lowell Plan, Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI), the small business community, non-profit agencies, and the Greater Lowell communities as a result of the CEDS planning process. These partnerships have enabled NMCOG to focus on areas outside its purview, such as workforce development, that have a direct impact upon the creation of well-paying jobs in the region. While the principal focus has been on the City of Lowell, we have been able to address economic issues in the suburban communities as well. Communities like Billerica, for instance, have experienced closures and openings that have impacted the region's workforce appreciably. NMCOG has been able to assist Billerica, Chelmsford, Pepperell, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough and Westford in their economic development efforts, and has provided technical support for the City of Lowell. The economic future of each of these communities is dependent upon what happens economically in the Greater Lowell region, which is where the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee and the Annual CEDS documents have a major impact.

The economic development capacity at NMCOG has grown appreciably since 2004. However, in order to address the "grass-roots" CEDS planning process, the development of the Annual CEDS documents, the technical support for local economic development efforts and the promotion of regional economic development projects, NMCOG will need to hire an Economic Development/Housing Planner to aid the Assistant Director in his economic development tasks. This position can be supported through the use of EDA, DLTA and housing funds and will be instrumental in supporting the activities of NMEDD and completing the EDD application. NMCOG would provide the necessary staff training to ensure that the Economic Development/Housing Planner is familiar with the EDA rules and regulations and would encourage the person to attend EDA sessions on the CEDS process and programmatic instructions. NMCOG will also review special opportunities to utilize outside consultant assistance where it is appropriate and when there are funds to pay for the specific project. In particular, specific information on cluster industries to update and supplement the information that has already been provided would be helpful. We would also be looking for a way to tie together land use, transportation and economic development information to provide the basis for informed future policies and development goals for the region. NMCOG will need to update its *2020 Vision: Planning for Growth in the Northern Middlesex Region* report so that it incorporates more current information and is consistent with the Five-Year CEDS to be developed in 2009.

III. The Regional Economy

This section provides an overview of the current economic conditions in the Greater Lowell region by updating the statistical data provided previously to the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee. By providing this “snapshot” of the regional economy, we can assess the current economic conditions and adjust our policies to address current problems and to build upon the available economic opportunities. The annual re-assessment of the Regional Economy also provides direction for the goal-setting process as well.

The Regional Economy section consists of updated information related to population estimates and projections, employment (unemployment rates, labor force figures, employment projections, closings/layoffs, current employment and tax rates) and the housing market (household projections, housing sales and prices, Chapter 40B inventory and foreclosures). At the conclusion of this section, there is a brief summary of the state of the economy in the Greater Lowell region.

A. Population Estimates and Projections

The U.S. Census released new population estimates for the Greater Lowell region as of July 10, 2008. Based upon these population estimates, the Greater Lowell region experienced a growth rate of 2.1% between the U.S. Census figures (281,225) in April 2000 and the estimated figures (287,132) for July 1, 2007. As outlined in Table 1 below, the decline in population, based upon the estimates, in Lowell (1.6%) was offset by the increases in population in Billerica (7.8%), Chelmsford (0.8%), Dracut (3.3%), Dunstable (16.3%), Pepperell (2.4%), Tewksbury (2.6%), Tyngsborough (7.0%) and Westford (5.0%):

Table 1: Greater Lowell Population Estimates: 2000-2007

Community	2000	7/1/2002	7/1/2003	7/1/2004	7/1/2005	7/1/2006	7/1/2007
Billerica	38,981	39,415	39,425	39,998	40,069	41,391	42,038
Chelmsford	33,858	33,640	33,844	33,810	33,852	33,707	34,128
Dracut	28,562	28,756	28,742	28,716	28,971	29,385	29,498
Dunstable	2,829	2,990	3,051	3,105	3,163	3,222	3,290
Lowell	105,167	104,710	104,213	103,777	103,383	103,229	103,512
Pepperell	11,142	11,386	11,405	11,448	11,439	11,412	11,409
Tewksbury	28,851	29,266	29,200	29,164	29,120	29,418	29,607
Tyngsborough	11,142	11,309	11,302	11,401	11,369	11,542	11,860
Westford	20,754	21,212	21,310	21,501	21,520	21,507	21,790
NMCOG Region	281,286	282,684	282,492	282,920	282,886	284,813	287,132

Source: U. S. Census Population Estimates as of July 10, 2008.

Last year, the Massachusetts Highway Department developed population projections for the region through 2030. These population projections were based upon a statewide model that assigns a specific share to each Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) region and then to its individual communities. NMCOG offered comments on the draft projections and the final projections were adjusted accordingly. Based upon the population projections established by MassHighway, the region was expected to increase its population by 8.1% between 2000 and

2010 and by 22.3% between 2000 and 2030. Outlined below in Table 2 are the population projections for the Greater Lowell region and its individual communities:

Table 2: Greater Lowell Population Projections: 2000-2030

Community	2000	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Billerica	38,981	40,020	40,470	41,090	41,650	42,150
Chelmsford	33,858	34,920	35,460	36,110	36,900	37,500
Dracut	28,562	33,408	34,700	36,900	38,100	40,300
Dunstable	2,829	3,780	4,300	4,850	5,490	6,120
Lowell	105,167	108,210	109,790	111,200	112,010	113,270
Pepperell	11,142	14,150	17,120	18,660	20,300	22,450
Tewksbury	28,851	30,915	31,700	32,300	32,500	33,270
Tyngsborough	11,142	13,430	14,610	15,400	16,200	17,400
Westford	20,754	24,807	26,350	28,490	29,350	31,340
NMCOG Region	281,286	303,640	314,500	325,000	332,500	343,800

Source: 2000 U.S. Census; projections by MassHighway in consultation with NMCOG

In comparison to the U.S. Census population estimates, the MassHighway projections seem to underestimate the growth in Billerica and overestimate the growth in the City of Lowell. The population estimates for Billerica in July 2007 total 42,038, while the population projections for 2010 total only 40,020. Similarly, while the U.S. Census population estimates for July 2007 indicate a population decline to 103,542 for the City of Lowell, the population projections developed by MassHighway reflected a population increase to 108,210 in 2010. Similar discrepancies exist with the other communities as the population projections show increases in every period for every community.

In order to compare the population estimates with the population projections, Table 3 below summarizes the population growth rates for the NMCOG region and the individual communities within the region. By comparing the 2000-2007 and 2000-2010 columns, the differences between the population estimates developed by the U.S. Census and the population projections developed by MassHighway become readily apparent:

Table 3: Growth Rates by Community and Region

Community	1990-2000	2000-2007	2000-2010	2000-2020	2000-2030
Billerica	3.6%	7.8%	2.7%	5.4%	8.1%
Chelmsford	4.6%	0.8%	3.1%	6.7%	10.8%
Dracut	11.6%	3.3%	17.0%	29.2%	41.1%
Dunstable	26.5%	16.3%	33.6%	71.4%	116.3%
Lowell	1.7%	-1.6%	2.9%	5.7%	7.7%
Pepperell	10.3%	2.4%	27.0%	66.9%	101.5%
Tewksbury	5.8%	2.6%	7.2%	12.0%	15.3%
Tyngsborough	28.2%	7.0%	20.5%	39.0%	56.2%
Westford	26.6%	5.0%	19.5%	37.3%	51.0%
NMCOG Region	6.7%	2.1%	8.1%	15.6%	22.3%

*Source: U.S. Census for 1990 and 2000 and Population Estimates for July 1, 2007
Projections for 2010, 2020 and 2030 developed by the Massachusetts Highway Department*

B. Employment

The employment situation in the Greater Lowell region has been stabilized since the early 2000's when there were extensive layoffs in the information technology and computer manufacturing sectors. However, according to Professor Andrew Sum at the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, the growth rate in the civilian labor force in Massachusetts ranked last among all states at -1.7% between 2002 and 2005. Between 2002 and 2006, the labor force growth rate was 0.2%, which ranked last in New England behind Vermont (8.3%), Maine (6.7%), New Hampshire (6.6%), Rhode Island (6.3%) and Connecticut (6.1%). During the six year period from July 2000 to July 2006, Massachusetts ranked 47th of all states in terms of population growth (1.2%), as compared to the U.S. population growth rate of 6%. This limited growth in population was attributed to high levels of domestic out-migration (232,945 residents between 2000 and 2005) being only partially offset by the high level of international migration (153,980 people between 2000 and 2005). Only two other states – Louisiana (due to Hurricane Katrina) and New York – had higher net levels of domestic out-migration. The states benefiting from this mass out-migration from Massachusetts between 2003 and 2005 included Florida, New Hampshire, Texas, North Carolina, Maine, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington and Illinois. As a result of these factors, the educational attainment levels of the current labor force have shifted considerably and offer new challenges for private industry and the workforce development and educational systems in the Commonwealth.

This section provides an overview of the labor force, employment levels and unemployment rates of the Greater Lowell region in comparison to the state and the nation as a whole. Employment projections developed by the Massachusetts Highway Department are compared to the actual employment levels through June 2008. The listing of closings developed by the Rapid Response Team in Massachusetts shows that there have been fewer closings recently than occurred in the 2004-2006 period. The major employers in the region, as identified by the *Lowell Sun* in March 2008 are compared to those identified in March 2007. Updated information on the number of establishments, employment levels and average wage rates by community is also provided. The current tax rates for FY 08 are also included.



In March 2008, electronics manufacturer Jabil Circuit, Incorporated (pictured left), laid thirty workers off from its Billerica facility.

Source: Pictometry International (2008)

Labor Force

The Greater Lowell labor force increased by 1.4% between 2007 and June 2008-- a rate which was comparable to the 1.5% increase at the state level for the same period. Every community in the NMCOC region experienced an increase in their labor force, ranging from 0.5 % in Dracut to 1.4 % in Lowell. This represented a turnaround from the 2005 to May 2007 situation. Listed below in Table 4 are the updated labor force figures for the Greater Lowell region and individual communities:

Table 4: Labor Force Levels by Community and Region

Community	2005 Annual	2006 Annual	2007 Annual	June 2008	Percent Change, 2007- June 2008
Billerica	22,261	22,385	23,034	23,194	0.7%
Chelmsford	18,855	18,975	18,133	18,998	4.8%
Dracut	16,246	16,342	16,530	16,620	0.5%
Dunstable	1,811	1,823	1,852	1,863	0.6%
Lowell	49,988	50,106	49,716	50,433	1.4%
Pepperell	6,454	6,449	6,417	6,471	0.8%
Tewksbury	16,475	16,556	16,650	16,757	0.6%
Tyngsborough	6,347	6,381	6,467	6,505	0.6%
Westford	11,694	11,775	11,721	11,795	0.6%
NMCOG Region	150,131	150,792	150,520	152,636	1.4%
Massachusetts	3,374,200	3,404,400	3,408,200	3,458,200	1.5%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment Security

Employment Levels

The employment levels in the region, based upon community employment figures, increased from 142,496 in 2005 to 144,384 in 2007, or by 1.3%. However, the employment levels increased only by 0.02% between 2007 (144,384) and June 2008 (144,411). Within this period of time, the employment levels for each community were consistent, except for Pepperell, whose employment level increased by 46 or 0.7%. Outlined below in Table 5 are the employment figures for the region.

Table 5: Employment Levels for the NMCOG Region

Community	2005 Average	2006 Average	2007 Average	June 2008	Percent Change, 2007- June 2008
Billerica	21,237	21,351	22,072	22,069	-0.01%
Chelmsford	18,099	18,197	18,133	18,131	-0.01%
Dracut	15,449	15,531	15,765	15,763	-0.01%
Dunstable	1,747	1,756	1,791	1,790	-0.06%
Lowell	46,764	47,015	46,978	46,972	-0.01%
Pepperell	6,186	6,179	6,180	6,226	0.7%
Tewksbury	15,702	15,786	15,960	15,958	-0.01%
Tyngsborough	6,065	6,098	6,195	6,194	-0.02%
Westford	11,247	11,307	11,310	11,308	-0.02%
NMCOG Region	142,496	143,220	144,384	144,411	.002%
Massachusetts	3,211,000	3,234,900	3,255,600	3,274,300	0.6%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment Security

As shown on the previous page, the state employment levels increased by 1.4% between 2005 and 2007 and by only 0.6% between 2007 and June 2008.

As with the population projections, MassHighway developed employment projections for the Greater Lowell region through a “top-down” approach that utilizes employment projections for the state as a whole and then assigns shares of these figures to the MPO regions and individual communities within those regions. Based upon this approach, the employment projections for the state are more accurate than those for the regions or individual communities. Outlined below in Table 6 are the employment projections for the Greater Lowell region through 2030.

Table 6: Employment Projections for the Greater Lowell Region

Community	2000	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Billerica	20,862	28,796	28,965	29,080	29,111	28,930
Chelmsford	15,711	24,670	24,910	25,105	25,200	25,100
Dracut	4,927	5,460	5,619	5,725	5,810	5,920
Dunstable	258	354	401	455	475	520
Lowell	36,185	39,990	41,541	43,314	44,065	45,170
Pepperell	1,685	1,770	1,804	1,893	1,952	2,000
Tewksbury	18,003	19,370	19,601	19,800	19,837	19,930
Tyngsborough	4,476	5,203	5,679	5,882	5,950	6,200
Westford	11,997	14,987	15,780	16,546	16,700	17,530
NMCOG Region	114,404	140,600	144,300	147,800	149,100	151,300

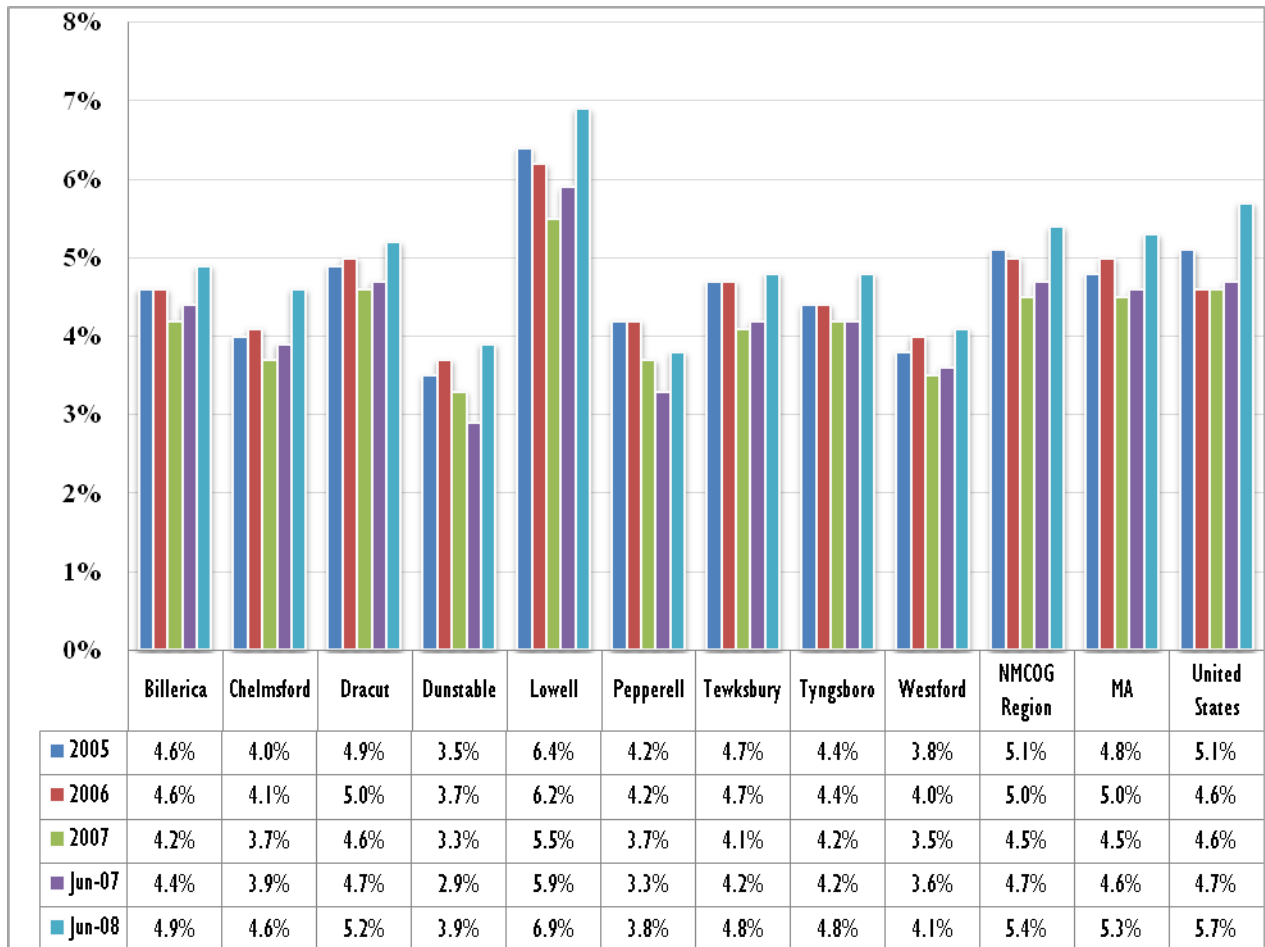
Source: 2000 U.S. Census; projections by MassHighway in consultation with NMCOG

Unemployment Rates and Per Capita Income

The unemployment rate for the Greater Lowell region increased from 4.7% in June 2007 to 5.4% in June 2008. Overall the unemployment rates for the region have been consistent and generally have been slightly higher than the state unemployment rates. However, due to the major layoffs in industries not associated with Massachusetts or the region, such as the automobile industry, the national unemployment rate grew from 4.7% in June 2007 to 5.7% in June 2008. During the twenty-four month period from July 2006 to June 2008, the national unemployment rate was 4.7%, while the Massachusetts unemployment rate was 4.6%. The City of Lowell, which had an unemployment rate of 5.7% for the same twenty-four month period, exceeded the national unemployment rate by 1%. In June 2008 the unemployment rate for the City of Lowell (6.9%) was 1.2% higher than the national unemployment rate (5.7%). Summarized on the next page in Figure 1 are the unemployment rates for the NMCOG region, the state, the nation and the individual communities within the NMCOG region.

As outlined in the *Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008*, the City of Lowell is slightly above 80% of the national per capita income figure for 2000. However, the majority of Census Tracts in the City of Lowell are well below the 80% national per capita income figure and the following Census Tracts are eligible for EDA funding based upon their 2000 per capital income figures: 3101, 3103-3105, 3107-3113, 3117-3121 and 3124. No other Census Tracts or communities meet the per capital income criteria for EDA funding.

Figure 1: Unemployment Rates for 2005, 2006, 2007 and June 2007 and 2008



Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment Security

Plant Layoffs

The suburban communities in the region have been largely impacted by the number of layoffs experienced by private firms located within their community. These layoffs impact not only the community where the private firm is located, but also the communities in the region where the employees reside. Companies have a responsibility to notify the Commonwealth’s Rapid Response Team of impending layoffs and this information is provided to the public as part of the federal WARN System. The number of layoffs in the region (800) during 2007 and 2008 was significantly lower than those reported in the Five-Year CEDS or in the 2004-2006 period, however, the impact of job losses at Schott Solar and Nutcracker Brands in Billerica, Mercury Computer Systems and Kronos, Inc. in Chelmsford, Joan Fabrics in Lowell and Tyngsborough, Adden Furniture and M/A COM, Inc. in Lowell and the DJ Reardon Company in Tewksbury remain significant. Outlined in Table 7 on the next page are the documented layoffs in the NMCOG region, according to the Massachusetts Rapid Response Team.

Table 7: Layoffs in the NMCOCG Region

Community	Company	Effective Date	Employees Affected
Billerica	Schott Solar, Inc.*	6/27/2007	200
	Jabil Circuit	3/28/2008	30
	GSI Lumonics Trust Inc.	4/28/2008	8
	Nutcracker Brands	5/1/2008	90
Chelmsford	Mercury Computer Systems	6/28/2007	65
	Daily Racing Form	5/17/2008	7
	Fidelity National Information	5/22/2008	30
	Kronos Inc.	9/30/2008	87
Lowell	Joan Fabrics	4/27/2007	90
	M/A COM, Inc.	9/30/2007	30
	Adden Furniture	2/19/2008	70
	Microsemi Microwave Products	4/11/2008	8
	Adden Furniture	6/1/2008	13
Tewksbury	DJ Reardon Company	7/14/2008	56
Tyngsborough	Joan Fabrics	6/11/2007	25
Westford	Alcatel Lucent	11/30/2007	3
Total Layoffs			812

*Schott Solar, Inc. decided to remain in Billerica.

Source: Massachusetts Rapid Response Team

Businesses

The number of businesses in the Greater Lowell region increased from 6,999 in the third quarter of 2006 to 7,016 in the third quarter of 2007 for an overall increase of 0.2%, which was less than the 1 % increase in businesses at the state level for the same period. Average monthly employment increased by 4.7% in the NMCOCG region during this period of time and the average weekly wage increased by 7.2%. At the state level, the average monthly employment increased by only 1.3%, while the average weekly wage increased by only 5.5%. Specific information on the establishments, employment and wages for the NMCOCG region and its communities is summarized in Table 8 on the next page.



Between 2006 and 2007, there was a slight increase in the total number of establishments across the region. The Learning Experience (pictured left) is one such business. Established in Chelmsford in 2007, The Learning Experience, a woman and minority owned business, is a child care center that employs twenty people and boasts sales between \$500,000 and \$1 million per year.

Source: ReferenceUSA and Pictometry International (2008)

Table 8: Establishments, Employment and Wages for the NMCOG Region

Community	Number of Establishments		Average Monthly Employment		Average Weekly Wages	
	2006 (Q3)	2007 (Q3)	2006 (Q3)	2007 (Q3)	2006 (Q3)	2007 (Q3)
BillERICA	1,181	1,190	22,897	22,800	\$1,172	\$1,276
ChELMSford	1,154	1,138	21,350	21,065	\$1,055	\$1,096
Dracut	596	595	4,888	4,942	\$716	\$715
Dunstable	55	57	282	274	\$581	\$593
Lowell	1,936	1,946	32,974	33,003	\$859	\$916
Pepperell	233	229	1,440	1,499	\$615	\$643
Tewksbury	817	835	15,417	15,620	\$1,040	\$1,079
Tyngsborough	376	374	4,391	4,525	\$625	\$671
Westford	651	652	11,334	11,791	\$1,358	\$1,563
NMCOG Region	6,999	7,016	114,973	115,519	\$1013*	\$1,086
Massachusetts	208,821	210,902	3,197,357	3,240,481	\$950	\$1,002

Source: ES-202 Reports * Estimate

Industry Composition

In analyzing the industry composition for the Greater Lowell region, the region consisted principally of industries in the service-providing domain, as opposed to the goods-producing domain. In terms of total establishments, more than 3.6 times the number of establishments were in the service-providing domain as the goods-producing domain. Within the service-providing domain, Trade, Transportation & Utilities (23.2%), Professional & Business Services (22%), Other Services (18.8%) and Education and Health Service (12%) establishments comprised more than two-thirds of the service-providing establishments. Construction (72.7%) and Manufacturing (26.5%) establishments dominated the goods-producing domain.

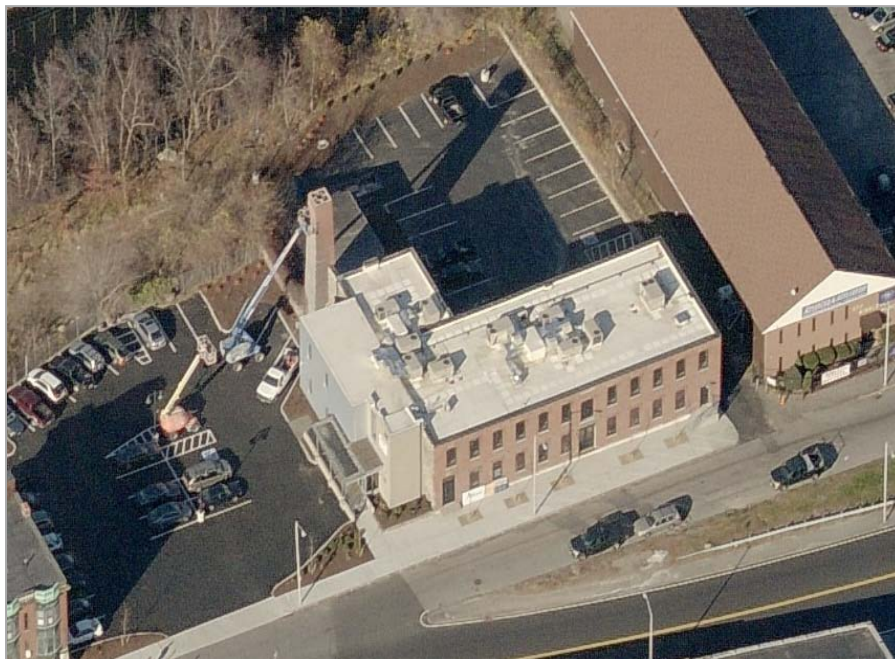
In terms of Average Monthly Employment, the ratio between the service-providing domain and the goods-producing domain was slightly less at 3.5 times. Education (26.4%), Trade, Transportation & Utilities (24%), Professional & Business Services (18.7%) and Leisure and Hospitality (11%) comprised more than 80% of total monthly employment in the service-providing domain. Manufacturing (72.9%) and Construction (26.4%) comprised the major employment components of the goods-producing domain.

The Average Weekly Wage for all industries was \$ 1,146, while the goods-producing domain paid an average weekly wage of \$ 1,485 and the service-provided domain paid only \$ 1,018. The highest salaries were paid in the Information (\$ 1,777), Manufacturing (\$ 1,666), Professional & Business Services (\$ 1,569) and Public Administration (\$ 1,075) sectors, as shown in Table 9 on the following page.

Table 9: Composition of Industry in the NMCOG Region by NAICS Code for 2007

	Establishments		Average Monthly Employment		Average Weekly Wages
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number
Total, All Industries	7,018	100.0%	116,400	100.0%	\$1,146
Goods Producing Domain	1,509	21.5%	26,029	22.4%	\$1,485
Natural Resources and Mining	12	0.8%	199	0.8%	\$897*
Construction	1,097	72.7%	6,862	26.4%	\$1,002
Manufacturing	400	26.5%	18,969	72.9%	\$1,666
Service Providing Domain	5,509	78.5%	90,370	77.6%	\$1,018
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1,277	23.2%	21,695	24.0%	\$923
Information	116	2.1%	5,876	6.5%	\$1,777
Financial Activities	476	8.6%	3,916	4.3%	\$1,012
Professional and Business Services	1,212	22.0%	16,890	18.7%	\$1,569
Education and Health Services	652	12.0%	23,890	26.4%	\$867
Leisure and Hospitality	635	11.5%	9,938	11.0%	\$327
Other Services	1,037	18.8%	4,047	4.5%	\$683
Public Administration	94	1.7%	4,119	4.6%	\$1,075

*Source: ES-202 Reports * Estimate*



The Greater Lowell region was once a thriving manufacturing and industrial center. Over the decades, the region's economy has largely transformed from being industry and manufacturing- centered to service-oriented. Public officials and the private sector have been working to adaptively reuse many of the mills and factories in the region, such as the former Davis and Sargeant Building (pictured left), which was redeveloped by Nobis Engineering, Inc., into their new Lowell office in 2008. The redevelopment of this property represents the first LEED Historic Brownfields Mill Building project in the City of Lowell.

Source: Nobis, Incorporated and Pictometry International (2008)

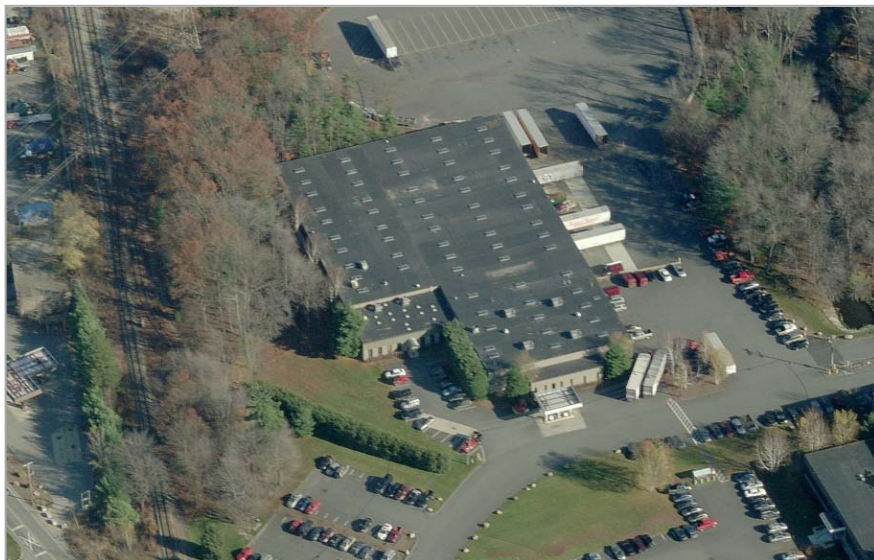
Major Employers

Based upon information developed by the *Lowell Sun* in March 2008, the major employers for 2008 are compared to those identified in 2007 in Table 10 below:

Table 10: Major Employers in the NMCOG Region: 2007 and 2008

Rank	Employer (2007)	Employees	Employer (2008)	Employees
1	Raytheon	8,000	Raytheon	8,000
2	DeMoulas Supermarkets	5,500	DeMoulas Supermarkets	5,500
3	BAE Systems	5,200	BAE Systems	5,000
4	Lahey Clinic	4,355	Lahey Clinic	4,000
5	United Parcel Service	2,300	United Parcel Service	2,200
6	Teradyne Inc.	1,850	Mitre Corp.	1,976
7	Mitre Corp.	1,829	Lowell General Hospital	1,810
8	Emerson Hospital	1,686	Teradyne Inc.	1,800
9	Lowell General Hospital	1,680	Cisco Systems	1,625
10	M/A Com Inc.	1,675	Analog Devices, Inc.	1,600
11	Analog Devices, Inc.	1,650	Verizon Communications	1,600
12	Verizon Communications	1,600	Sun Microsystems	1,600
13	Sun Microsystems	1,550	Emerson Hospital	1,560
14	Cisco Systems	1,500	Hannaford Bros.	1,500
15	Kronos Inc.	1,500	Saints Medical Center	1,400
16	Hannaford Bros.	1,500	Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.	1,350
17	Saints Medical Center	1,497	The Home Depot, Inc.	1,350
18	Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.	1,350	Kronos Inc.	1,300
19	The Home Depot, Inc.	1,300	Millipore Corporation	1,142
20	N/A	N/A	Tyco Electronics, Ltd.	1,100

Source: The Lowell Sun, March 2007 and March 2008



DeMoulas Supermarkets (Tewksbury headquarters pictured left) consistently ranks as one of the major employers for the region. In both 2007 and 2008, the regional supermarket chain was named the second largest regional employer by the Lowell Sun. The company employs 5,500 full and part-time workers.

Source: Pictometry International (2008)

Current Tax Rates

The setting of the tax rates can provide a balance between the property tax generated by homeowners and the taxes provided by the business community. Outlined in Table 11 below are the updated tax rates for the communities in the Greater Lowell region:

Table 11: Fiscal Year 2008 Tax Rates by Class for the Greater Lowell Region

Community	Residential	Open Space	Commercial	Industrial	Personal Property
Billerica	\$11.02	-	\$24.75	\$24.75	\$24.75
Chelmsford	\$13.50	-	\$13.50	\$13.50	\$13.50
Dracut	\$10.55	-	\$10.55	\$10.55	\$10.55
Dunstable	\$11.64	-	\$11.64	\$11.64	\$11.64
Lowell	\$10.60	-	\$21.27	\$21.27	\$21.27
Pepperell	\$10.06	-	\$10.06	\$10.06	\$10.06
Tewksbury	\$10.45	\$10.45	\$19.21	\$19.21	\$19.21
Tyngsborough	\$11.71	-	\$11.71	\$11.71	\$11.71
Westford	\$13.40	-	\$13.58	\$13.58	\$13.40

Rate per \$ 1,000 Valuation

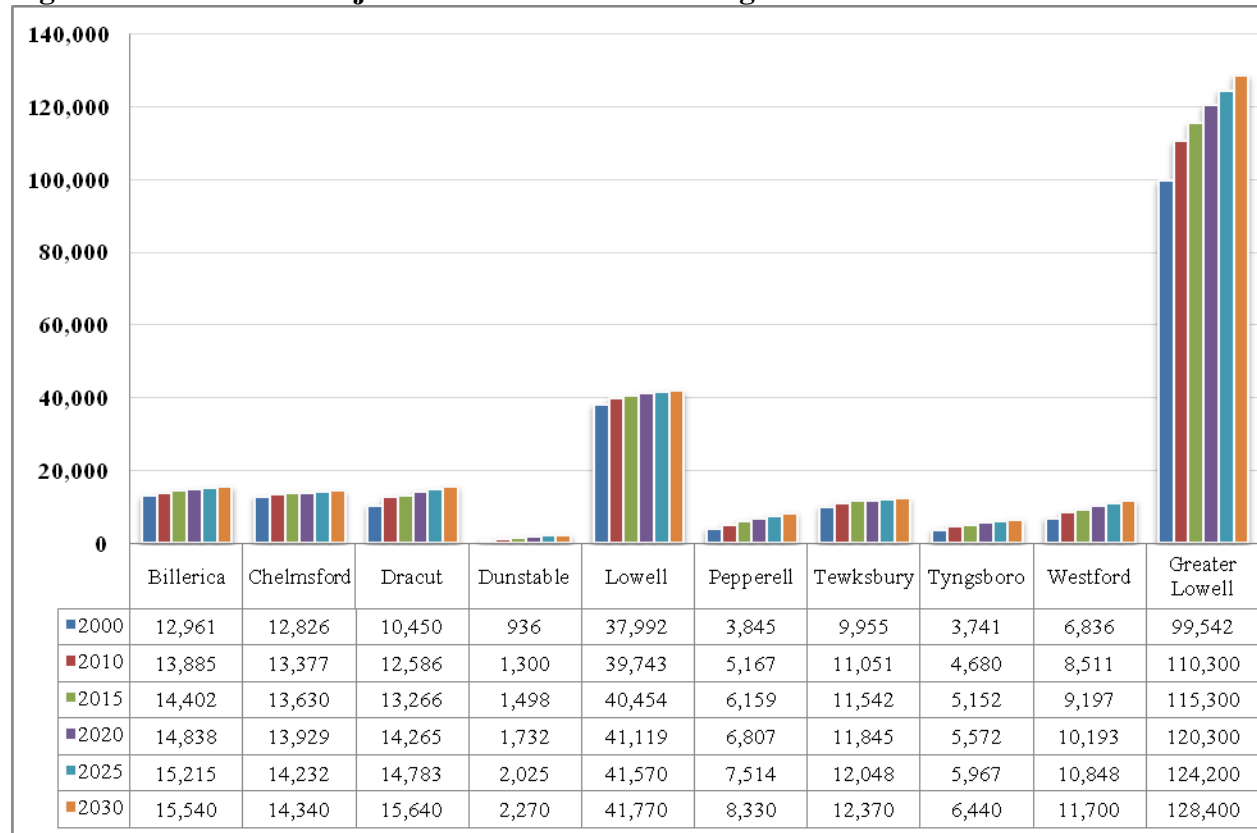
Source: Mass. Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services

C. Housing Market

The cost and availability of housing in the Greater Lowell region remains a major barrier to economic growth of the region. Without the availability of affordable housing for its workforce, private firms cannot retain their jobs or expand their workforce. Since the publication of the *Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008*, the housing sector has been the most impacted sector within the region's economy. The number of housing units built and sold has been reduced and the cost of housing has begun to show the impacts of this slowdown. While the number of housing units built for low- and moderate-income families under Chapter 40B has increased in the region, the sale of market-rate housing units has slowed due to increased mortgage costs and declining and aging populations. Foreclosure petitions in the region have increased by more than 409% between FY'07 and FY'08. These collective issues make the state of housing in the region the most problematic area for the expansion of the regional economy.

As with the population and employment projections completed by the Massachusetts Highway Department, the household projections were developed to show the growth of households in the Greater Lowell region. Households are defined by the U.S. Census as being equivalent to "occupied housing units". According to the projections developed by MassHighway, the number of households in the Greater Lowell region was expected to increase from 99,542 in 2000 to 128,400 in 2030. Based upon these projections, Lowell's share of households would be reduced from 38.2% in 2000 to 32.5% in 2030. Other communities with decreasing shares of the households in the region were Billerica, Chelmsford and Tewksbury. Summarized in Figure 2 on the following page are the household projections for the Greater Lowell region.

Figure 2: Household Projections for the NMCOG Region: 2000- 2030



Source: 2000 U.S. Census; projections by MassHighway in consultation with NMCOG

According to the household projections, the number of households in the Greater Lowell region will increase by 20.9% between 2000 and 2020 and 29.3% between 2000 and 2030. In analyzing the household projection figures, the largest household growth areas are anticipated to be in Dracut, Dunstable, Pepperell, Tyngsborough and Westford. Outlined below in Table 12 are the percentage changes between 2000 and 2020 and 2000 and 2030 for the Greater Lowell region and its individual communities.

Table 12: Households in the NMCOG Region – 2000, 2020 and 2030

Community	2000	2020	Percent Change 2000-2020	2030	Percent Change 2000-2030
Billerica	12,961	14,838	14.5%	15,540	20.3%
Chelmsford	12,826	13,929	8.6%	14,340	11.9%
Dracut	10,450	14,265	36.5%	15,640	49.7%
Dunstable	936	1,732	85.0%	2,270	145.9%
Lowell	37,992	41,119	8.2%	41,770	10.2%
Pepperell	3,845	6,807	77.0%	8,330	116.5%
Tewksbury	9,955	11,845	19.0%	12,370	24.1%
Tyngsborough	3,741	5,572	48.9%	6,440	72.6%
Westford	6,836	10,193	49.1%	11,700	71.9%
NMCOG Region	99,542	120,300	20.9%	128,400	29.3%

Source: U.S. Census for 2000

Projections for 2020 and 2030 developed by the Massachusetts Highway Department

The Greater Lowell region has shown some progress in addressing the affordable housing goals established by former Governor Michael Dukakis through Executive Order 418. As of April 6, 2007, the Greater Lowell region had 8,479 subsidized housing units, or 8.34% of the year-round housing units documented in the 2000 U.S. Census. More than 61.7% of these subsidized units were located in the City of Lowell. As of July 2008, the subsidized housing inventory in the Greater Lowell region had grown by 6.4% to 9,020 units, as documented by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED), and Lowell's share of the region's subsidized housing units had been reduced to 58%. Outlined below in Table 13 are the subsidized housing unit comparisons for each community in the Greater Lowell region.

Table 13: Subsidized Housing Units in the Greater Lowell Region

Community	2000 Census Year-Round Units	Chap. 40B Units (as of 4/07)	Chap. 40B Units (as of 7/08)	Percent 40B Units (as of 7/08)
Billerica	13,055	640	649	5.0%
Chelmsford	12,981	885	885	6.8%
Dracut	10,597	614	614	5.8%
Dunstable	933	0	0	0
Lowell	39,381	5,231	5,231	13.3%
Pepperell	3,905	122	122	3.1%
Tewksbury	10,125	512	921	9.1%
Tyngsborough	3,784	292	292	7.7%
Westford	6,877	183	306	4.4%
NMCOG Region	101,638	8,479	9,020	8.9%

Source: Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development



The Village at Merrimac Landing in Tyngsborough (pictured left) was constructed between 2006 and 2007, and the first townhouse condominiums were sold in 2006. All of the condos are two bedroom units, and eight of the units were sold at the restricted price of \$155,000. The average selling price for market rate units was \$285,426.

Source: Pictometry International (2008)

The Massachusetts housing market has changed significantly during the past three years. Beginning in February 2005, the sales of single-family homes in Massachusetts have fallen in 36 out of 39 months, according to the Warren Report. The number of sales of single-family homes in Massachusetts declined by 29.8% between 2004 and 2007. Sales of single-family homes dropped even more, according to the Warren Report, when the “credit crisis” hit in July 2007. This contributed to a total sales decline statewide of more than 20% in the first part of 2008 and a decline in sales in the Merrimack Valley of 19.1% during the same period of time. Median prices of single-family homes have been declining for 26 months in Massachusetts, while the Merrimack Valley has lost 10% in median prices during the first four months of 2008. Professor Ross Gittell of the University of New Hampshire projected a 14% decline in housing prices for Massachusetts between 2005 and mid-May 2008, the largest decline in New England. Professor Gittell predicted that housing prices wouldn’t return to their peak until 2010 and Professor Adam Clayton-Matthews of the University of Massachusetts argued that these price declines were good for the Massachusetts economy. Professor Matthews predicted that Massachusetts would not recover its lost jobs from the early 2000s until 2011.

These housing conditions can be seen in the Greater Lowell housing market as well. The sale of single-family homes in the region declined from 2,177 homes in 2006 to 1,783 homes in 2007, or by 18.1%, while the median sales prices increased from \$ 325,598 in 2006 to \$ 337,324 in 2007, or by 3.6%. Condo sales decreased from 1,495 in 2006 to 1,359 in 2007, or by 9.1%, and their median sales prices decreased from \$ 225,629 in 2006 to \$ 200,740 in 2007, or by 11%. The sale of all housing units declined from 4,585 in 2006 to 3,804 in 2007, or by 17% (887 units), while the median sales prices decreased from \$ 290,022 in 2006 to \$ 289,175 in 2007 (-0.3%). Summarized in Table 14 below are the Housing Sales and Median Sales Prices for the region in 2007.

Table 14: 2007 Housing Sales and Median Sales Prices in the NMCOG Region

Community	2007 Single Family Sales	2007 Single Family Median Sales Prices	2007 Condo Sales	2007 Condo Median Sales Prices	All Housing Sales in 2007	All Housing Median Sales Prices in 2007
Billerica	319	\$ 342,500	105	\$ 195,000	504	\$ 335,000
Chelmsford	274	\$ 353,500	186	\$242,250	502	\$310,000
Dracut	184	\$ 285,000	146	\$179,950	393	\$242,000
Dunstable	19	\$ 399,900	0	0	25	\$415,000
Lowell	413	\$ 251,000	564	\$175,000	1,263	\$228,500
Pepperell	81	\$ 322,500	18	\$168,500	126	\$300,000
Tewksbury	187	\$ 338,500	169	\$265,000	410	\$309,950
Tyngsboro	88	\$ 381,100	51	\$182,000	201	\$320,000
Westford	218	\$ 498,500	120	\$210,000	380	\$400,750
NMCOG Region	1,783	\$ 337,324 (estimate)	1,359	\$ 200,740 (estimate)	3,804	\$ 289,175 (estimate)

Source: Warren Group

Even though the data for 2008 is limited to six months (January to June), the trends in the decline in sales and median sales prices (with the exception of condo prices) can be readily seen in Table 15 on the next page.

Table 15: 2008 (Jan-June) Housing Sales and Median Sales Prices in the NMCOG Region

Community	2008 Single Family Sales	2008 Single Family Median Sales Prices	2008 Condo Sales	2008 Condo Median Sales Prices	All Housing Sales in 2008	All Housing Median Sales Prices in 2008
Billerica	132	\$ 315,000	37	\$ 244,900	196	\$ 315,000
Chelmsford	120	\$319,500	72	\$219,250	210	\$272,000
Dracut	88	\$264,000	41	\$165,000	155	\$234,000
Dunstable	11	\$413,000	0	\$0	12	\$399,000
Lowell	183	\$196,000	59	\$165,000	501	\$183,900
Pepperell	25	\$310,000	3	\$87,500	45	\$293,000
Tewksbury	92	\$319,450	61	\$280,700	171	\$310,000
Tyngsboro	29	\$328,750	14	\$173,500	71	\$260,626
Westford	73	\$430,000	57	\$259,900	146	\$338,950
NMCOG Region	753	\$ 294,324 (estimate)	454	\$ 227,310 (estimate)	1,507	\$ 256,296 (estimate)

Source: Warren Group

For comparison purposes, one would expect the sales figures in 2008 to be half of the 2007 data to maintain a consistent trend. However, sales of single-family homes for the region in 2008 (753) represented only 42.2% of the total single-family sales in 2007. The sale of condominiums in 2008 was barely a third of the 2007 level, while the sale of all housing units in the first six months of 2008 was only 39.6% of the total housing sales in 2007. Reflecting the decline in sales for 2007 and the first six months of 2008, the single family median sales prices fell by 12.7% between 2007 and the first half of 2008. The median sales prices for condominiums actually increased from \$ 200,740 in 2007 to \$ 227,310 in the first half of 2008, or by 13.2%. The median sales prices for all housing sales decreased from \$ 289,175 in 2007 to \$ 256,296 in the first half of 2008, or by 11.4%.

Compared below in Table 16 are the housing sales and median sales prices for the NMCOG region in 2003, 2006, 2007 and 2008 (January to June). More detailed information on historic housing data by community is available on page 94 of the *Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008*.

Table 16: Housing Sales and Median Sales Prices Comparison for the NMCOG Region

NMCOG Region	Single Family Sales	Single Family Median Sales Prices (estimate)	Condo Sales	Condo Median Sales Prices (estimate)	All Housing Sales	All Housing Median Sales Prices (estimate)
2003	2,792	\$ 297,679	1,465	\$ 192,000	5,472	\$ 266,398
2006	2,177	\$ 325,598	1,495	\$ 225,629	4,585	\$ 290,022
2007	1,783	\$ 337,324	1,359	\$ 200,740	3,804	\$ 289,175
2008 (January- June)	753	\$ 294,324	454	\$ 227,310	1,507	\$ 256,296

Source: Warren Group

Through information provided by the Warren Group, foreclosure petition data for July 2006 to June 2007 and July 2007 to June 2008 are summarized below in Table 17. The number of foreclosure petitions in the region increased from 172 in FY'07 to 876 in FY'08, or by 409.3%. The City of Lowell accounted for nearly half of the total foreclosure petitions in the region in FY'08, yet the suburban communities saw significant increases in their foreclosure petitions.

Table 17: Foreclosure petitions in the NMCOG Region (7/06-6/08)

Community	7/06- 06/07 Number of Records	7/06- 06/07 Percent of Region	7/07- 06/08 Number of Records	7/07- 06/08 Percent of Region
Billerica	28	16.3%	114	13.0%
Chelmsford	17	9.9%	58	6.6%
Dracut	27	15.7%	113	12.9%
Dunstable	1	0.6%	7	0.8%
Lowell	66	38.4%	420	47.9%
Pepperell	5	2.9%	19	2.2%
Tewksbury	16	9.3%	89	10.2%
Tyngsborough	4	2.3%	29	3.3%
Westford	8	4.7%	27	3.1%
NMCOG Region	172	100.0%	876	100.0%

Source: Warren Group

The Greater Lowell economy has yet to feel the full effects of the housing crisis, increasing fuel costs, or rising unemployment rolls. However, as outlined in the Housing Market component, the increases in foreclosures will likely have a negative impact upon the regional economy. The City of Lowell still has an unemployment rate more than 1% greater than the national unemployment rate and will require additional private investment. The Town of Billerica has experienced business growth and closures at the same time, which requires both skill training and layoff assistance simultaneously. The continued involvement of these Greater Lowell communities in the Annual CEDS process will help to address these problems in the future.

IV. Regional Development Projects

This section of the Annual CEDS Update for 2008 focuses upon the Priority Projects and Major Development Projects in the region that have an economic impact upon the Greater Lowell economy. The first section outlines the CEDS Priority Project RFP Process that included the active involvement of the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee and input from our member communities regarding critical projects that were important to their development. The CEDS Priority Project RFP package consisted of a cover letter, Priority Project criteria and a one-page project description form. In the case of those projects under consideration for EDA funding, the FY'2008 EDA Investment Policy Guidelines were made available as part of our overall criteria for the selection of Priority Projects. The CEDS Priority Project List, which consists of Short-term, Intermediate and Long-term projects, is included as part of this section as well. Those projects under consideration for EDA funding are marked with an asterisk. A one-page summary of those Priority Projects from the 2004 Five-Year CEDS that have been completed, are under way, or dropped is also included.

The Major Development Projects are those projects in the region that have a significant economic impact upon the region. These projects contribute to the regional economy through infrastructure investments or technical assistance to local communities. These investments will lead to additional projects in the future and address the goals established in the 2004 Five-Year CEDS. The Major Development Projects included in this document are the Hamilton Canal, Lowell Junction, Expedited Permitting, the Creative Economy, Tyngsborough Town Center Revitalization, the Downtown Lowell Renaissance Plan, the Pepperell Paper Mill Site Redevelopment Project and the I-495 Corridor Transportation Study.

The CEDS Action Steps for 2009 summarize the objectives for the 2009 CEDS Program Year in addressing the role of NMCOG as a partner to EDA and the ten goals developed in the 2004 Five-Year CEDS. The principal roles for NMCOG in its partnership arrangement with EDA include the establishment of an ongoing comprehensive, coordinated “grass-roots” planning process, the provision of technical support to local communities for their economic development efforts and the promotion of regional economic development projects. The goals addressed include those related to Economic Development, Workforce Development, Education, Affordable Housing, Racial and Ethnic Diversity, Pockets of Distress, Regional Transportation System, Quality of Life, Technology and Financial Investments. With the development of a new Five-Year CEDS in 2009, these goals may change based upon the “grass-roots” input received at the public Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) sessions.

A. CEDS Priority Project RFP Process

The Greater Lowell CEDS Committee worked with NMCOG staff to develop the CEDS Priority Project RFP package that was mailed to the Greater Lowell communities. Consistent with what had been done in the past, NMCOG staff asked the local communities to update their information on existing Priority Projects and to submit complete information on new projects. The CEDS Priority Project RFP package was submitted to the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee for their review and approval. At their meeting of April 8, 2008, the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee approved the CEDS Priority Project RFP package for distribution to the local communities. The deadline for the submission of Priority Projects was established as of May 2, 2008. NMCOG

staff communicated with staff at the local level to update the projects and understand the components of the new projects being submitted.

NMCOG staff originally worked with the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee in 2004 to develop the project criteria for inclusion on the CEDS Priority Project List. The criteria were established based upon the EDA Investment Policy Guidelines and the additional criteria – regional, community, job creation/workforce development, and project readiness- which are important to development in this region. All Priority Projects need to meet these criteria and are then categorized based upon the expected timeframe to complete the specific project. Short-term projects were expected to be implemented within 12-18 months, while Intermediate projects (2-4 years) and Long-term projects (5+ years) were expected to take much longer. These Priority Projects addressed at least one of the goals established in the 2004 Five-Year CEDS and NMCOG encouraged the movement of these projects from Long-term to Intermediate to Short-term status over the five-year period.

The Priority Projects List for 2008 was approved by the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee at their August 19, 2008 meeting and subsequently approved by the NMCOG Council at their August 20, 2008 meeting. A listing of the Priority Projects for 2008 is included in this section. Additional material is available in the Appendix on the CEDS Priority Project RFP package and the approvals of these materials and the final Priority Projects List at the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee and NMCOG Council meetings.

B. EDA Investment Policy Guidelines

NMCOG utilizes the established EDA Investment Policy Guidelines whenever it is applying for EDA funding or is working with prospective EDA applicants. These guidelines have been made available to prospective project applicants during this year's RFP process to ensure that all Greater Lowell projects meet the guidelines. As established by EDA, the Investment Policy Guidelines for FY 2008 are as follows:

FY 2008 EDA Investment Policy Guidelines

Investment applications will be competitively evaluated on their ability to meet or exceed the following investment policy guidelines:

Be market-based and results-driven. An investment will capitalize on a region's competitive strengths and will positively move a regional economic indicator measured on EDA's Balanced Scorecard, such as: an increased number of higher-skill, higher-wage jobs; increased tax revenue; or increased private-sector investment.

Have strong organizational leadership. An investment will have strong leadership, relevant project management experience, and a significant commitment of human-resources talent to ensure a project's successful execution.

Advance productivity, innovation and entrepreneurship. An investment will embrace the principles of entrepreneurship, enhance regional clusters, and leverage and link technology innovators and local universities to the private sector to create the conditions for greater productivity, innovation and job creation.

Look beyond the immediate economic horizon, anticipate economic changes, and diversify the local and regional economy. An investment will be part of an overarching, long-term comprehensive economic development strategy that enhances a region's success in achieving a rising standard of living by supporting existing industry clusters, developing emerging clusters, or attracting new regional economic drivers.

Demonstrate a high degree of commitment by exhibiting:

- High levels of local-government or nonprofit matching funds and private-sector leverage.
- Clear and unified leadership and support by local elected officials.
- Strong cooperation between the business sector, relevant regional partners, and local, state and federal governments.

C. CEDS Priority Project List

The listing of CEDS projects for the NMCOG region has been done based upon their short-term (up to 18 months), intermediate (2-4 years) or long-term (5+ years) status. Listing the CEDS projects in this manner helps separate out those projects that are ready to go, as well as to identify those projects to be implemented at a later date. It also enables us to show the movement of projects from year to year.

For the most part, the CEDS Priority Project List is comprised of those projects which have been submitted by project proponents or are on the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is completed each year by the Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO) through the NMCOG staff. The Priority Projects listed in this section are summarized by Project Name, Project Description, Project Proponent, Total Cost, Funding Sources (if known), Start Date, Environmental Impact, and the CEDS Goals Addressed by the specific project. The projects are not prioritized; however, the general consensus of the CEDS Committee was that the first three priority projects – Hamilton Canal, JAM Plan and Hamilton Crossing – should receive top priority due to the manner in which they address multiple CEDS goals, while also meeting community and minority goals simultaneously.

The CEDS Priority Project List includes the following breakout of projects:

1. Short-Term Projects (up to 18 months)

The CEDS Committee approved twenty-four (24) Short-term projects as part of this year's Annual CEDS Update. These projects are principally infrastructure projects that deal with transportation, sewer and water issues. Funding for these projects will be principally through non-EDA funding sources. However, apart from the three projects mentioned previously, the EDA-funded projects include the EDA Planning Grant and the Economic Development District (EDD) Designation.

2. Intermediate Projects (2-4 years)

Thirteen (13) Intermediate projects were approved by the CEDS Committee. None of these projects were determined to be eligible for EDA funds. These projects principally

focus upon the infrastructure and technical assistance needs of our communities in order to attract businesses.

3. Long-Term Projects (5 + years)

Only six (6) Long-term projects were approved by the CEDS Committee. These projects will require a combination of federal, state and local assistance, but it is unlikely that EDA funding will be needed. These projects are not as well defined as the Short-term and Intermediate projects so their needs may change as they move to the Intermediate and Short-term stages.

The 2008 Priority Projects are listed in Tables 18-20 over the next five pages, while the CEDS Priority Project Status Report (as of June 30, 2008) is provided on page 41.

Table 18: Short-Term Projects (Up to 18 months)

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	PROJECT PROPONENT	TOTAL COST	FUNDING SOURCE(S)	START DATE	ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	GOALS ADDRESSED
Hamilton Canal*	Development of residential, commercial and institutional uses.	City of Lowell	\$ 800 M	Federal, state, private and local funds.	2009	Yes – positive	1,4, 6, 8, 10
JAM Plan*	Neighborhood Revitalization	City of Lowell	\$ 850 M	Federal, state, private and local funds.	2009	Yes – positive	1,4,6, 8, 10
Hamilton Crossing*	Development of housing, R & D, commercial offices, and light mfg. facilities.	City of Lowell	\$ 80 M	Federal, state, private and local funds.	2009	Yes – positive	1, 4, 6, 8, 10
Nanomanufacturing Center	Develop Emerging Technology Center	UMass Lowell	\$ 85 M	Federal, state, private and local funds.	2009	Unknown	1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10
Lowell Junction Interchange	PDS planning; EIR, EIS, ramp construction.	Town of Tewksbury	\$ 150 M	Fed: \$ 120M State: \$ 30M	2009	Yes	1, 4, 7, 8
Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) (Phase I)	Reduce discharges into Merrimack and Concord Rivers	City of Lowell	\$ 65 M	Federal, state and local	Ongoing (to be completed by 2011)	Yes	8
Tanner Street Initiative	Master Plan	City of Lowell	Unknown	Federal, state and local	2009	No	1, 6, 8
EDA Planning Grant*	CEDS Planning grant	NMCOG	\$ 100 k	Fed: \$ 50k Match :\$50k	2009	No	1
Economic Development District Designation* (EDD)	Designation of NMCOG as EDD	NMCOG	Annual planning grants	Federal: \$ 60k Match : \$60k	2010	No	1
Gallagher Square	Intersection improvements	City of Lowell	\$ 5.6 M	Federal: \$ 4.48M State: \$ 1.12 M	2008	No	7

Table 18 (cont'd): Short Term Projects (Up to 18 months)

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	PROJECT PROPONENT	TOTAL COST	FUNDING SOURCE(S)	START DATE	ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	GOALS ADDRESSED
Downtown Improvements	New crosswalks that meet ADA requirements.	City of Lowell	Unknown	Unknown	2008	No	7
Morton Street Bridge	Bridge reconstruction	City of Lowell	\$ 1.2 M	Federal: \$ 960 k State: \$ 240k	2009	Unknown	7
Thorndike Street Pedestrian Bridge	Construct pedestrian bridge.	National Park Service/ City of Lowell	\$ 2.7 M	Federal: \$ 2.16 M State: \$ 540 k	2009	No	7
Pawtucket Blvd. Relocation	Bridge relocation. (two years)	Town of Tyngsborough	\$ 7 M	Federal: \$ 5.6 M State: \$1.4M	2009	No	7
Safety Improvements At Bridge Street and VFW Highway	Design safety improvements.	Mass Highway	\$ 391 k	Federal: \$ 313 k State: \$ 78 k	2009	No	7
University Ave. (Textile) Bridge	Bridge replacement	Mass Highway	\$ 20 M	Federal: \$16M State: \$4M	2009	No	7
Navy Yard Mill Redevelopment	Designate site as EOA and Certified Project	Town of Dracut	\$ 3.8 M	State and private funds	2009	No	1
Wood St./Rourke Bridge RFP	Feasibility analysis	Mass Highway	\$ 500 k	Federal: \$400 k State: \$100 k	2009	No	1, 7
Sewer Line Extensions	Extend sewer lines	Town of Billerica	\$ 3 M per contract	Local	2009	Yes-positive	1
Sewer Construction Phase 10	Expand sewer	Town of Tewksbury	\$ 11.6M	Town funds	2009	Yes	8

Table 18 (cont'd): Short Term Projects (Up to 18 months)

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	PROJECT PROPONENT	TOTAL COST	FUNDING SOURCE(S)	START DATE	ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	GOALS ADDRESSED
Sewer Construction Phase 11	Expand sewer.	Town of Tewksbury	\$ 14.8M	Town funds	2009	Yes	8
Riverside Senior Affordable Housing	Develop town-owned parcel for affordable housing.	Town of Dracut	\$ 4.5 M	Federal: \$3.15 M	2009	Yes	4
Chelmsford, Plain and Powell Streets	Roadway and intersection improvements.	City of Lowell	\$ 725 k	Federal: \$ 580k State: \$ 145k	2008	No	7
Updated Housing Plan	Housing Production Plan	Town of Tyngsborough	\$ 8,500	Local	2009	No	4

Table 19: Intermediate Projects (2-4 years)

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	PROJECT PROPONENT	TOTAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	START DATE	ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	GOALS ADDRESSED
Upper Merrimack Traffic Calming & Street Improvements	Redevelop commercial core	City of Lowell	Unknown	Federal, state, and local	2010	Unknown	1, 4, 7
Town Center Project	Signal upgrading, new crosswalks, resurfacing and pedestrian walkways.	Town of Billerica	\$ 2.5M	State	2010	No	7
Town Center Development/ Preservation	Implement Master Plan for Town Center.	Town of Tyngsborough	Unknown	Federal, state, local, private and nonprofit	2010	No	1, 4, 8
East/Shawsheen Streets	Intersection and signalization project.	Town of Tewksbury	\$ 650 k	Federal: \$520 k State \$130k	2010	No	7

Table 19 (cont'd): Intermediate Projects (2-4 years)

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	PROJECT PROPO- NENT	TOTAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	START DATE	ENVIRON- MENTAL IMPACT	GOALS ADDRESSED
Mill Complex Redevelopment	Redevelop mill property as mixed-use facility.	Town of Chelmsford	Unknown	Private	2010	No	1, 4, 8
Route 113 resurfacing	Resurface Route 113	Town of Tyngsborough	\$ 1.08 M	Federal: \$ 865 k State \$216 k	2010	No	7
Neighborhood Business Center Improvements	Business assistance, traffic calming, sidewalk and street improvements, etc.	City of Lowell	Unknown	Federal and local	2010	No	1, 7
Minots Corner Route 110	Roadway reconstruction and intersection improvements.	Town of Westford	\$ 4 M	Federal: \$3.2 M State: \$ 800k	2011	No	7
Middlesex Turnpike	Phase 3 – road widening and signalization	Town of Billerica	\$16.726 M	Federal: \$12.94M State: \$3.235M Local: \$ 552k	2011	Yes	1,7
Sewer expansion	Expand sewer capacity to support economic growth.	Town of Tewksbury	Unknown	Unknown	2011	Yes – positive	8
East/Livingston Streets	Intersection and signalization improvements.	Town of Tewksbury	\$ 650 k	Federal: \$ 520 k State: \$ 130 k	2011	No	7
Route 113 Industrial Zone Sewer Development	Provide sewer to industrially-zoned land	Town of Dracut	\$19.961M	Local	2010	Yes – positive	1, 8
Sewer Plant Upgrade & Evaluations	Upgraded sewer network	Town of Billerica	\$ 9 M	Local	2010	Yes – positive	8

Table 20: Long-Term Projects (5 + years)

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	PROJECT PROPO-NENT	TOTAL COST	FUNDING SOURCE(S)	START DATE	ENVIRON- MENTAL IMPACT	GOALS ADDRESSED
Allen Road	Roadway reconstruction	Town of Billerica	\$ 3.6 M	Federal and state	2012	To be determined	7
Holden Center	Building renovation	City of Lowell	Unknown	Federal, state, local and private	2012	Unknown	1, 2
UMass Lowell – West Campus	Re-use of property for mixed-income housing.	Town of Chelmsford	Unknown	Federal, state and non-profit	2012	Unknown	4
Glenview Sand & Gravel	Redevelopment of brownfield site.	Town of Chelmsford	Unknown	Federal and state	2012	Yes	8
970 Broadway Industrial Redevelopment	Redevelop brownfield site for industrial use.	Town of Dracut	Unknown	Federal and state	2012	Yes	1, 8
Boston Road Improvements	Resurfacing of town-owned property and construction of new sidewalks and a new drainage system.	Town of Billerica	\$ 2.5 M	State	2013	Yes	1, 7, 8

CEDS Priority Project Status Report
(As of June 30, 2008)

Completed Projects:

EDA Planning Grants (2004, 2006)
I-495 Corridor Study
Republic-Esquire Sterling Sewer
Town-wide Sewer (initial phase)
Water Treatment Plant
Concord Road (Phase 1)
Call Street and Cabot property purchased
Habitat for Humanity
Housing Production Plan
Rangeway Road
Middlesex Turnpike (Phase 1)
Drum Hill Corridor Study
Trout Brook Sanitary Sewer Extension
Lakeview Ave. Bridge
Riverwalk Extension (phase 1)
Western Canal Acre Reach
Transit Projects (2004-2007)
Route 3 Widening
Main St. and Shawsheen
Water Storage Tank
Route 225 Bridge
Stony Brook Housing

Proponent

NMCOG
NMCOG
Town of Billerica
Town of Billerica
Town of Billerica
Town of Billerica
Town of Billerica
Town of Billerica
Town of Billerica
Town of Billerica
Town of Chelmsford
Town of Dracut
Town of Dracut
Lowell National Historic Park
Lowell National Historic Park
LRTA
NMMPO
Town of Tewksbury
Town of Tewksbury
Town of Westford
Town of Westford

Projects Underway:

Alexander Road/Cook Street
Concord Road (Phase II)
Route 3A Signals
Route 4 Bridge
Town Sewer
Princeton Street Bridge
Middlesex Street Mill
Combined Sewer Overflow
Wood Street/Rourke Bridge
Tanner Street Initiative
Chelmsford St., Plain St., & Powell St.
Gallagher Square
Phases 8 and 9 – Sewer Expansion
Manley Brook Restoration
Water Distribution System

Proponent

Town of Billerica
Town of Billerica
Town of Billerica
Town of Billerica
Town of Chelmsford
Town of Chelmsford
Town of Chelmsford
City of Lowell
City of Lowell
City of Lowell
City of Lowell
City of Lowell
Town of Tewksbury
Town of Tewksbury
Town of Tewksbury

Dropped Projects:

Project Vision
Lowell Loam Commercial Compacting
Route 225 Relocation

Proponent

Billerica Chamber of Commerce
UMass Lowell
Town of Westford

D. Major Development Projects

In addition to the Priority Projects identified in the previous section, there are major development projects that have even more of an economic impact upon the Greater Lowell region than the Priority Projects. In the *Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008*, the major development projects were the Route 3 North Transportation Improvement Project, the Acre Urban Development and Revitalization Plan, and the Jackson/Appleton/Middlesex (JAM) Urban Renewal Area. While the Route 3 project has been completed, the other major development projects have individual components, such as the Hamilton Canal District, which continue to move forward.

The major development projects for 2008 are the Hamilton Canal, Lowell Junction, Expedited Permitting, the Creative Economy, Tyngsborough Town Center Revitalization, the Downtown Lowell Renaissance Plan, the Pepperell Paper Mill Site Redevelopment Project and the I-495 Corridor Transportation Study. The completion of each of these major development projects will move the Greater Lowell region closer to the vision outlined in the 2004 Five-Year CEDS. In the case of the Hamilton Canal project, there are two separate public works projects under consideration for EDA funds – the Hamilton Canal and Hamilton Crossing projects. These projects will create an extensive number of jobs, encourage private investment in a distressed area of the City and revitalize the Central Business District. The other major development projects contribute in their own way to the economic vitality of individual communities through major infrastructure improvements and technical assistance, which result in a stronger regional economy.

1. Hamilton Canal District Project

In June 2006, the City of Lowell issued a solicitation for a master developer to design, entitle, market and develop the Hamilton Canal District (HCD), a 13-acre underutilized and vacant site bordered by Jackson Street, Revere Street, Middlesex Street and Dutton Street. The site is located at the confluence of three canals: the Hamilton, Merrimack and Pawtucket Canals, and has been designated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a Priority Development Site (PDS) under Chapter 43D, a Growth District, and a Chapter 40R/Smart Growth District. The HCD development district is part of the Jackson/Appleton/Middlesex Urban Renewal Plan district, as amended in 2008.

Following a two-phase qualification process, the Trinity Hamilton Canal Limited Partnership team was selected to become the master developer for the site. Through an extensive master planning process, a transit-oriented, mixed-use development plan has been created that will enhance the tax base, strengthen and diversify the downtown economy, and create additional employment and housing opportunities for area residents. The City has chosen to entitle the project through the creation of a form-based zoning code.

The total project build out will be approximately 1.8 million square feet, and will include 425,000 sf of commercial space, up to 55,000 sf of retail space, a 450-seat theater, up to 700 mixed-income housing units, additional parkland, and a parking garage. In addition, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will be developing an adjacent parcel as a comprehensive justice center comprised of sixteen court rooms, although this project is not considered part of the Hamilton Canal project. The City of Lowell will be retaining ownership of the streets,

bridges and rights-of-way connecting the development parcels. Existing conditions of the Hamilton Canal site are illustrated in the flyover image below.



Overview of Hamilton Canal District

Source: Pictometry International (2008)

The City of Lowell and the Northern Middlesex region will realize the following significant benefits from the project:

- Revitalization of a 13-acre underutilized and neglected site, located directly adjacent to Downtown Lowell, into a mixed-use development featuring housing, office space, retail uses, restaurants and other commercial development;
- The project will bring an estimated \$800 million in new investment to an area that has not seen any significant reinvestment in decades;
- Creation of up to 1,000 jobs (full-time and temporary) and an increase in state and local tax revenues;
- The creation of up to 700 units of affordable and market rate housing;
- The project's proximity to the Gallagher Transportation Terminal will support and enhance use of public transportation;
- The proposed extension of the trolley system will augment transportation within the development district and the downtown area;
- New canal crossings, and roadway improvements will enhance pedestrian and vehicular access;

- The project design includes adaptive reuse and the historic preservation of a large mill complex; and
- The project will incorporate many element of green building design in compliance with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Neighborhood Development (LEED ND) criteria.

The local community has been afforded many opportunities for public input. The City of Lowell is considered an Environmental Justice community by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The City of Lowell and the master developer have established an extensive public outreach process, which has included outreach to the city's minority and disadvantaged communities. Multiple meetings and public visioning sessions have been conducted to discuss the planning and development processes, as well as the potential project impacts and mitigation. This process has allowed for meaningful input relative to the design of the project, and has positively and successfully shaped the final design plans for the project. Documents related to the project have been translated into three languages and are posted on the project's website.

The current project schedule calls for design and permitting work to continue over the upcoming year. Groundbreaking for Phase 1 of the project is anticipated in the Spring of 2009.

2. Lowell Junction/I-93 Interchange Project

The proposed project consists of the construction of a new highway interchange on I-93 in the Towns of Andover, Tewksbury and Wilmington. The new interchange would be located between the I-93/Route 125 Interchange in Wilmington and the I-93/Dascomb Road Interchange in Andover, in an area referred to as Lowell Junction. The purpose of the project is to relieve traffic congestion on I-93 and adjacent local roadways, and to improve access to existing industrial and commercial developments, as well as to undeveloped land suitable for industrial and commercial development. The access from the south to businesses in the Lowell Junction area (east of I-93) is via the I-93/Route 125 Interchange (Interchange 41) to Ballardvale Street (a local, partially residential roadway north of Route 125). From the north, access to the Lowell Junction area is via the I-93/Dascomb Road Interchange (Interchange 42) to Dascomb Road, Clark Road, Andover Street, River Street, and Ballardvale Street. These narrow, winding residential roads are unsuited for the volume of commuter traffic they currently handle.

The Lowell Junction/ I-93 Development Area has the potential to become one of the largest concentrations of employment in northeastern Massachusetts. The area's strategic location north of the research and development centers of Boston, Cambridge and Route 128, and immediately south of the longstanding technology manufacturing centers of the Merrimack Valley, place it at the nexus of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' efforts to retain and develop employment opportunities in the communications, technology, instrumentation and life sciences sectors. Situated between Exit 41 (Route 125) and Exit 42 (Dascomb Road), a new interchange in this location would open up 700 acres of currently landlocked and underutilized land for development.

In 2006, the communities of Andover, Wilmington and Tewksbury formed the Tri-Town Development Task Force in order to create a Unified Development Vision for the area. The task

force retained the services of The Cecil Group to assist with formulating four alternative visions for the Junction Area. As a result of the public planning process, a mixed-use vision emerged which will allow for science and technology based development, around sustainable mixed-use "villages," offering a compact setting for office and retail uses, with residential uses included in specific locations within the site.

The Tri-Town Unified Development Vision seeks to provide area businesses, residents, municipalities, and the region with significant new job and tax benefits, while alleviating existing traffic congestion, limiting the impact of vehicular trips generated by new development, and improving environmental conditions. The three towns are committed to reaching unanimous agreement on a final development area master plan that respects each community's "Priorities" as outlined in the vision. Further refinement and consensus will be required to move the Development Vision forward into a plan that can be used as the basis for creating a form-based zoning code.

In the spring 2008, Town Meeting voters in the three communities voted to designate three separate portions of the development area as Priority Development Sites under the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Chapter 43D expedited permitting regulation. This process required the communities to commit to permitting development projects on the priority development sites within 180 days. In exchange, the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development provided planning funds and economic development assistance to the communities.

The communities are now working toward advancing the planning that would allow the mixed-use vision for the development area to be implemented. The Towns have collectively decided to pursue a form-based zoning code as the mechanism for implementing the development vision. The form-based code will be consistent across municipal boundaries, and will be voted by each community's town meeting in Spring 2010. The master planning process signals to businesses that the communities are serious about economic growth and will encourages private investment in the area.

MassHighway is presently engaged in designing and permitting the new interchange project. It is anticipated that it will take three years to complete the design and permitting processes, with construction commencing on 2011. While several design alternatives are being evaluated, the estimated construction cost is currently \$150 million.

3. Expedited Permitting

The economic future and continued prosperity of the region requires the development of jobs, housing and infrastructure. The Commonwealth and the regional planning agencies have long recognized that applicants before regulatory boards face a maze of permits, standards and procedures. A more transparent, timely, efficient and predictable permitting process would assist the public objectives of promoting economic development while protecting local resources, encouraging locally supported projects, and maintaining the standard of review.

Over the past year, the thirteen regional planning agencies across the state have collaborated to evaluate local permitting processes involving zoning, wetlands protection, transportation, and water supply and wastewater treatment. As a result of this effort, the Massachusetts Association

of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) developed *A Best Practices Model for Streamlined Local Permitting*, which is organized around four themes: Improving Communication with Permit Applicants; Standardizing the Permitting Process; Providing Resources for Improving Local Permitting Performance; and Proactive Planning.

Chapter 205 of the Acts of 2006, *An Act Relative to Streamlining and Expediting the Permitting Process in the Commonwealth*, created the District Local Technical Assistance Fund (DLTA), providing \$1.8 million to the state's regional planning agencies. This funding was used to provide support to local communities relative to streamlining the local permitting process, promoting regional collaboration, fostering economic development and addressing smart growth issues.

In December 2006, the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) received \$130,000 in DLTA funds, through a contract with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). NMCOG initiated the DLTA program by conducting a public forum and soliciting proposals from its member communities. As part of its outreach and education efforts, NMCOG hosted a Citizens Planner Training Collaborative Program on Chapter 43D and worked with the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD), MassDevelopment and The Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development (MAEDI) regarding Chapter 43D, potential Priority Development sites within the region, and the DLTA program.

Letters of Agreement were established with all nine member communities outlining the scope of work and schedule for each DLTA project. The section below summarizes the projects completed within each community.

Billerica

NMCOG staff developed a Chapter 43D application relative to the EMD Serono Priority Development Site recently approved by Billerica Town Meeting. EMD Serono, a pharmaceutical company located on the Middlesex Turnpike, plans to expand its facility and create one hundred additional research jobs by 2012. NMCOG staff also assisted the town by preparing a job description for an Economic Development Coordinator.

In December 2007, the Town's 43D application was approved by the Interagency Permitting Board for \$100,000, plus an additional \$50,000 was awarded to identify infrastructure issues impeding development along the Route 3 corridor from Burlington to Chelmsford. Following approval of the 43D application, NMCOG staff reviewed the town's permitting process for compliance with Chapter 43D, worked with town boards and commissions to streamline the permitting process so that all local permits related to the Priority Development site are granted within 180 days, and prepared a Permit Streamlining Guide. A Development Guide was also created for those businesses and individuals seeking permits from the town's various boards and commissions.

Chelmsford

NMCOG staff updated the 2000 Build-out Study for the Town of Chelmsford. The build-out report is a tool that allows the community to understand the impacts of developing available land to the capacity allowed under current zoning. Such analysis helps the community identify changes that may be needed to its Master Plan, Zoning Bylaw and development regulations.

This information will be particularly useful to the Town of Chelmsford as it undertakes its Master Plan Update over the upcoming year.

Under the DLTA program, NMCOG staff updated the *Drum Hill Master Plan*, which was initially completed in 2000 by NMCOG. Drum Hill is a major business and commercial district located at Exit 31 on U.S. Route 3, adjacent to the Lowell line. The updated document focused on the following elements:

- Providing an inventory and map of existing sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian amenities, parking fields and parking spaces;
- Outlining recommendations for improving pedestrian safety and circulation, vehicular traffic flow, and parking within the Drum Hill area; and
- Creating an overlay zoning district and design guidelines, to encourage mixed-use development, improve the visual and aesthetic character of the area, and enhance the quality of future development and redevelopment projects within the district.

The study also focused on the redevelopment of key vacant and underutilized parcels, such as the former car wash, Glen View Sand and Gravel, and other vacant properties that were acquired by MassHighway for the reconstruction of the Drum Hill Rotary.

Dracut

NMCOG staff assisted the Town of Dracut in streamlining its permitting process by reviewing existing permitting practices, policies and procedures, preparing an assessment report, and outlining recommendations for streamlining the processes and procedures, based on the MARPA Best Practices. A Permitting Guide is also being created as part of this project.

Dunstable

NMCOG provided GIS services to the Town of Dunstable. A map of the proposed Source Water Protection Overlay Zoning District was created and will be used for public presentations, board meetings, and town meeting. The purpose of the bylaw is to protect the town's wellfield and recharge area from potential sources of contamination. Dunstable voters will be acting on the proposed bylaw at the upcoming Special Town Meeting.

Lowell

NMCOG staff reviewed and supported the City's 43D application for the Hamilton Canal District Priority Development site. The project will bring approximately 1.8 million square feet of new development and \$800 million in additional investment to the City. Current development plans include 425,000 sf of commercial space, up to 55,000 sf of retail space, a 450-seat theater, up to 700 mixed-income housing units, additional parkland, and a parking garage. Staff participated in the project Visioning Sessions and provided input and feedback to the City and master developer.

Pepperell

Under the Letter of Agreement established with the Town of Pepperell, NMCOG staff provided technical support relative to the proposed redevelopment of the former Pepperell Paper Mill site. NMCOG staff facilitated discussions between the town and state economic development agencies, and assisted the town in designating a Priority Development Site on the mill property

and in establishing an Economic Target Area (ETA). NMCOG worked with state partners to examine options for addressing brownfield issues related to the mill site, and assisted the Town by providing guidance on the scope for a proposed site master plan relative to the mill property and surrounding area.

Tewksbury

NMCOG assisted the Town of Tewksbury with the development of a Town Center Overlay Zoning District Bylaw and corresponding design guidelines. The Town Center Overlay Zoning Bylaw goals are as follows:

- (a) Encourage a mix of business, residential, cultural, educational and civic uses;
- (b) Promote compact development that is pedestrian-oriented and preserves the historic value and character of the area;
- (c) Minimize impacts on public services and maximize the efficient use of public infrastructure;
- (d) Increase the town's tax base by creating a thriving small business environment, attracting new investment and promoting economic development;
- (e) Provide diverse housing opportunities; and
- (f) Encourage the reuse of existing underutilized or vacant properties.

The draft bylaw and design guidelines are complete and it is expected that the bylaw will be taken up by town meeting voters at the Annual Town Meeting.

NMCOG staff also assisted the town with the formation of the Tewksbury Economic Development Committee and provides technical assistance to the committee on an ongoing basis. In addition, NMCOG staff assisted the Town of Tewksbury with streamlining its permitting process by reviewing existing permitting practices, policies and procedures, preparing an assessment report, and outlining recommendations for streamlining the processes and procedures, based on the MARPA Best Practices Guide.

Tyngsborough

NMCOG staff assisted the Town of Tyngsborough in streamlining its permitting process by reviewing existing permitting practices, policies and procedures, preparing an assessment report, and outlining recommendations for streamlining the processes and procedures, based on the MARPA Best Practices. Staff also continued to meet with the town's Economic Development Committee to discuss 43D, provide technical assistance regarding the Town Center Master Plan, and on issues related to development along Middlesex Road.

Westford

NMCOG prepared the Economic Development Component of the Westford Comprehensive Master Plan. This work included conducting two forums for the business community focused on the business experience in the Town of Westford. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was performed at each of these events which were both sponsored by local companies. In addition, NMCOG staff participated in town-wide and neighborhood forums where residents expressed their opinions and concerns regarding economic development issues.

As a result of this effort, a technical paper and Economic Development Implementation Plan were prepared and presented to the Comprehensive Master Plan Committee. These documents will be incorporated into the final Master Plan to be adopted by Town Meeting.

Regional Sewer Infrastructure Study

Chelmsford and Tyngsborough requested that NMCOG analyze capacity limitations within the region's wastewater infrastructure. These communities are served by the Greater Lowell Wastewater Treatment Plant which is presently operating at capacity. These communities see the lack of sewer capacity as a serious impediment to future economic growth. NMCOG staff met with both communities, and will attempt to initiate a dialogue focusing on ways to address the need for additional capacity at the plant. In addition, individual community-level issues relative to wastewater will be addressed.

4. Creative Economy

The Creative Economy project was initiated by the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council (MVEDC) through a small grant it received from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. The focus of this project was to define the creative economy in the Merrimack Valley, quantify its contributions to the overall economy, and promote the growth of the creative economy as a means to diversify the economy and provide a destination location for travelers and shoppers. The communities involved in this project included the nine communities of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) and the fifteen communities of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC).

The initial study of the creative economy in this area was undertaken by Mt. Auburn Associates in 2000 when it worked with the New England Council to produce the report entitled "The New England Creative Economy Initiative: The Role of Arts and Culture in New England's Economic Competitiveness". Based upon the results of this study, three specific components were quantified:

- 1) The Creative Cluster businesses employed 245,000 employees, which represented 3.5% of the New England business workforce; this cluster was growing faster than the rest of the economy; the cluster bringing in significant external revenues;
- 2) The Creative Community focused upon quality of life, was a key to downtown revitalization and could be a component of suburban and rural development as well, and
- 3) The Creative Workforce represented 2% of the New England total workforce, many worked outside the cluster and the workforce was highly entrepreneurial.

In 2007 Mt. Auburn Associates worked with the Lowell Plan to produce "On the Cultural Road...CITY OF WORLD CULTURE – Strategies for the Creative Economy in Lowell, Massachusetts". The purpose of this project was to "utilize and strengthen Lowell's cultural assets in order to enhance community revitalization and pride, develop leadership and build human capital and create new economic opportunities". This strategy document outlined implementation steps in five specific areas: (1) Strengthen Lowell's Cultural Organizations and Artists, (2) Enhance the Cultural Product, (3) Promote Creative Business Development, (4) Build

New Leadership and Civic Engagement and (5) Shape the Image and Improve Marketing. In essence, the Lowell report provided a blueprint for growing the creative economy in the city.

Beginning in July 2007, MVEDC formed an initial steering committee consisting of the Cultural Organization of Lowell (COOL), UMass Lowell and representatives of MVEDC. This steering committee was broadened to include representatives from NMCOG, Team Haverhill, MVPC, the Light of Cambodian Children & Southeast Asian Water Festival, Live Lawrence and the artist community. MVEDC hired Deborah Carey as project manager and Mt. Auburn Associates to provide an overview of the creative economy as part of their outreach efforts. MVEDC conducted two creative economy forums with more than 300 attendees at the Revolving Museum in Lowell (November 2007) and Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill (January 2008). As a result of these forums, four working groups were established: Workforce/Business Development, Marketing and Communications, Festivals, Celebrations and Cultural Products, and New Regional Activities and Events. There was also an active effort to tie together businesses with the arts and cultural organizations to focus upon the economic component of this initiative. MVEDC identified more than 70 annual festivals in the Merrimack Valley and compiled an inventory of “creative economy assets” in the region.

There was an extensive marketing effort and outreach by MVEDC to the Chambers of Commerce in Lowell, Lawrence, Haverhill and Newburyport, as well as the Visitor Centers at the Greater Merrimack Valley and the North of Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau. MVEDC implemented an extensive outreach to the press, cable television and travel bureaus to “brand” the region as a creative economy and destination location. MVEDC and the Steering Committee began planning for two Valley-wide events scheduled for the fall of 2008. The first event was the *ArtsFest Merrimack Valley*, which was the first-ever Merrimack Valley-wide arts and cultural event. Through an active partnership with the Essex National Heritage Commission’s annual “Trails and Sails” weekend, Lowell’s annual “Lowell Open Studios” and Newburyport’s ArtWalk, MVEDC used this framework of activities to schedule the event from September 26th through 28th. The second event was the first Massachusetts Poetry Festival scheduled for October 10th to 12th in downtown Lowell. Based upon a collaborative effort with the Massachusetts Poetry Outreach Project, the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, MVEDC modeled this event after the successful Lowell Folk Festival.

MVEDC concluded this project after the two major events were held due to limited funding. The resources developed as a result of this grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council are available for future efforts to expand the Creative Economy in the Merrimack Valley.

5. Tyngsborough Town Center Revitalization

The 2004 Tyngsborough Master Plan identified the need to strengthen the commercial base in the Town Center, while preserving and enhancing its historic character. NMCOG staff has provided technical assistance to the Tyngsborough Economic Development Committee regarding the redevelopment of the Town Center over the past two years.

In the later portion of 2007, NMCOG staff worked with the Economic Development Committee to draft a Town Center Overlay Zoning Bylaw that would encourage mixed-use development. In addition, Design Guidelines were drafted that focused on the use of traditional town center

design concepts in order to minimize impacts on public services, maximize the use of public infrastructure, and allow for a mix of residential, commercial and civic uses. In creating the new zoning overlay district, the Town hopes to provide additional employment opportunities, spark new investment and foster economic growth.

As a result this effort, and based on recommendations outlined on the *Tyngsborough Economic Development Plan* prepared by NMCOG in 2006, Town Meeting voters allocated Community Preservation funds to prepare a Town Center Master Plan. In 2008, the Town hired a consultant, Concord Square Planning and Development, Inc., to develop a detailed Master Plan for the Town Center area. A draft Master Plan has been prepared under the direction of the Economic Development Committee and addresses the following:

- Re-use of vacant town-owned properties;
- Opportunities for new development;
- Infrastructure needs; and
- Open space enhancements.

The Town's ownership of four properties within the Town Center provides a unique opportunity to shape future development plans for the area. The Master Plan identifies and recommends potential reuse options for the Winslow School, Littlefield Library, Old Town Hall, and the former Shur-Fine Market. The restoration and reuse of these properties will transform the Town Center into a more vibrant and economically viable area. The added economic value will attract the private investment capital needed to implement the full Master Plan.

The Master Plan also focuses on potential sites for new development to create the density and building mass that will provide a distinctive entrance to the Town Center from Middlesex Road, the bridge and Kendall Road. However, this new development will not be possible without bringing public sewer to the area. The Economic Development Committee is actively working with the Sewer Commission to address this issue.

Throughout the development of the Town Center Master Plan there were multiple walking tours of the study area. Meetings and conversations were held with local property owners, merchants, and municipal officials. Three public meetings were conducted to gather ideas from Tyngsborough residents, businesses and property owners. The level of interest in this project was clearly evident in the strong attendance at each public input event. The Economic Development Committee intends to finalize and adopt the Master Plan in the fall of 2008.

6. Downtown Lowell Renaissance Plan

During the summer and fall of 2007, the City of Lowell prepared the Downtown Lowell Renaissance Plan, which focused on traffic and parking, infrastructure, retail recruitment and retention and marketing. Summits were held to receive input from residents, local officials, businesses, non-profits and other stakeholders. NMCOG staff participated in these events and provided input.

Based on the results of the planning and public input process, a plan was developed that included immediate and long term actions for improving conditions within the downtown. The following is a list of immediate actions that have been identified:

- Improve directional signage by redesigning the signs to include larger print and updated logos;
- Assess traffic and infrastructure improvement options to address one-way street patterns, improved signal operations, condition of cobblestone streets, pedestrian accommodations, lighting, street furniture, and sidewalk vaults;
- Address short-term parking needs of businesses and residents by increasing the supply of parking and distributing the parking more evenly throughout downtown;
- Improve landscaping along the Central Street traffic island;
- Add additional planters and street furniture throughout downtown;
- Construct Mack Plaza Children's Playground;
- Improve streetscapes by replacing broken light post components, repainting kiosk signs, and providing additional trash receptacles;
- Develop and implement a Best Retail Practices Program offering workshops on best practices, providing in-store consultation for business owners, and offering a grant program to help finance implementation of forthcoming recommendations;
- Hire a retail site selection consultant to assess the downtown's retail potential, prepare a marketing plan for targeted retailers, and work with the City to recruit retailers;
- Establish an arts competition to enliven Lowell's vacant storefronts as a collaboration of the City of Lowell, the Downtown Lowell Business Association, Arts League of Lowell, and the Cultural Organization of Lowell;
- Implement the cultural plan: *On the Cultural Road-City World of Culture*;
- Bring back the "There's a lot to like about Lowell" slogan;
- Use image advertising to promote downtown strengths; and
- Improve public safety image by continuing to build partnerships between the Police Department and community stakeholders and by expanding the public surveillance system.

The following long-term actions are recommended for implementation as a means of improving the economic viability of the downtown and improving the quality of life for its residents:

- Implement the traffic and intersection improvements identified as part of the immediate actions program outlined above;
- Upgrade the cobblestone roadway and implement streetscape improvements along Middle Street;
- Improve sidewalks, streetscape and street furniture at the intersection of Prescott, Central and Market Streets;
- Improve crosswalks and pedestrian amenities throughout the downtown;
- Upgrade Mack Plaza;
- Install new historic street lights along French, John, Bridge, East Merrimack, Market, and Jackson Streets, as well as in Kearney Square;
- Implement the development plan for the Hamilton Canal District;

- Implement the recommendations of the retail site selection consultant as discussed in the Immediate actions above;
- Explore public-private partnerships with financial institutions, commercial property owners and brokers to promote and attract businesses to the downtown;
- Create a Downtown Wi-Fi hotspot; and
- Improve the Thorndike Street gateway to downtown.

7. Pepperell Paper Mill Site Redevelopment Project

In July 2007, the Town of Pepperell requested assistance from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in redeveloping the former site of the Pepperell Paper Mill, a 12-acre property located at 128 Main Street. The facility has been inactive since the late 1990s and has been owned by several property owners. Currently, the property is owned by Pepperell Realty LLC, which is in turn owned by Perry Videx. In August 2007, the Massachusetts Permit Regulatory Office (MPRO) of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED), responded by meeting with town officials, and representatives from the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD), MassDevelopment, and NMCOG. The state officials provided information to the community on the Expedited Permitting Program, the Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP) and “brownfield” programs at the state and federal levels. The state officials encouraged the town to apply for Priority Development Site (PDS) and Economic Target Area (ETA) designation and to develop a site master plan to identify the next steps that need to be addressed in redeveloping the site.

In January 2008, NMCOG staff submitted a memorandum to the Town outlining the steps that needed to be taken to move the redevelopment project forward. Based upon a review of other site master plans that had been developed for similar projects, the consensus was that the master plan should be comprehensive in scope by incorporating recommendations for the former mill site, Railroad Square, and the Nashua River, in order to maximize the economic impact of the mill site revitalization.

NMCOG offered to provide technical assistance using the DLTA funds provided under Chapter 43D, in order to move the Site Master Plan forward. NMCOG also recommended that the town establish an oversight committee consisting of six to nine representatives to provide advice to the Board of Selectmen on the steps to be taken to redevelop the site in partnership with the property owner. Furthermore, it was recommended that there be a public outreach component to inform the overall process. An outline for the Site Master Plan was then developed that detailed the elements that needed to be incorporated into the plan.

The Town and NMCOG established a Letter of Agreement for DLTA assistance in April 2008 related to the former mill site. NMCOG pledged \$15,000 in technical assistance to the community through this agreement. Annual Town Meeting, held on May 5, 2008, unanimously voted to adopt the provisions of Chapter 43D related to the designation of the former mill property as a PDS and also voted to designate the community as an ETA. The Town subsequently established the Mill Site Study Committee in June 2008, as suggested by NMCOG.

The activities of the Town and the property owner demonstrate the partnership that has been forged in order to successfully bring economic investment to this blighted parcel. The town has

increased the economic development tools available by pursuing designation as an ETA and establishing a PDS.

8. I-495 Corridor Transportation Study

The Greater Lowell region is served by an extensive highway network that includes Route 3, Interstate 93 and Interstate 495. Over the past several years, the state and federal governments have initiated projects to address traffic congestion issues along Route 3 and I-93. In 2006, MassHighway completed the Route 3 North Transportation Improvement Program, which added a third travel lane in each direction along the entire 21-mile long corridor. Communities located along the corridor are now looking to capitalize on the investment that the federal and state governments have made by encouraging businesses to locate in the area.

Efforts are underway to construct improvements along the I-93 corridor. MassHighway has initiated the design and permitting processes for construction of a new interchange along I-93, between Dascomb Road and Route 125, in the communities of Andover, Tewksbury and Wilmington. This improvement project also includes the addition of a fourth travel lane on I-93, from the area of the new interchange to I-495. Once completed, the new interchange will provide access to 700 acres of developable land that is presently landlocked.

While conditions on Route 3 have improved and the I-93 improvement project has made considerable progress, travel conditions along I-495 have deteriorated due to increased congestion levels during peak hours. Given that Interstate 495 has played an important role in the region's growth and development, functioning as both an interstate and a local commuter highway, the importance of addressing these poor travel conditions is evident from both an economic development perspective and safety perspective.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOTPW), in conjunction with NMOG and MVPC, completed the *I-495 Corridor Transportation Study* in June 2008. This study, initiated in 2005, provided a forum for state and regional agencies, municipalities, business leaders, legislators, transportation service providers and the general public to collaboratively develop solutions to address existing and future transportation problems along the corridor.

The I-495 Corridor study area population was 491,000 in 2000, according to the U.S. Census, and is expected to grow to 556,000 by 2025, based on MassHighway projections. Of the communities located within the study area, Westford is expected to have the highest population growth rate (41%). Numerous technology firms have established business locations along this portion of the interstate, in similar fashion to the high technology development that was previously attracted to the Route 128 corridor due to its proximity to Boston, convenient access, and available land. Traffic volumes along some sections of the corridor have tripled since the late 1970s. By 2000, there were about 247,000 jobs located within the I-495 study area. Employment is expected to increase 16% by 2025, adding about 39,700 jobs. In Westford alone, there are approximately 200 acres of industrially zoned land available for development in the vicinity of Exit 32.

The *I-495 Corridor Transportation Study* documented existing conditions along the corridor relative to transportation, land use, socio-economic characteristics and the environment. The

study also examined projected conditions in the year 2030, analyzing how well the I-495 mainline and interchanges would function, using the concept of level of service (LOS), a measure of the efficiency of traffic operations. The study concluded that additional public transit service and the development of park and ride lots will not be sufficient measures to negate the need to add additional capacity to the corridor in the future. In the near-term, (less than 2 years) the following improvements will be needed within the Northern Middlesex region:

- Exit 38/Route 38 interchange, Tewksbury: The retiming of existing signals would improve PM operating conditions from LOS D to LOS C; and
- Exit 39/Route 133, Tewksbury: Signal retiming would improve PM operating conditions from LOS D to B overall, with the International Place approach improving from LOS F to LOS C.

Mid-term (2 to 8 years) improvements recommended in the study included the following:

- Exit 32/Boston Road, Westford: Lengthening of the existing acceleration lane by 70 feet from its current 750-foot length;
- Exit 33/North Road, Chelmsford: Installation of a traffic signal system;
- Exit 34 Northbound/Route 110, Chelmsford: Installation of a new traffic signal system at the end of the off-ramp, and creation of a new left-turn lane on Route 110 to serve the on-ramp to I-495 northbound by restriping existing pavement;
- Exit 34 Southbound/Route 110, Chelmsford: Installation of a traffic signal and creation of a new left-turn lane on Route 110 by restriping the existing pavement, and the lengthening of the existing acceleration lane by 320 feet, to 820 feet. This could be accomplished by restriping existing pavement. The deceleration lane should also be lengthened from 300 feet to 520 feet;
- Exit 37 Northbound/Woburn Street, Lowell: The installation of a traffic signal system and the addition of a left-turn lane on Woburn Street;
- Exit 37 Southbound/Woburn Street, Lowell: The signalization of the intersection and construction of a left-turn lane on Woburn Street;
- Exit 38 Southbound/Route 38, Tewksbury: Lengthening of the existing 900-foot acceleration lane to 1,350 feet; and
- Exit 39 Northbound and Southbound/Route 133, Tewksbury: Lengthening of the acceleration lane from 870 feet to 1,420 feet.

The study also identified long-term improvements (more than 8 years). Numerous sections of the mainline will function at LOS E or F by 2030. The proposed solution for addressing these operational deficiencies is to add additional lane capacity from Exit 32 to Exit 40, a distance of 15 miles. All widening would occur in the median, and following the widening, all merge and diverge movements would operate at acceptable levels of service, with the exception of the weave movement from I-495 NB to Route 110/Route 3. Redesign/relocation of this interchange would be needed to address this problem. Capacity improvements will also be needed on the Exit 32 ramps, and the Exit 38 NB/Route 38 signals will need to be retimed. The overall cost of the I-495 widening and related improvements is currently estimated at \$102 million.

It is assumed that the short-term recommendations outlined in the study will be implemented by MassHighway as part of its ongoing maintenance program or under a district-wide contract. The mid-term and long-term improvements will need to be programmed in the region's Transportation Improvement Program and in the State Transportation Improvement Program, through the MPO process. The improvements outlined in the study will be critical to providing the transportation infrastructure necessary for the future economic growth and prosperity of the region.

E. CEDS Action Steps for 2009

NMCOG will continue to fulfill its partnership responsibilities with EDA during 2009 collaboratively with the other economic development stakeholders in the Greater Lowell region. As with this past year's activities, it remains the collective responsibility of all the economic development stakeholders to work with NMCOG to address the ten goals outlined in the 2004 Five-Year CEDS. The overall CEDS Action Steps for 2009 to be implemented between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009 will be as follows:

1. Continue CEDS "grass-roots" planning process

- Implement the EDA Planning Investment and develop a schedule for the Five-Year CEDS (2009-2013);
- Schedule five (5) CEDS Committee meetings during the program year;
- Maintain Evaluation as an ongoing process;
- Identify and approve Priority Projects as part of the annual CEDS planning process;
- Host two public forums on Infrastructure and Workforce Development that build upon our previous work in these areas;
- Develop and submit Economic Development District (EDD) application for approval as the Northern Middlesex Economic Development District, Inc. (NMEDD);
- Develop and submit an Economic Adjustment application to continue support for the annual CEDS process in 2009-2010;
- Develop and submit the Five-Year CEDS (2009-2013) to EDA by June 30, 2009 and make copies available on the NMCOG web site and to the economic development stakeholders in the region; and
- Continue to provide demographic data and information to municipalities, businesses, non-profit groups, other government agencies and the public.

2. Provide support for local economic development efforts.

- Work with local communities to implement streamlined permitting processes to attract private investment;
- Support local efforts to access Chapter 43D funds, particularly in Chelmsford and Pepperell;
- Work with the Tewksbury Economic Development Committee to attract business and to identify tax incentive programs;
- Promote improvements at Drum Hill in Chelmsford so that it will become more user-friendly;

- Advocate for federal and state funds to support local economic development initiatives; and
- Target funds to projects in the City of Lowell to alleviate the distress factors.

3. *Assist and provide technical assistance for regional economic development projects.*

- Promote the Hamilton Canal District and the Lowell Junction project as important economic generators that benefit the region;
- Work with local communities on regional solutions to local problems, such as addressing the sewer and water capacity issues;
- Support the Town of Billerica in its efforts to work with the Towns of Burlington and Bedford in completing the Middlesex Turnpike in order to support economic development, such as the expansion of EMD Serono;
- Work with the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council (MVEDC) and the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) to support regional economic development projects; and
- Support the efforts by the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council to encourage local communities to become more receptive to increased private investment by the biotech industry.

4. *Implement Five-Year CEDS Goals*

- **Economic Development:** *Develop a regional economic development framework that supports the efforts of private industry, local communities and agencies, educational institutions, federal and state agencies and private foundations to create jobs and improve the quality of life in the region.*
 - Establish Priority Development Sites in local communities and streamline local permitting and development review;
 - Support local economic development initiatives, such as the Tewksbury Economic Development Committee, the updating of the Chelmsford Master Plan and the revitalization of the Pepperell paper mill;
 - Address sewer infrastructure needs within the communities of Chelmsford, Dracut, Lowell, Tewksbury and Tyngsborough; and
 - Work with the City of Lowell to fund its Hamilton Canal District projects.
- **Workforce Development:** *Increase the supply of skilled workers for industry in the region through the integration of the economic development and workforce development systems.*
 - Take advantage of state and federal programs focusing on job training in the area of green and renewable energy;
 - Work with the Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board (GLWIB) and the Career Center of Lowell to coordinate economic development and workforce development policies;
 - Encourage private sector investment in training opportunities through a public/private partnership that reduces the tax burden for private companies; and

- Work with the state's Rapid Response Team and local businesses experiencing layoffs to assist employees in finding new jobs.
- **Education:** *Improve the educational and workforce skills of primary, secondary and college students to meet the needs of industry in the future.*
 - Work with UMass Lowell and the City of Lowell to address the education needs of biotech, nanotech and other emerging industries;
 - Partner with Middlesex Community College to identify training opportunities with expanding companies; and
 - Support local communities in their efforts to access training programs for residents interested in new employment opportunities.
- **Affordable Housing:** *Create more affordable housing throughout the region to ensure that businesses can expand and relocate to the region with assurance that their workforce will be able to afford housing.*
 - Encourage the use of inclusionary zoning as a means of increasing the regional affordable housing stock;
 - Address rising foreclosures within the region by working with financial institutions, non-profits, and governmental entities on foreclosure prevention initiatives and financial literacy;
 - Update Affordable Housing Production Plans for local communities and identify funding for a Regional Housing Plan; and
 - Support the construction of new affordable housing units in the region.
- **Racial and Ethnic Diversity:** *Increase the opportunities available to minority and low-income communities in the region to participate in the expansion of the regional economy.*
 - Increase minority participation in local government and the electoral process;
 - Support the efforts of OneLowell to increase the economic and housing opportunities available to minority and low-income communities;
 - Identify funding sources for Cambodian small businesses through the involvement of the Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce; and
 - Promote business and contracting opportunities for minority firms.
- **Pockets of Distress:** *Target assistance to those neighborhoods and communities in the region that have not shared the economic benefits of the regional economy.*
 - Establish job training programs targeted for workers residing in neighborhoods with high economic distress levels;
 - Promote economic benefits to Lowell neighborhoods through the implementation of the Hamilton Canal District projects;
 - Establish job preference for area residents for those companies locating in the region that are receiving government financial assistance; and
 - Support public transit initiatives that provide transportation for inner city residents to jobs outside the City.

- **Regional Transportation System:** *Develop the infrastructure needed to build upon the strengths of the regional highway system and the public transportation network to enhance access to the economic centers of the region.*
 - Complete remaining phases of the Middlesex Turnpike project;
 - Expand downtown trolley system to connect the Hamilton Canal District with Gallagher Terminal;
 - Address infrastructure deficiencies in the Lowell Junction area; and
 - Expand public transportation options to better serve suburban employment centers in Chelmsford, Tyngsborough and Westford.

- **Quality of Life:** *Maintain the community character in the region by preserving and protecting the region's natural, cultural and historic resources and encouraging concentrated development.*
 - Assist communities with the preparation of local Open Space and Recreation Plans;
 - Work with the National Park Service to maintain the historic nature of the Hamilton Canal District;
 - Develop an update of the Chelmsford Master Plan addressing the community's natural, cultural and historic resources; and
 - Complete the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

- **Technology:** *Enhance the region's strengths within its "cluster industries" by promoting technological advancements and expanding the technological infrastructure in the region.*
 - Update local land use regulations and permitting requirements to better accommodate and attract clean technology, biotechnology and nanotechnology industries;
 - Support the UMass Lowell Centers of Excellence that provide spin-off businesses from incubator space;
 - Work with the MVEDC and the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD) to promote the location of businesses within specific "cluster industries" in the Greater Lowell region; and
 - Promote advanced telecommunications systems throughout the region to support the technical requirements of emerging technology firms.

- **Financial Investments:** *Target federal, state, local, non-profit and private funds to those projects that create jobs and improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods.*
 - Identify federal, state and private funds in order to implement the Hamilton Canal project;
 - Work with EDA officials to promote economic development projects in the region and to access public works funds for these projects;
 - Work with the Lowell Plan and the Billerica Community Alliance to identify funding opportunities for expanding businesses; and

- Utilize the state's Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP) as a means to attract businesses to local communities.

V. Evaluation Section

As outlined in the *Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008*, the most critical aspect of any plan is the evaluation component. Without an annual evaluation of the programmatic efforts being undertaken to achieve the stated Goals and Objectives in the Five-Year CEDS document, it is difficult for NMCOG and its economic development partners to determine how successful they've been and what, if any, changes need to be made. NMCOG recognizes that the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee and the NMCOG Council have a role to play in this overall evaluation process as well. It is also clear that NMCOG and the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee do not have the sole responsibility for achieving the CEDS Goals and Objectives, but that it is also the responsibility of the other economic development stakeholders in the region. As the lead economic development agency for the region, NMCOG needs to collect certain necessary information during the year and report on it as part of the Annual CEDS Update process. However, given the ongoing funding and time constraints, it is often difficult to fully document the accomplishments of the other economic development stakeholders in the region. We will attempt to do a better job of this in the future through the strengthening of our relationships with the other economic development partners.

This section provides an evaluation of the past program year in relation to the Evaluation Methodology that was outlined in the *Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008*. It is expected that this Evaluation Methodology will be modified by the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee as part of the Five-Year CEDS for 2009-2013. The Evaluation Methodology focuses upon both quantitative and qualitative measures and attempts to provide an overall assessment of the program activities in accordance with what was originally established. The annual assessment process also helps identify those areas that need to be improved upon, as well as those areas that have been addressed fully. The evaluation components have been broken out into three separate areas: the CEDS Implementation Process, the CEDS Goals and the CEDS Priority Projects. Each area is important to the overall success of the CEDS program in the Greater Lowell region. The italicized information comes directly from the original Five-Year CEDS document.

CEDS Implementation Process

The CEDS Implementation Process addresses how the “grass-roots” CEDS process was implemented during the program year, the level of participation at the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee meetings and other forums, the availability and dissemination of data that was developed through the completion of the Annual CEDS Update, and the CEDS Marketing and Outreach process. Each of these components is essential to the overall functioning of the “grass-roots” CEDS process and ensures greater participation by businesses, community organizations, municipalities, minority groups, nonprofit groups, public agencies and the general public in the CEDS process. Outlined below are the evaluation results for the Levels of Participation, Data Development and Dissemination and CEDS Marketing & Outreach components:

1. Levels of Participation

The levels of participation at the public and CEDS Committee meetings are critical to the continuing success of the CEDS program. NMCOG needs to improve its recruitment effort in

attracting people from various backgrounds to participate in public meetings and to serve on the CEDS Committee. This effort is necessary in order to maintain the “grass-roots” nature of the CEDS process.

The Greater Lowell CEDS Committee met four times during the course of this past year. The membership of the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee was expanded to include more representatives of the minority community to ensure that all voices were being heard. During this past year, we began losing some of these new Committee members due to changing jobs and increased professional and personal commitments. NMCOG needs to work with ONE Lowell and other CEDS Committee members to recruit new members to the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee. It is anticipated that there will be additional members that will need to be replaced. During our CEDS Committee meetings, we’ve had fairly good attendance. The attendance at our meetings is documented in our minutes for each meeting.

NMCOG has updated its mailing list every year since the Five-Year CEDS was developed. During this past year, we worked with our economic development partners to co-sponsor different events. Due to staffing limitations and time constraints, we were unable to host our own Public Forums. However, NMCOG hosted a Citizens Planning Training Collaborative program on the Chapter 43D initiative with MPRO, MOBD, and MAED on October 22, 2007, which had ten participants. NMCOG co-hosted the Zoning Reform Task Force meeting on November 9, 2007 at which there were 30 attendees. In supporting the Town of Billerica’s economic development initiatives, NMCOG assisted the Town and Representative Bill Greene’s Office on their “Growing Your Business in Billerica” forum on December 11, 2007 at which there were 60 people in attendance. NMCOG hosted the Chapter 40B Regulations session with DHCD on May 15, 2008 at which there were 15 people participating. NMCOG co-sponsored the BioReady Community Forums with the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, MVEDC and MVPC at Wyeth in Andover (34 attendees) on April 2, 2008 and at Millipore in Billerica (33 attendees) on April 30, 2008. NMCOG played a major role in working with Congresswoman Tsongas’ Office to plan the Regional Housing Summit held on June 2, 2008, which attracted 120 participants.

Based upon the quantitative and qualitative measures established for this component, NMCOG exceeded its estimates in terms of the number of attendees at most of its public meetings. The participation of the CEDS Committee was fairly steady, but due to some vacancies that developed, there is room for improvement in this area. NMCOG also needs to develop an evaluation tool to be used in conjunction with its public forums.

2. Data Development and Dissemination

NMCOG provides data to the general public and local communities on an ongoing basis. The additional role related to the CEDS complements the efforts NMCOG already makes to keep the public and member communities apprised of new data that impacts the area. Among the data provided are the U.S. Census, local and regional traffic counts, labor market information, housing affordability information, GIS maps and recent newspaper articles. NMCOG provides this information by telephone, mail and on its web site, www.nmcog.org. The private sector also contacts this office for data on the individual communities within the region. At some point, NMCOG will work with local communities to assemble information on a regional basis on available commercial and industrial space.

NMCOG continues to provide extensive data to the public through its web site and through personal requests. The presence of the *Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008* on our web site has provided the most complete and detailed document regarding our region that we've ever developed from an economic development and data perspective. We continue to receive inquiries on updated economic information that we provide to the public. We also share updated economic development documents that we develop as part of the CEDS process with our member communities. When our local communities develop grant applications for which they needed updated data, our office regularly provides the information. Through our work with the Towns of Tyngsborough and Westford, we've provided updated economic development data through our contracts related to the Economic Development Study in Tyngsborough and the Comprehensive Master Plan in Westford. In our development of the Chapter 43D applications, we've utilized our economic data to address economic distress issues, as well as to demonstrate how well a community has done economically. Similarly, in our development of the Housing Productivity Plans for Dracut and Billerica, we've used updated housing statistics to address the issues raised by DHCD.

We have not had many requests for copies of the Five-Year CEDS, principally because it is available on our web site. Our annual requests and referrals far exceed the evaluation criteria we originally outlined for this component. As the U.S. Census representative for this region, we have already provided local growth information to the U.S. Census and will be providing additional data to our communities once the 2010 U.S. Census is completed. In terms of the external requests we've had on our web site, the following data summarize the number of external hits we received between February (partial) and June 2008:

Table 21: Monthly Website Usage for www.nmcog.org (Feb 2008-June 2008)

Month	Number of External Website Requests	% of Total Requests
February 2008 (Partial)	51	0.06%
March 2008	20,085	24.2%
April 2008	20,566	24.8%
May 2008	21,854	26.3%
June 2008	20,538	24.7%
February – June 2008	83,094	100%

Source: NMCOG

3. CEDS Marketing & Outreach

Now that the CEDS document has been completed, NMCOG can begin its marketing and outreach efforts to promote the CEDS. Presentations will be made before the Lowell City Council and the Boards of Selectmen in the towns, as well as before various businesses, social and community groups upon request. The effort under this component will provide increased levels of participation under Component One summarized earlier. The CEDS document will also be on the NMCOG web site and, hopefully, will be linked with other web sites in the region. Increased marketing via the Lowell Sun and the community newspapers will be implemented once the CEDS document is approved by EDA.

Apart from the work that NMCOG has done related to its Annual CEDS Update process and its request for Priority Projects, there has not been a great deal that has been done in this area. However, as part of our transition period from the previous Executive Director, we made presentations before the Boards of Selectmen in Pepperell, Westford, Chelmsford and Tyngsborough, as well as a joint presentation before the Dunstable Board of Selectmen and Planning Board, on what NMCOG could provide for each community. As part of that presentation, we focused on our CEDS document and process and encouraged their involvement in our public process. We also explained how we request projects on an annual basis to include on our CEDS Priority Project list.

Based upon the quantitative and qualitative measures established in 2004, NMCOG needs to do more in marketing the CEDS document and program. Even though our five presentations fall within the “good” category, there is a need to broaden our marketing efforts. In our public forums, we stress how the CEDS document is important to regional development in Greater Lowell. Since our Council is comprised of elected officials from the City Council/Boards of Selectmen and Planning Boards, we spend a great deal of time educating them on the benefits available under the CEDS program. However, until there are public works projects funded in our region, there will be some skepticism about getting too involved. At the current time, there is the feeling by our suburban communities that only the City of Lowell can benefit from the program. We have been working to educate these officials that layoffs at major industries within the suburban communities will have as big an impact as unemployment rates or per capita income figures.

Goals and Objectives

As outlined in the *Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008*, the establishment of quantitative and qualitative measures for the ten CEDS Goals is more difficult than dealing with the CEDS Implementation Process. NMCOG still has not had sufficient program experience or the staffing to fully document the total number of jobs created or dollars invested by specific goal. Also, as mentioned in the Five-Year CEDS document, each regional or local organization responds to the funding requirements from their federal or state funding agency. For instance, even though we’ve been working closely with the Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board (GLWIB), they respond directly to the funding requirements established by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. However, even given these limitations, NMCOG continues to work with its economic development partners to respond to the CEDS requirements as efficiently and effectively as possible. Outlined below are the evaluation components for the ten CEDS Goals established in the Five-Year CEDS:

1. Economic Development

Develop a regional economic development framework that supports the efforts of private industry, local communities and agencies, educational institutions, federal and state agencies and private foundations to create jobs and improve the quality of life in the region.

In terms of the quantitative measures, the Greater Lowell region has benefited economically from the growth in high tech industries. In particular, the City of Lowell and the Town of Billerica have experienced exceptional growth in these areas since the early 2000’s. Economic

growth in the other communities has often been limited by infrastructure barriers, particularly sewer and water infrastructure. Each community is trying to address these barriers on a local and regional basis. As of 2008, the region had submitted only one economic adjustment application and two planning applications to EDA. No public works applications have been submitted to date, however, upon meeting with the new Economic Development Representative, Alan Brigham, in March 2008, we began discussing the submission of a public works application for the Hamilton Canal project. The completion of the Annual CEDS for 2008 provides an overview of the activities to date.

The regional economic development capacity has grown appreciably since 2004. The Greater Lowell region had not had a relationship with EDA since 1994 and now there is an ongoing annual CEDS planning process in place. We have an annual RFP process for CEDS Priority Projects, which is more extensive than the OEDP process in place in 1994. There is a permanent CEDS Committee, even though we need to find some replacements for long-serving members. There has also been greater recognition of the advantages that can be derived from a comprehensive “grass-roots” economic development planning process. The number of projects that have been completed or started since 2004, as outlined in the Project Status Report section, have been quite significant.

2. Workforce Development

Increase the supply of skilled workers for industry in the region through the integration of the economic development and workforce development systems.

The Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board (GLWIB) has played a major role in the workforce development initiatives in the Greater Lowell region. As outlined in the Goal Attainment section, GLWIB has set the standard for workforce development programs in the region. Both the GLWIB and NMCOG have shared their respective planning documents and have attended each other’s training sessions to help integrate the economic development and workforce development systems. The GLWIB Director is a member of the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee and is also an appointed member of our nonprofit entity, NMEDD, Inc. NMCOG has responded to interview requests from GLWIB to improve their overall operations and has recommended different steps to tie both systems together more fully. Under our submitted 2008-2009 program, we are focusing on the Workforce Development system through one of our Public Forums. This effort will be done in conjunction with Middlesex Community College. Although the unemployment rate in the region has not been reduced, the efforts of GLWIB, Middlesex Community College and UMass Lowell provide the necessary labor supply for growing businesses in our region.

3. Education

Improve the educational and workforce skills of primary, secondary and college students to meet the needs of industry in the future.

The quantitative data related to SAT Scores from 2006-2007 by District, the MCAS Scores in 2008 by District for English/Language Arts, Math and Science and Graduation Rates for 2008 are attached at the end of the Evaluation section in Tables 22- 26 on pages 70-73.

The Greater Lowell region continues to have one of the better educated labor forces in the country. UMass Lowell, Middlesex Community College and many of the schools in the Greater Boston area have worked together to meet the needs of industry for quality workers.

4. Affordable Housing

Create more affordable housing throughout the region to ensure that businesses can expand and relocate to the region with assurance that their workforce will be able to afford their housing.

The Greater Lowell region has addressed this goal as well as any other goal. Every community in the region completed housing production plans for DHCD and the number of new Chapter 40B housing units created has been summarized in the Goal Attainment section. Funding from HUD, DHCD and other state sources has enabled affordable housing to be built in the region. The downturn in the housing market has depressed the values of the housing stock and increased the number of foreclosures in the region. When the Five-Year CEDS was completed in 2004, most people felt that the housing boom would go on for a long time. The affordable housing stock has grown appreciably in the region since 2004 and new Housing Production Plans will need to be developed in response to the new Chapter 40B requirements.

The business community has indicated their interest in the production of housing that is affordable to their workforce. In order for these businesses to expand or for other businesses to relocate in this area, there needs to be housing available for their workers. NMCOG has focused extensively on this area due to its strong correlation with a growing economy. The establishment of NMEDD, Inc. as the non-profit arm of NMCOG will enable us to tie economic development and housing initiatives even closer together.

5. Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Increase the opportunities available to minority and low-income communities in the region to participate in the expansion of the regional economy.

As outlined previously, ONE Lowell has been particularly helpful in assisting us in adding more minority members to our CEDS Committee. Similarly, ONE Lowell plays a unique role in advancing the causes of immigrants and minority groups within the City. Within the Goal Attainment section, the accomplishments of the organization have been recognized at the federal level, as well as at the local level. NMCOG is seeking more opportunities to interact with the minority and low-income communities and has utilized the offices of Community Teamwork, Inc., ONE Lowell, GLWIB and Coalition for a Better Acre to determine the needs of these groups. NMCOG staff have participated at various city-sponsored events where there is a greater representation of minorities present. NMCOG needs to do more work in this area.

6. Pockets of Distress

Target assistance to those neighborhoods and communities in the region that have not shared the economic benefits of the regional economy.

The City of Lowell is the only community in the region that meets the EDA distress criteria related to unemployment rates and per capita income. For the past twenty-four months, the average unemployment rate in Lowell has exceeded the average national unemployment rate for

the same period by more than 1%. In terms of per capita income, Lowell is slightly higher than 80% of the national per capita income according to the 2000 U.S. Census. However, most of the Census Tracts in the City are closer to 70% of the national per capita income, including the Census Tract in which the Hamilton Canal project is located. This data has been documented in the *Annual CEDS Update for 2008*, the *Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008*, and the grant applications submitted by NMCOG for economic adjustment and short-term planning funds. Therefore, NMCOG has targeted its efforts to the City of Lowell, while also determining how to meet the needs of its suburban communities that have experienced layoffs. In many cases, these layoffs in the suburban communities directly impact Lowell residents.

Even though the City has not received an EDA Public Works grant to date, we have been working with the EDA Regional Office to promote the Hamilton Canal project as a likely candidate for EDA funding. This project already has extensive support from the City of Lowell and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and it would make a great deal of sense to include EDA as an economic development and financial partner. Among the list of CEDS Priority Projects, the top three projects for the region are located in the City of Lowell: Hamilton Canal, Hamilton Crossing and the JAM Plan. We hope to be able to improve our evaluation next year from needs improvement to excellent.

7. Regional Transportation System

Develop the infrastructure needed to build upon the strengths of the regional highway system and the public transportation network to enhance access to the economic centers of the region.

As staff to the Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO), NMCOG plays a unique role in the transportation arena for the state and region. NMCOG is the premier agency for Greater Lowell in addressing funding for highway and transit projects at the federal and state levels. NMCOG has also recognized the importance of tying economic development and transportation activities together. NMCOG is one of the few agencies to have a joint economic development/transportation component in its work plan with MassHighway, which provides support for a number of projects, including the Lowell Junction project. Within the Goal Attainment section, there is a listing of a few transportation projects and other infrastructure projects that have been completed or initiated. Within the Project_CEDS Priority Project Status Report, there is an extensive listing of transportation and infrastructure projects that have been implemented or started since 2004. Whether it be on the quantitative or qualitative measures, NMCOG clearly exceeds the evaluation criteria established for this goal.

8. Quality of Life

Maintain the community character in the region by preserving and protecting the region's natural, cultural and historic resources and encouraging concentrated development.

NMCOG plays a prominent role in the region as part of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review process. During this past year, NMCOG completed twelve environmental reviews in Billerica (2), Dracut (2), Lowell (4), Pepperell (1), Tewksbury (1) and Westford (2), which places the region in the "good" category. NMCOG actively worked on Open Space and Recreation Plans for its member communities and saw a 20-year old project come to fruition in

the Bruce Freeman Bike Path. Quality of Life issues are important to the residents of the Greater Lowell region from an economic development perspective. The communities in this region have utilized funding through the Community Preservation Act to finance open space and historic preservation initiatives, as well as to support affordable housing projects. The listing within the Goal Attainment section provides a good sampling of the Quality of Life projects that have been funded or completed in the past year.

9. Technology

Enhance the region's strengths within its "cluster industries" by promoting technological advancements and expanding the technological infrastructure in the region.

UMass Lowell continues to lead the way on biotechnology and nanotechnology issues in the region. Its collaboration with Northeastern University and the University of New Hampshire has demonstrated its willingness to work with other universities to focus its efforts on nanotechnology. The passage of the Life Sciences bill in Massachusetts in 2008 has provided more financial opportunities for private companies as the Commonwealth competes with other states across the country. NMCOG's work with the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council and its member communities could lead the way in putting these communities at a greater advantage for attracting biotech, nanotech and other emerging technology firms.

The City of Lowell has benefited from the relocation of numerous technology companies, including Motorola, Xenith, Telles/Metabolix, Alliptia, and Global Energy Services. Other companies, such as Konarka, Alpha Imaging and DS Graphics, have expanded in the City. Billerica and Chelmsford have also benefited from the relocation or expansion of firms, such as EMD Serono. These trends are important to the overall growth of the economy in the region. The region has earned an excellent evaluation score on this goal.

10. Financial Investments

Target federal, state, local, non-profit and private funds to those projects that create jobs and improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods.

The financial investments in the region have exceeded the evaluation criteria outlined in the Five-Year CEDS. As outlined in the Goal Attainment section, there are a number of retail, commercial and industrial projects being developed in the region. The State has focused on improvements to the Hamilton Canal and Lowell Junction projects and has maintained its commitment to economic development throughout the region. The Greater Lowell region has earned its reputation as a place for private firms to invest their money. The new headquarters for Jeanne D'Arc Credit Union reflects the confidence of this area in its economic future.

CEDS Priority Projects

The CEDS Priority Projects represent a major component of the overall CEDS effort. These projects are funded by multiple funding sources and each one addresses a specific goal or goals within the CEDS. These projects are important to the local communities and non-profit agencies that sponsored them and have been included because they help move the Greater Lowell region closer to its Vision. A limited number of projects are eligible for EDA funding and will be reported

on separate from the other projects. Many of the transportation projects included on the regional Transportation Improvement Program are dependent upon passage of federal legislation, as well as changing state priorities. In essence, this component will be deemed to be successful if projects are implemented, there is movement from the Short-Term, Intermediate and Long-Term project priority lists and new projects are submitted each year.

Even though this region has not received any EDA Public Works funding to date, there has been significant movement on the Priority Project List, whereby important projects in the region have received their funding through other sources. The Status of the Priority Projects Listing provides an overview of every project that has been completed, started or dropped from the 2004 Priority Project List. NMCOG is still prepared to submit an application for EDD designation and will continue to apply for planning or economic adjustment funds to maintain the continuous, comprehensive “grass-roots” economic development planning process. NMCOG has exceeded the evaluation criteria for the CEDS Priority Projects component.

Table 22: Mean SAT Scores, 2006-2007 by District

School	Reading	Writing	Math	Number of Test Takers
Billerica - Billerica Memorial High School	515	499	534	326
Chelmsford - Chelmsford High	527	519	535	401
Dracut - Dracut Senior High	495	479	501	217
Groton-Dunstable - Groton Dunstable Regional	539	536	568	176
Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Tech (Tyngsborough)	438	418	451	77
Lowell - Lowell High School	463	456	478	518
North Middlesex - North Middlesex Regional High School	528	513	531	244
Nashoba Valley Regional Vocational School (Westford)	461	434	452	38
Shawsheen Regional Vocational School (Billerica)	460	440	460	119
Tewksbury - Tewksbury Memorial High	511	511	529	221
Tyngsborough - Tyngsborough High School	497	496	512	138
Westford - Westford Academy	569	563	583	324
NMCOG Average (12 schools)	500	489	511	2,799 (total test takers)

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Table 23: MCAS Scores in 2008 by District: English/ Language Arts (Grade 10)

Organization Name	Above Proficient/Advanced Number	Above Proficient/Advanced Percent	Proficient Number	Proficient Percent	Needs Improvement Number	Needs Improvement Percent	Warning/Failing Number	Warning/Failing Percent
Billerica	99	26%	209	54%	58	15%	18	5%
Chelmsford	155	39%	194	49%	38	10%	8	2%
Dracut	74	23%	173	53%	57	18%	20	6%
Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical (Tyngsborough)	9	2%	242	50%	206	43%	25	5%
Groton-Dunstable	86	42%	105	52%	10	5%	2	1%
Lowell	67	9%	348	46%	273	36%	68	9%
Nashoba Valley Regional Vocational Technical (Westford)	11	6%	104	56	68	36	4	2
North Middlesex	73	24%	180	59%	48	16%	5	2%
Shawsheen Valley Regional Vocational Technical (Billerica)	42	13%	214	68	53	17	4	1
Tewksbury	49	19%	137	53%	61	24%	12	5%
Tyngsborough	33	23%	94	66%	14	10%	1	1%
Westford	196	49%	176	44%	21	5%	6	2%
NMCOG Totals	894		2176		907		173	

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Table 24: MCAS Scores in 2008 by District: *Math* (Grade 10)

Organization Name	Above Proficient/ Advanced Number	Above Proficient/ Advanced Percent	Proficient Number	Proficient Percent	Needs Improvement Number	Needs Improvement Percent	Warning/ Failing Number	Warning/ Failing Percent
Billerica	187	49%	119	31%	45	12%	28	7%
Chelmsford	236	59%	107	27%	39	10%	15	4%
Dracut	123	38%	100	31%	69	21%	30	9%
Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical	109	23%	167	35%	154	32%	51	11%
Groton-Dunstable Regional	153	75%	40	20%	8	4%	2	1%
Lowell	209	28%	181	24%	228	31%	124	17%
Nashoba Valley Regional Vocational Technical	40	22%	79	43%	54	29%	12	6%
North Middlesex Regional	169	55%	91	30%	40	13%	6	2%
Shawsheen Valley Regional Vocational Technical	113	36%	127	41%	69	22%	3	1%
Tewksbury	139	53%	61	23%	38	15%	22	8%
Tyngsborough	80	56%	43	30%	17	12%	3	2%
Westford	294	74%	78	20%	16	4%	9	2%
NMCOG Totals	1852		1193		777		305	

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Table 25: MCAS Scores in 2008 by District: Science (Grade 10)

Organization Name	Above Proficient/ Advanced Number	Above Proficient/ Advanced Percent	Proficient Number	Proficient Percent	Needs Improvement Number	Needs Improvement Percent	Warning/ Failing Number	Warning/ Failing Percent
Billerica	39	11%	207	58%	93	26%	21	6%
Chelmsford	112	29%	176	46%	81	21%	11	3%
Dracut	36	12%	119	41%	112	38%	25	9%
Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical	6	5%	62	48%	42	33%	19	15%
Groton-Dunstable	51	27%	108	57%	23	12%	8	4%
Lowell	31	5%	183	27%	320	47%	150	22%
Nashoba Valley Regional Vocational Technical	7	5%	74	48%	54	35%	20	13%
North Middlesex Regional	43	15%	140	50%	80	29%	17	6%
Shawsheen Valley Regional Vocational Technical	6	2%	136	46%	148	50%	6	2%
Tewksbury	29	12%	123	49%	84	33%	16	6%
Tyngsborough	27	20%	87	64%	17	13%	4	3%
Westford	152	39%	198	51%	30	8%	11	3%
NMCOG Totals	539		1613		1084		308	

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Table 26: High School Graduation Rates in 2008

Organization Name	Number in Cohort	Percent Graduated	Percent Still in School	Percent Non-Grad Completers	Percent GED	Percent Dropped Out	Percent Permanently Excluded
Billerica	399	88.5%	5.3%	0.5%	2%	3.5%	0.3%
Chelmsford	446	93.3%	3.8%	0.4%	0.7%	1.8%	0%
Dracut	310	82.6%	1.9%	1.3%	2.9%	11.3%	0%
Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical	461	93.1%	2.4%	0.2%	0%	4.3%	0%
Groton-Dunstable	208	95.2%	2.4%	0%	0%	2.4%	0%
Lowell	879	73.8%	11%	1.9%	2%	11.1%	0%
Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter (District)	65	21.5%	18.5%	0%	18.5%	36.9%	4.6%
Nashoba Valley Regional Vocational Technical	150	89.3%	7.3%	0%	1.3%	2%	0%
North Middlesex	294	89.1%	5.1%	0.7%	0.3%	4.8%	0%
Shawsheen Valley Regional Vocational Technical	307	94.8%	2.6%	0%	1%	1.6%	0%
Tewksbury	319	85.6%	4.1%	0%	3.8%	6.6%	0%
Tyngsborough	162	95.1%	0%	0%	1.2%	3.7%	0%
Westford	384	96.4%	2.1%	0%	0.8%	0.8%	0%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Appendices

Appendix I – CEDS Committee Membership

Appendix II – CEDS Committee Minutes

Appendix III – Annual CEDS Update Approval

Appendix IV – CEDS Priority Projects RFP Package

Appendix I:
CEDS Committee Membership

Table 26: CEDS Committee Membership

Member	Agency	Public	Private	Male	Female	White	Minority
Francisco Carvalho	Enterprise Bank		x	x		x	
Theresa Park*	DPD, City of Lowell	x			x		x
Prof. Victoria Fahlberg	OneLowell		x		x	x	
Beverly Woods*	NMCOG	x			x	x	
Robert Halpin	MVEDC		x	x		x	
Robert Hanson	Town of Pepperell	x		x		x	
Norman Khumalo	Town of Westford	x		x			x
Steve Joncas	Lowell Plan/LDFC		x	x		x	
Vacant	African Assistance Center						
William Lipchitz	Community Teamwork, Inc.	x		x		x	
Gerard Frechette	Washington Savings Bank		x	x		x	
Barbara O'Neill	Workforce Investment Board	x			x	x	
Jeanne Osborn	Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce		x		x	x	
Ellen Rawlings	NMCOG/Town of Billerica	x			x	x	
Osvalda Rodrigues	Mass. Alliance of Portuguese Speakers		x		x		x
Mark Scolnick	Appleby & Wyman Ins. Agency		x	x		x	
Sophy Suon	DPD, City of Lowell	x			x		x
Vacant	UMass - Lowell						
Stacie Hargis*	Congresswoman Niki Tsongas	x			x	x	
Arthur Williams	Small Business		x	x		x	

* Ad hoc member.

Appendix II:
CEDS Committee Meetings

Included documents:
Agendas and Meeting Minutes for CEDS Committee meetings

CEDS Committee Meeting

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
For the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

October 23, 2007
12:00-1:00
NMCOG Conference Room

AGENDA

- 1. Welcome and Introductions---Bob Flynn, Executive Director**
- 2. EDA Planning Contract---Jay Donovan, Associate Planner**
- 3. 2007-2008 Work Plan---Jay**
 - CEDS Committee Meetings**
 - EDD Application**
 - Planning Grant Application**
 - Public Forums**
 - RFP Process**
 - Annual CEDS Update for 2008**
- 4. Other Economic Development Activities---Jay**
 - Expedited Permitting Contract**
 - Westford Comprehensive Master Plan- Economic Development Component**
 - MassHighway Economic Development Component**
- 5. Next Meeting**

**CEDS Committee Meeting
NMCOG Conference Room
115 Thorndike Street, Lowell, MA 01852**

**Meeting Minutes
October 23, 2007**

CEDS Committee Members: Bruce Akashian (representing Barbara O'Neill), Frank Carvalho, Victoria Fahlberg, Bob Flynn (ad hoc), Jeanne Osborn, Theresa Park, Mark Scolnick, and Arthur Williams.

NMCOG Staff: Jay Donovan and Beverly Woods.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Bob Flynn, Executive Director of NMCOG, welcomed the CEDS Committee members to the meeting and thanked them for their active participation. He also asked them to introduce themselves. It was noted that this would be Bob's final CEDS Committee meeting.

2. EDA Planning Contract

Jay Donovan explained that NMCOG had received a new planning grant from EDA, which would cover the period from August 1, 2007 through July 31, 2008. It was expected that NMCOG would submit an application for Economic Development District (EDD) designation so that the region would not have to compete on an annual basis for EDA planning funds, but would receive long-term planning funds instead.

3. 2007-2008 Work Plan

Mr. Donovan outlined the components of the 2007-2008 Work Plan as outlined in the contract with EDA. Under the terms of the Program Summary, it was anticipated that the CEDS Committee would meet three additional times before June 30th, probably in February, April and June. The February meeting, according to Mr. Donovan, would be utilized to go over economic development activities in the region and to endorse a schedule for the completion of the Annual CEDS Update for 2008. The April meeting would be used to approve the RFP package to be sent out for Priority Projects, while the June meeting would be used to approve the Priority Projects and to recommend to the NMCOG Council that the Annual CEDS Update be approved.

Mr. Donovan then discussed the establishment of the non-profit arm for NMCOG, the Northern Middlesex Economic Development District, Inc. This entity would be designed to assist the region in advancing economic development and affordable housing initiatives, particularly with the suburban communities, which don't have the staffing capacity enjoyed by the City of Lowell. While the board members have been chosen from the NMCOG Council and CEDS Committee, the formal paperwork needs to be submitted to the Secretary of State's Office. The principal benefit of the non-profit arm will be to secure private and non-profit funds not currently available to NMCOG. Frank Carvalho asked whether the purpose of the non-profit would be to produce affordable housing or develop the resources. Mr. Donovan responded that the non-

profit would not be developing affordable housing, but would secure the resources for the local communities, undertake planning activities and build local capacity.

Mr. Donovan outlined that the Economic Development District (EDD) application would need eighteen to twenty-four months to be approved by EDA. EDA approval would also depend upon having an EDD slot available as there is a waiting list for EDDs to be approved. In terms of the EDA planning grant, NMCOG usually receives an invitation from EDA to apply in June for the contract to begin by August 1st. It is anticipated that NMCOG will be invited to apply for funding next year.

The work program submitted to EDA included the hosting of three Public Forums to address infrastructure, workforce development and the partnership between the City of Lowell and UMassLowell in creating job, research and development and investment opportunities for the region. Mr. Donovan stated that the infrastructure public forum was being delayed and it was hoped that Greg Bialecki would be available as a speaker. According to Mr. Donovan, the Route 3/ Middlesex Turnpike corridor could provide the focus for this public forum due to the economic development opportunities available. Arthur Williams raised concern about the congestion issues along Route 3.

Mr. Donovan outlined the RFP process for determining the CEDS Priority Projects based upon established criteria consistent with the Five-Year CEDS and the EDA Investment Policy Guidelines. He also noted that the Annual CEDS Update for 2008 should be submitted by June 30, 2008.

4. Other Economic Development Activities

Mr. Donovan provided an overview of the other economic development activities in the region.

- **Expedited Permitting Contract**

Mr. Donovan reviewed the copy of the October 2007 Quarterly Report for the Expedited Permitting program that was submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). This report covered the period from July 1, 2007 through September 30, 2007. Mr. Donovan explained the Priority Development Site (PDS) program and indicated that the City of Lowell and Towns of Billerica, Tewksbury and Pepperell were interested in the program. The City of Lowell had applied for \$ 150,000 for the Hamilton Canal District. Theresa Park stated that the Lowell Department of Planning and Development was working with the designated developer, Trinity Financial, to schedule a public charrette process to receive public input regarding uses, dimensions and zoning for the site. Mr. Donovan added that the Hamilton Canal project was the top priority project in the region.

Mr. Donovan then provided an overview of the Lexigen/EMD Serono project along Middlesex Turnpike in Billerica, the Lowell Junction project in Tewksbury and the former Pepperell Paper Mill site in Pepperell as candidates for Chapter 43D funding. Mark Scolnick asked whether there was an opportunity for these communities to share an economic development person through NMCOG. Mr. Donovan replied that each community receives assistance from NMCOG through a Letter of Agreement under the

DHCD contract. Other communities are not interested in identifying a PDS site, but are rather more interested in permit streamlining recommendations, which are being developed as part of *A Best Practices Model for Streamlined Local Permitting* being finalized by the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA).

- **Westford Comprehensive Master Plan – Economic Development Component**

Mr. Donovan provided a brief overview of the work on the economic development component of the Westford Comprehensive Master Plan. Mr. Williams expressed appreciation for the work being completed by NMCOG.

- **MassHighway Economic Development Component**

Mr. Donovan explained how the economic development component of the MassHighway contract tied together transportation and economic development initiatives. This work component is unique among Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPOs) in Massachusetts, but makes a great deal of sense given the transportation needs of businesses in the region, as well as the transportation infrastructure projects that are so important to the economic future of the region.

Mr. Williams told the Committee about UMass Lowell Chancellor Meehan's appearance at the Merrimack Valley Venture Forum in September. Chancellor Meehan spoke about improving the relationship with the City of Lowell and establishing a capital plan for UMass Lowell that would accommodate more students living on campus. Chancellor Meehan also talked about how there needed to be more interface with the business community. Mr. Donovan commented that there were great things happening on the UMass Lowell campus related to nanotechnology. Mr. Donovan also announced that the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council (MVEDC) would be hosting its Cultural Economy Forum on November 3rd at the Revolving Museum in Lowell.

5. Next Meeting

The Committee agreed to hold its next meeting in February on a specific date to be determined later.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 P.M.

CEDS Committee Meeting

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
For the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

February 26, 2008
12:00-1:00
NMCOG Conference Room

AGENDA

1. **Welcome ---Beverly Woods, Executive Director**
2. **Economic Development Activities---Jay Donovan, Assistant Director**
 - **Expedited Permitting Contract**
 - **Priority Development Sites**
 - Hamilton Canal (approved)
 - EMD Serono – Billerica (approved)
 - Pepperell Paper Mill
 - Lowell Junction – Tewksbury
 - **Other Activities by Community**
 - **Westford Comprehensive Master Plan- Economic Development Component**
 - **Creative Economy**
3. **Upcoming Events----Jay**
Bio ready Communities Forum
Chapter 40B Regulations Session – May 15th
4. **CEDS RFP Process for Priority Projects---Jay**
5. **Next Meeting**

**CEDS Committee Meeting
NMCOG Conference Room
115 Thorndike Street, Lowell, MA 01852**

**Meeting Minutes
February 26, 2008**

CEDS Committee Members: Bruce Akashian (representing Barbara O’Neill), Ryan Coleman (representing Congresswoman Tsongas’ Office), Victoria Fahlberg, Bob Halpin, Norman Khumalo, Jeanne Osborn, Sophy Suon, and Beverly Woods (ad hoc)

NMCOG Staff: Jay Donovan

1. Welcome

Beverly Woods, Executive Director of NMCOG, welcomed the CEDS Committee members to the meeting and thanked them for their active participation.

2. Economic Development Activities

Jay Donovan provided an overview of the various contracts that NMCOG is implementing in concert with the CEDS program. These contracts and initiatives have helped the region meet its goals under the CEDS Five-Year Plan and address NMCOG’s responsibilities as a partner to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) in promoting regional economic development projects and providing technical assistance to local communities related to their economic development efforts.

- **Expedited Permitting Contract**

Under the Expedited Permitting contract with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Mr. Donovan reviewed the January Quarterly report that had been provided to the CEDS Committee members. The activities from October 1, 2007 through December 31, 2007 were covered under this report. Mr. Donovan highlighted the Chapter 43D approvals of the Priority Development Sites (PDS) at Hamilton Canal in Lowell and EMD Serono in Billerica, as well as the Chapter 43D contract opportunities with the Town of Billerica. Bob Halpin mentioned that expansion at the EMD Serono site is constrained by its water supply capacity and there may be a need for a connection with the Town of Burlington. Mr. Donovan indicated that the Hamilton Canal site could be a candidate for public works funds from EDA.

Mr. Donovan also mentioned the work NMCOG had been doing with the Town of Pepperell to revitalize the former Pepperell Paper Mill site. Mr. Donovan referred the Committee members to the memo sent to the Pepperell Town Administrator, Robert Hanson, and indicated that there could be an opportunity for PDS designation, as well as designation of the town as an Economic Target Area (ETA) under the state’s Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP). Norman Khumalo asked what NMCOG’s role would be with the paper mill project. Mr. Donovan indicated that NMCOG would serve

as technical advisors to the Town in moving forward to develop a Site Master Plan and to submit a PDS application to the state. However, Mr. Donovan explained, the Town would need to establish a Letter of Agreement with NMCOG under the Expedited Permitting program so that NMCOG could provide the technical assistance for this project.

Mr. Halpin provided a status report on the Lowell Junction project, which involves the Towns of Tewksbury, Andover and Wilmington. Mr. Donovan added that state officials would be meeting with the Tewksbury Economic Development Committee to outline the Chapter 43D process that the City of Lowell and Town of Billerica just completed. Mr. Halpin informed the Committee that the Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development (MAED) will be marketing these established PDS sites for the state and that the state is also looking to designate fifteen (15) sites across the state as Growth Center Districts.

- **Westford Comprehensive Master Plan – Economic Development Component**

Mr. Donovan shared the responses to the Economic Development Discussion Questions and the Westford Implementation Plan for the Economic Development component with the Committee. Mr. Khumalo spoke about the activities of the Master Plan Committee in developing and finalizing the Updated Comprehensive Master Plan. In relation to the discussion about economic development tools, Mr. Donovan informed the Committee that Northeastern University has developed a Self-Assessment Tool for local communities that David Soule, formerly Executive Director of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), is promoting. Local communities interested in learning more about this economic development assessment tool should contact David at Northeastern.

- **Creative Economy**

Mr. Halpin provided an overview of the Creative Economy project that the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council (MVEDC) had implemented, principally through the efforts of David Tibbetts. The kick-off for the Creative Economy project was held at the Revolving Museum in Lowell on November 3, 2007. According to Mr. Halpin, there was a follow-up meeting for creative businesses in January 2008 and a working group has been formed to focus on a branding strategy for the Creative Economy in the Merrimack Valley. Professor Robert Forrant of UMass Lowell is researching the Northeast Massachusetts Cultural Economy as part of this initiative. Mr. Halpin offered to keep the Committee informed on the progress of this initiative at future meetings.

3. Upcoming Events

Mr. Halpin announced that the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council and MVEDC were setting up forums with NMCOG and the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) for the third or fourth weeks in March to describe what biotechnology is, how it is important to the growth of Massachusetts, and what qualities these companies look for in a community in making their location or re-location decisions. The Committee received materials from the Council related to the proposed forums. It was thought that one of the forums would be at 1600 Osgood Street in North Andover, while the other forum would be scheduled for Billerica. Mr. Khumalo suggested that Gutierrez Company be invited to the forums. Sophy Suon added that the City of Lowell is

working with UMass Lowell on biotech readiness issues. Mr. Donovan offered to have NMCOG send out the invitations for the Biotech Council for the forum in the NMCOG region. Mr. Donovan then provided a brief overview of the upcoming event with DHCD on the new Chapter 40B regulations to be held on May 15th at the Wannalancit Mills in Lowell.

4. CEDS RFP Process for Priority Projects

Mr. Donovan informed the Committee that the next scheduled meeting would be on April 8, 2008 and that the CEDS RFP package would be issued by April 11th with the project returns requested by May 2nd. The final CEDS Committee meeting for the year would then be scheduled for June 10th.

Bruce Akashian then informed the Committee that disaggregated data for the region is being discussed at the state level, as well as employment forecasts. Mr. Akashian offered to provide this information to the Committee once the state sends it to the Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board (GLWIB).

Mr. Halpin indicated that MVEDC is focusing on how to promote Green Technology in the Merrimack Valley. In particular, he cited the recent efforts by IBM in “going green” in their administrative offices in Westford and their technical work space in Littleton.

5. Next Meeting

The Committee agreed to hold its next meeting on April 8, 2008 at 12:00 P.M.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 P.M.

CEDS Committee Meeting

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
For the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

April 8, 2008
12:00-1:00
NMCOG Conference Room

AGENDA

- 1. Welcome ---Beverly Woods, Executive Director**
- 2. RFP Process for Priority Projects---Jay Donovan, Assist. Dir.**
- 3. Report on Meeting with the new EDR---Jay**
- 4. Update on Economic Development Activities---Jay**
 - Expedited Permitting Contract
 - Westford Comprehensive Master Plan- Economic Development Component
 - Creative Economy
- 5. Upcoming Events----Jay**
 - Bio ready Communities Forum
 - Chapter 40B Regulations Session – May 15th
 - Regional Housing Summit – June 2nd
- 6. Next Meeting**

**CEDS Committee Meeting
NMCOG Conference Room
115 Thorndike Street, Lowell, MA 01852**

**Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2008**

CEDS Committee Members: Bruce Akashian (representing Barbara O'Neill), Frank Carvahlo, Bob Halpin, Steve Joncas, Bill Lipchitz, Theresa Park (ex officio), Art Williams and Beverly Woods (ad hoc)

NMCOG Staff: Jay Donovan

1. Welcome

Beverly Woods, Executive Director of NMCOG, welcomed the CEDS Committee members to the meeting and thanked them for their active participation.

2. RFP Process for Priority Projects

Jay Donovan explained that the communities will be asked to identify all priority projects, including those not funded with EDA funds. The priority projects are designed to move the region forward in addressing the goals established in the Five-Year CEDS. As in the past, the communities will be asked to update their current projects, submit new projects and indicate whether any projects had move forward or been dropped from consideration. Art Williams asked how many priority projects from the previous list were implemented. Mr. Donovan responded that the only EDA-funded project to move forward was the EDA Capacity grant, which was providing support to the CEDS planning process. Mr. Donovan indicated that he would need to review the submissions from the communities to see if some priority projects were funded through other sources.

Mr. Donovan indicated that the CEDS Committee would need to vote on the CEDS Priority Project list at its next meeting. Based on a motion made by Steve Joncas and a second by Bob Halpin, the Committee voted unanimously to release the Request for Proposals (RFP) for priority projects.

3. Report on Meeting with the new Economic Development Representative (EDR)

Mr. Donovan briefed the Committee on the recent meeting (March 18th) with Alan Brigham, newly designated Economic Development Representative (EDR) for Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine, replacing Rita Potter. Mr. Brigham indicated that EDA public works funding will likely be available in 2010 for priority projects. Mr. Donovan outlined that NMCOG had focused on the Hamilton Canal project and had actually provided Mr. Brigham with a tour of the proposed project. It was anticipated that the Hamilton Canal project would need approximately \$ 2 million in EDA Public Works funds, which would require that the City own the infrastructure for which the EDA funds would be used.

Mr. Joncas noted that the City may be looking for Community Development Action Grant (CDAG) funding for another project on Jackson Street and inquired as to whether the timeframe for the Hamilton Canal project calls for the commercial component to be in line with the 2010 timeframe. Theresa Park stated that the Hamilton Canal project is the city's largest and highest priority project. Ms. Park added that she would check on the timing of the commercial piece.

Mr. Joncas then briefed the committee on the other Jackson Street project, which is a joint venture of Banc of America and the Architectural Heritage Foundation. The project is located in three buildings, including the former Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA) building. The first building will consist of 80,000 square feet of mixed-use development, including sixty-five (65) housing units and a health clinic. The second building would include Adden Furniture, which is relocating. This building consists of 180,000 square feet on the first floor and 110,000 square feet on the second floor. Phase I of the project will begin this summer and Phase II would begin in late 2009 or early 2010. The total investment is projected to be about \$ 80 million. Mr. Joncas added that one of the challenges in completing the project is that lenders are looking for 50% pre-leased space. Marketing of the space includes the promotion of a skilled workforce, the presence of higher education institutions and price competitiveness with the suburbs.

Mr. Donovan stated that he looked forward to working closely with Mr. Brigham on securing funding for numerous CEDS projects in the region.

4. Update on Economic Development Activities

Mr. Donovan provided an overall update on the major economic development activities that were ongoing in the region:

- **Expedited Permitting Contract**

Mr. Donovan noted that the Expedited Permitting contract with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) had been extended until December 31, 2008 to ensure that the funds could be expended on worthwhile local projects. He cited NMCOG's assistance with the City of Lowell on its Priority Development Site (PDS) application for the Hamilton Canal project.

Mr. Donovan indicated that NMCOG had also worked with the Town of Billerica in developing its PDS application for the expansion of EMD Serono on Middlesex Turnpike, which will attract \$ 50 million in additional private investment and create 100 new jobs. The Town received a \$ 100,000 PDS grant of which NMCOG will receive \$ 15,000 in order to assist the community with the permit streamlining process. DHCD also offered an additional \$ 50,000 grant for the Town of Billerica to work with the Towns of Burlington, Bedford, Lowell and Chelmsford to develop an infrastructure study of the Route 3 corridor from Route 128 to I-495. This study would address the infrastructure barriers facing the development of additional land along Route 3. Mr. Halpin added that these communities are also working on a project to "brand" the Route 3 corridor. He also noted that MVEDC is working with the State to identify employment clusters along Route 3 and I-93. Mr. Donovan indicated that NMCOG would like to see

this effort extend along the entire Route 3 corridor, which would also address development issues in North Chelmsford, Westford and Tyngsborough.

Mr. Donovan added that NMCOG has been working with the Towns of Tewksbury and Pepperell on their PDS initiatives as well. NMCOG has been working with the Town of Tewksbury on the Lowell Junction project, which also includes the Towns of Andover and Wilmington. The overall objective has been to develop a mutually-agreed upon Master Plan for the entire 700 acre development site, as well as to add a new interchange along Route 93 to access these development parcels. In the case of Pepperell, NMCOG has been working with the Town relative to the redevelopment of the former Pepperell Paper Mill.

- **Westford Comprehensive Master Plan – Economic Development Component**

Mr. Donovan announced that the Economic Development component of the Westford Comprehensive Master Plan had been completed and submitted to the Town and the Master Plan Committee.

- **Creative Economy**

Mr. Donovan asked Mr. Halpin if he wanted to update the CEDS Committee on the Creative Economy initiative. Mr. Halpin spoke about the effort to “brand” the Merrimack Valley based upon its creative economy. He credited David Tibbetts of the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council (MVEDC) for this initiative. Mr. Halpin mentioned that he recently toured an animation company in Lawrence with Secretary Dan O’Connell of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. Mr. Donovan added that the building in which they are located is within a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) zone.

5. Upcoming Events

- **Bio ready Communities Forum – April 30th**

Mr. Donovan announced that the Bio-ready Communities Forum sponsored by the Massachusetts BioTech Council would be held on April 30th at Millipore in Billerica. Another session had been held in Andover at Wyeth earlier in the month.

- **Chapter 40B Regulations Session – May 15th**

Mr. Donovan informed the Committee that NMCOG will co-sponsor a session with DHCD on the new Chapter 40B regulations on May 15th at 7:00 P.M. at the Wannalancit Mills in Lowell. These regulations will have an impact on affordable housing development in the region and community representatives, developers and affordable housing advocates were being invited to the information session.

- **Regional Housing Summit – June 2nd**

Mr. Donovan summarized the work that he and Ms. Woods had been undertaking with Congresswoman Niki Tsongas’ Office to establish a Regional Housing Forum. This forum was being scheduled for June 2nd from 8:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. and would address many of the critical housing issues in the region.

Mr. Halpin added that Congresswoman Tsongas would also be hosting a Clean Technology and Alternative Energy Summit at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill on May 19th. Ms. Park added that the City will be holding a Small Business Fair on April 29th at 11:00 A.M. at the new parking garage on Middlesex Street. Mr. Halpin stated that the Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development (MAED) and MVEDC would be hosting a presentation on the Market Assessment for the Merrimack Valley on April 18th at the Wyndham Hotel in Andover from 10:30 to 12:30.

Mr. Donovan asked whether there were any other issues to discuss. Bill Lipchitz asked about the status of NMCOG's newly formed non-profit arm, the Northern Middlesex Economic Development District, Inc. (NMEDD). Mr. Donovan replied that the non-profit had been approved by the Secretary of State and a filing would need to be submitted to the Internal Revenue Service. According to Mr. Donovan, the non-profit would primarily serve the suburban communities on matters related to economic development and housing since they have fewer resources available than the City.

6. Next Meeting

The Committee agreed to hold its next meeting on June 10, 2008 at 12:00 P.M.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:35 P.M.

CEDS Committee Meeting

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
For the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

August 19, 2008
12:00-2:00
NMCOG Conference Room

AGENDA

- 1. Welcome and Introductions---**Beverly Woods, Executive Director
- 2. Annual CEDS Update for 2008---**Jay Donovan, Assistant Director
 - Priority Projects
 - Annual CEDS Update
 - Motion to recommend approval to the Council
- 3. Annual NMCOG Meeting---**Jay
- 4. EDA Planning Grant---**Jay
- 5. 2008-2009 Work Plan---**Jay
 - CEDS Committee Meetings
 - EDD Application
 - Planning Grant Application
 - Public Forums
 - RFP Process
 - Five-Year CEDS
- 6. Next Meeting**

**CEDS Committee Meeting
NMCOG Conference Room
115 Thorndike Street, Lowell, MA 01852**

**Meeting Minutes
August 19, 2008**

CEDS Committee Members: Jerry Frechette, Stacie Hargis (representing Congresswoman Tsongas' Office), Victoria Fahlberg, Steve Joncas, Bill Lipchitz, Jeanne Osborn, Theresa Park, Ellen Rawlings, Mark Scolnick and Beverly Woods (ad hoc).

NMCOG Staff: Jay Donovan

1. Welcome and Introductions

Beverly Woods, Executive Director of NMCOG, welcomed the CEDS Committee members to the meeting and thanked them for their active participation.

2. Annual CEDS Update for 2008

Jay Donovan began by reviewing the Annual CEDS Update for 2008 process and indicated that the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee should vote to approve the CEDS Priority Project list and to recommend to the NMCOG Council that the Annual CEDS Update for 2008 should be approved and submitted to the Economic Development Administration (EDA). Mr. Donovan provided an overview of the Priority Project list that had been compiled based upon the submissions of the local communities and our inclusion of the transportation projects for the region. Mr. Donovan explained that these Priority Projects helped the region achieve the goals outlined in the Five-Year CEDS and move closer to the vision that was developed in 2004. For the EDA-funded projects, which are marked by an asterisk, they needed to meet the FY'08 EDA Investment Policy Guidelines as well as the CEDS Committee criteria developed for all projects. Ellen Rawlings stated that the Middlesex Turnpike project should be included.

Mr. Donovan agreed that the Middlesex Turnpike project would address both the economic development and regional transportation goals established in the Five-Year CEDS. After further discussion, Mark Scolnick made a motion to approve the Priority Project list as amended by including the Middlesex Turnpike project, which was seconded by Ms. Rawlings. Steve Joncas indicated that he needed to recuse himself from the vote due to his involvement with one of the projects. The motion was then approved by the Committee.

Mr. Donovan explained the other components of the CEDS Annual Update for 2008 and then discussed the Regional Economy section. Mr. Donovan pointed out that the average unemployment rate for City of Lowell for the past 24 months was still more than 1% above the national average unemployment rate for the same period. Mr. Donovan stressed that meeting this criteria maintains eligibility for EDA-funded programs in the Greater Lowell region. Ms. Rawlings questioned the inclusion of the layoff numbers for Schott Solar, noting that the company changed its mind and decided to stay in Billerica. Mr. Donovan agreed that Schott Solar had changed its mind, based upon current newspaper reports, however it was still on the

state's layoff list. Mr. Donovan agreed to place an asterisk next to the Schott Solar layoffs and not include them in the total layoffs for the region.

Mr. Donovan also outlined the difference between the goods-producing and service-providing sectors. Theresa Park asked why there are differences between the layoff numbers and the change in major employers. Mr. Donovan responded that this was similar to comparing apples and oranges – the layoff numbers are those compiled by the Rapid Response arm of the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development based upon companies complying with the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act and those companies with less than 100 employees that have notified the office. The change in major employers is based upon an annual section in March prepared by the *Lowell Sun*, which identifies the largest employers in the region. Mr. Joncas asked if there was a way to identify where job growth is occurring. Mr. Donovan replied that you can compare employment data on a quarterly basis within specific NAICS codes, but NMCOG does not have any other information on specific companies. Ms. Park suggested that she could take a closer look at the data from the Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development (MAED) to see if they provide such information. Mr. Donovan then discussed the Route 3 Infrastructure Study and the expansion plans of EMD Serono in Billerica.

Once the questions had been answered, Mr. Donovan asked for a motion to recommend approval of the Annual CEDS Update for 2008 to the NMCOG Council and submission to EDA. Mr. Joncas excused himself from the vote. Based upon a motion by Mark Scolnick and a second by Jeanne Osborn, the Annual CEDS Update for 2008 was recommended for approval and submission to EDA.

3. Annual NMCOG Meeting

Mr. Donovan provided information on the Annual NMCOG meeting to be held at the Westford Regency Inn and Conference Center on September 17, 2008. Of particular note was the fact that the Regional Director for EDA, Willie C. Taylor, will be the guest speaker. This represents the first time, according to Mr. Donovan, that the Greater Lowell region has been visited by the Regional Director of the Philadelphia EDA Office. Mr. Donovan mentioned that he and representatives of the City of Lowell would be taking Director Taylor and Alan Brigham, the Economic Development Representative (EDR) for Massachusetts, on a tour of the City of Lowell that will include the Hamilton Canal project. Mr. Donovan mentioned that NMCOG staff will be able to meet with the EDA officials to review projects from throughout the region.

4. EDA Planning Grant

Mr. Donovan informed the committee that the EDA Planning Grant was submitted six weeks ago and a new contract was expected shortly. Due to the delay in receiving the contract, NMCOG was not able to charge any time to the EDA contract, but would be charging to the local assessment account in the meantime. It is expected that the contract would arrive shortly. Mr. Donovan said that NMCOG appreciated the partnership arrangement with EDA.

5. 2008-2009 Work Plan

Mr. Donovan reviewed the 2008-2009 Work Plan Summary with the Committee members. For the most part, Mr. Donovan explained, the work components remained fairly similar to what was

outlined in the 2007 Work Plan. For instance, there would be two Public Forums scheduled – one on infrastructure and the other on workforce development, with co-sponsorships from Middlesex Community College and the Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board (GLWIB). These Public Forums would focus on two critical issues facing businesses that want to expand or re-locate to the Greater Lowell region. Mr. Donovan noted that the major change in the 2008-2009 Work Plan was that NMCOG and the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee would need to develop a Five-Year Plan, similar to what was developed in 2004. Mr. Donovan added that there would be an effort to tie in the Northern Middlesex Economic Development District, Inc. (NMEDD) and the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee, perhaps as a subcommittee for the non-profit. This change would be consistent with what was being outlined in the Economic Development District (EDD) application.

6. Next Meeting

Mr. Donovan suggested that the next meeting be scheduled in late October and that the members of the Committee would be contacted. Mr. Donovan thanked the Committee for their support.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:18 P.M.

Appendix III:
Annual CEDS Update Approval



NMCOG

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

NOTICE OF MEETING

The next meeting of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments will be held on **Wednesday, August 20, 2008**, at the Council office, Gallagher Terminal, Floor 3-B, 115 Thorndike Street, Lowell, MA. The meeting will begin promptly at **7:00pm**.

A Multi-Purpose
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Executive Director

Gallagher Terminal
Floor 3B
115 Thorndike Street
Lowell MA 01852-3308

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AGENDA

- I. MINUTES OF MEETING-** July 16, 2008
- II. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**
- III. FINANCIAL REPORT AND WARRANT**
- IV. OLD BUSINESS**
 1. Update on the FY 2009- 2012 TIP
 2. Update on the District Local Technical Assistance
 3. Approval of CEDS Priority Project & Submittal of CEDS Update
 4. Top 100 High Crash Locations for the Region
 5. Other Old Business
- V. NEW BUSINESS**
 1. Community Reports
 2. Project Referrals
 3. Approval of Lease for 40 Church Street
 4. 2008 NMCOG Annual Meeting
 5. Appointment of Nominating Committee
 6. Other New Business
- VI. Announcements**
- VII. Adjournment**

City/Town Clerks: PLEASE POST PURSUANT TO OPEN MEETING LAW

Councilors: PLEASE CALL IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND

NORTHERN MIDDLESEX COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Gallagher Transportation Terminal, Floor 3B
115 Thorndike Street
Lowell, MA 01852

Minutes of Meeting: August 20, 2008

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. with Chairman James Silva presiding. The communities of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Lowell, Pepperell, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough and Westford were represented. The attendance list is included as Attachment # 1.

I. MINUTES OF MEETING - July 16, 2008

The minutes were distributed to all Councilors for review. Upon a motion made by Kevin O'Connor and seconded by Ellen Rawlings, the Council voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the July 16, 2008 meeting.

II. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Executive Director's Report was previously mailed and distributed to the Councilors. Upon a motion made by Jerry Frechette and seconded by Philippe Thibault, the Council voted unanimously to accept the Executive Director's Report for filing. The Executive Director's Report is included as Attachment #2.

III. FINANCIAL REPORT AND WARRANT

Financial Officer Linda Bendzewicz presented the Financial Report and the Warrant for review and signature. Upon a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Gerry Frechette, the Financial Report and the Warrant were unanimously approved. The Financial Report is included as Attachment #3.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

1. Update on the FY 2009-2012 TIP

Beverly Woods distributed a copy of the preliminary draft FY 2009-2012 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). She informed the Council that the NMMPO met on August 8, 2008 to review the proposed draft and noted that there was disagreement on the part of the state transportation agencies regarding the readiness of some projects, most notably the Pawtucket Boulevard relocation project in Tyngsborough. Ms. Woods added that she received a call from EOT earlier in the day, indicating that the state now believes the Pawtucket Boulevard relocation project is on track for advertising in FY 2009.

Ms. Woods stated that there are issues to be addressed relative to the Thorndike Street Pedestrian Overpass project. She explained that the language in the project description will need to be revised at a later date to reflect a change in the design concept of this area due to the Hamilton Canal Redevelopment Project. An at-grade crossing is being proposed as part of the mitigation plan for the Hamilton Canal project, rather than the overpass bridge, and the City has

asked that the monies for the pedestrian bridge be redirected to the construction of a portion of the Hamilton Canal Walkway. The Walkway will connect Thorndike Street/Dutton Street and the Acre neighborhood to the redevelopment site. The trestle bridge, originally proposed as part of the project, will remain as part of the overall Plan, thereby providing a pedestrian connection to the downtown area. Ms. Woods explained that in order for the scope of the project to be formally revised within the TIP, the City and the National Park Service need to prepare additional documentation for submission to the state's Project Review Committee (PRC), which will meet in October. She noted that the National Park Service has designed the walkway, although MassHighway has not yet reviewed the plans. She pointed out that if this piece of the walkway is not constructed, the City will be left with the portion of walkway being constructed through the development site, with a trestle bridge to nowhere. Therefore, this piece of the walkway serves a vital link in the pedestrian network.

Ms. Woods explained that special funds have been designated specifically for safety projects in next year's TIP. These funds, known as Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds, must be spent on locations with a high crash rate. Ms. Woods stated that the intersection of Bridge Street and the VFW Highway in the City of Lowell has the highest crash rate in the region and in the state. Therefore, staff is proposing the FY 2009 HSIP funds be targeted toward designing safety improvements for this location.

Beverly Woods noted that the cost of the University Avenue Bridge project is now over \$20 million, therefore, the project will need to be financed through advanced construction, over a four- or five-year period. She noted that, due to issues related to air quality conformity, it is likely that the draft TIP will not be released for public comment until October or November, and an approved TIP will probably not be in place until December or January.

Kevin O'Connor stated that he is pleased to hear that the Pawtucket Boulevard relocation project is going forward as originally planned. Mr. O'Connor asked whether the Tyngsborough Bridge project is still scheduled to be advertised this fall. Ms. Woods stated that she has not heard of any delays and believes that the project is still on schedule. Steve O'Neill asked if there has been any discussion regarding the need for additional property takings for the Pawtucket Boulevard relocation project. Ms. Woods stated that the property owners have all received their notices of taking at this point. Frank Suszynski, from MassHighway, District 4, stated that he has not heard that there is additional property to be taken, although having the ROW in place is a critical element to getting the project advertised on time. He noted that the project is likely to be advertised in the fourth quarter of FY 2009.

2. Update on District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Funding

Beverly Woods informed the Council that the DLTA program has been funded for FY 2009. She noted that the House budget had included \$2 million for the program, but funding was not included in the Governor's budget or the Senate budget. She noted that a letter was sent to Senator Panagiotakos asking for his support of the line item while in conference committee.

The final budget sent to the Governor included the full \$2 million for the DLTA in an outside section. While the Governor did not veto the outside section per se, he instead returned it to the legislature with a request for an amendment redirecting the monies to a Regional Efficiency

Assistance Program Trust Fund. The legislature filed a separate bill to restore the funding to the DLTA program. The bill was signed into law by Governor Patrick. Ms. Woods noted that a decision has not been made as to how these monies will be spent. There is a lot of discussion that the RP As may be asked to focus on the regionalization of services. A meeting has been scheduled for September 5th with the state agencies to discuss the scope of the FY 2009 DLTA program. In the meantime, Ms. Woods stated that she would like to send a letter to Senator Panagiotakos, on behalf of the Council, thanking him and his staff for their work on this issue.

Based on a motion made by Ellen Rawlings and seconded by Rita Mercier, the Council voted unanimously to authorize the Executive Director to send a letter of thanks to the Senator, on behalf of the Council.

Jay Donovan provided an update on the Annual Report to DHCD on the FY 2008 DLTA. He noted that the Annual Report will be distributed to the local communities and the legislature. Mr. Donovan outlined the many projects that have been undertaken through the program. Jim Silva asked if the focus for FY 2009 will be entirely on the regionalization of services. Mr. Donovan stated that we do not know the answer to that question just yet. Beverly Woods added that the staff is hoping that there is some flexibility provided, given that the NMCOG communities have benefitted tremendously from the program, and that the state has eliminated all of the other planning grant programs previously available to the communities.

3. Approval of CEDS Priority Projects and Submittal of CEDS Update

Jay Donovan outlined the CEDS Update process, and informed the Council that the CEDS Committee met on August 19, 2008. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Council approve the Priority projects as submitted. They also voted to recommend that the Council authorize the staff to submit the Annual CEDS Update for 2008 to EDA. He noted that there has been a minor change to the list of Priority Projects, adding the Billerica portion of the Middlesex Turnpike project to the intermediate project list at a cost of \$16.6 million. Mr. Donovan stated that a specific component of the Hamilton Canal project targeted for EDA funding includes the construction of a temporary bridge to replace an existing bridge that cannot support the weight of construction vehicles and equipment. The City met with the EDA Economic Development Representative regarding the project's eligibility for EDA funds. The EDA Regional Director will also be touring the site on September 17th, before speaking at the NMCOG Annual Meeting.

Mr. Donovan noted that part of the benefit of having a project included on the regional priority project list is that it shows broad support for the project from an economic development perspective. MassHighway has a policy in place that requires that bicycle and pedestrian accommodations be incorporated into the design plans for all projects funded with state and federal monies.

4. Top 100 High Crash Locations for the Region

Justin Howard distributed the Top 100 Crash Locations report and presented an overview on the history of the project. He noted that this report serves as an update to a similar report published last year, and explained that it is based on the most recent data available. Mr. Howard outlined the methodology utilized in order to rank locations throughout the region, noting that the severity

of each crash is taken into account.

Mr. Howard then detailed the findings of the report, noting that nine of the top ten high crash locations are within the City of Lowell, with the intersection of Bridge Street and the VFW Highway being ranked as the top location. He then outlined the top location in each NMCOG community (with the exception of Dunstable which does not have a location that falls within the Top 100 list). Mr. Howard went on to point out that the accident rate at Drum Hill Square has been reduced tremendously since the Route 3 improvements were constructed.

Kevin O'Connor noted that the intersection of Pawtucket Boulevard and Frost Road is not on the top 100 list, although historically it has been considered a high accident location. Mr. Howard responded that although the number of crashes at the intersection does not place it in the top 100, there is a high crash rate at this location compared to the MassHighway district-wide average. He added that the high crash rate justifies implementing a safety improvement project at this location. Mr. O'Connor noted that there have been a lot of fatalities in the Frost Road, Sherburne Ave, Pawtucket Boulevard area, and complimented Mr. Howard on the quality of his report.

Jim Silva asked whether there have been any fatalities at the intersection of Boston Road and Route 110 in Westford. Justin Howard stated that there have not been any fatalities, but the intersection is rated as the seventh highest in the region simply due to the high number of crashes overall. Beverly Woods stated an improvement project is currently under design that will address some of the safety issues at this location, however, it will be several years before the improvements are completed.

Pat Wojtas asked whether bicycle and pedestrian needs are factored into the design of any improvement projects that are put forth as result of this study. Beverly Woods responded that MassHighway has a policy in place that requires that bicycle and pedestrian accommodations be incorporated into the design plans for all projects funded with state and federal monies.

5. Other Old Business

There was none.

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Community Reports

Rita Mercier thanked MassHighway District 4 for replacing the Jack Kerouac sign on 1-495 northbound and for repaving the Exit 38 ramps on 1-495 in Tewksbury.

Jim Silva added that Westford's new Town Manager, Jodi Ross, came on board on August 11th. Pat Wojtas stated that on August 11th, Steve Williams of the New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority came before the Chelmsford Board of Selectmen to provide an update on the extension of commuter rail service from Lowell to Nashua, Manchester and Concord. Mr. Silva asked if there is a timeframe for instituting the service. Ms. Wojtas stated that it will be at least two years.

Dave Plunkett stated that based on a recent article that appeared in the Lowell Sun regarding the park and ride lots in the region, NMCOG is being seen as a credible source of information.

2. Project Referrals

Beverly Woods presented the Council with a list of projects under MEPA review. Staff comments on the following projects were discussed: the DEIR for Phase 3 of the Tyngsborough Wastewater Management Plan, the ENF for the construction of a new water treatment facility at the Bomil Wellfield in North Chelmsford, and the ENF for improvements to the Route 110/113 Rotary in Methuen. Based upon a motion made by Steve O'Neill and seconded by Steve Themelis, the Council voted unanimously to approve the staff comments for those projects mentioned above.

3. Approval of Lease for 40 Church Street

Beverly Woods stated that the lease negotiations for the 40 Church Street property are still ongoing. She noted that the draft lease agreement contained a clause that would have made the Council responsible for 20% of the property taxes on the building, which was not outlined in the proposal received in response to the RFP. This would have added \$4,000 annually to the cost of the lease. During the course of the negotiations, the building owner agreed to remove the clause. Ms. Woods noted there are still two outstanding issues that need to be resolved through the negotiation process. The first issue is the terms of the five-year option to renew. Ms. Woods outlines the various versions of the option that have been discussed to date, and added that NMCOG's legal counsel is now negotiating the terms with the broker on NMCOG's behalf.

The second issue that needs to be addressed relates to the working in the clause that relates to parking. NMCOG legal counsel has suggested that this section of the lease be reworded and strengthened to guarantee that 15 parking spaces are available at all times.

Ms. Woods asked the Council for authorization to move forward on the lease, with continued assistance from legal counsel, and assuming that the consensus is reached regarding the terms of the lease renewal option and the language related to the parking clause. She noted that there is a meeting being scheduled for next week with NMCOG counsel, the broker, and the building owner.

Jim Silva asked if a representative from the Office of Space Subcommittee will be in attendance at the meeting. Kevin O'Connor expressed his surprise that these issues have arisen and stated that it is important that these things get ironed out in accordance with what was outlined in the proposal. Mr. O'Connor offered to make himself available for the meeting.

Dave Plunkett stated that the parking issue is very important and was a significant factor in the selection of this particular site.

Jerry Frechette asked whether NMCOG will be able to place a sign on the outside of the building. Ms. Woods stated that the building owner has agreed to allow a sign to be placed in the existing bracket that hangs from the building. NMCOG will need to work with the Historic Board to acquire the necessary permit.

Steve O'Neill stated that he feels comfortable allowing the Director to sign the lease as long as someone from the Office of Space Subcommittee is in attendance at next week's meeting.

Based on a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Rita Mercier, the Council voted unanimously to authorize the Executive Director to sign the lease, contingent upon resolving the outstanding issues related to parking and the terms of the five-year option to renew to the satisfaction of the Office Space Subcommittee.

4. 2008 NMCOG Annual Meeting

Beverly Woods informed the Council that the 2008 Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 17, 2008 at the Westford Regency Inn and Conference Center. A brief business meeting will take place at 5:30 pm, followed by a reception at 6:00 pm. The dinner and speaking program will begin at 7:00 pm. Willie Taylor, Regional Director of the Philadelphia office of EDA, will be the featured speaker.

5. Appointment of Nominating Committee

Jim Silva explained that a Nominating Committee is formed each year for the election of officers and asked for volunteers to serve on the Committee. A Nominating Committee comprised of Philippe Thibault, Kevin O'Connor, and Dave Plunkett was formed.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Steve O'Neill and seconded by Kevin O'Connor, the Council voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:18 p.m.

CLERK'S CERTIFICATE

I certify that this is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of August 20, 2008.

Attest: 
Judith Larter, Clerk

Appendix IV:
CEDS Priority Projects RFP Package

Priority Project Criteria

April 8, 2008

The Priority Project Criteria have been developed as a result of the *Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008*. These Project Criteria address the CEDS requirements, as outlined by the Economic Development Administration (EDA). These Project Criteria are designed to assist the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee in prioritizing projects, which reflect a balanced approach to development in the NMCOG region. Upon the approval of the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee, these projects will be included in the *Annual CEDS Update for 2008* to be submitted to EDA by June 30, 2008. Projects listed within the CEDS will include EDA and non-EDA funded projects which assist the region in attaining the goals and objectives outlined in the CEDS document. Current Priority Projects for the region can be viewed on line at www.nmcog.org.

All projects will meet the Priority Project Criteria and will be categorized based upon the expected timeframe to complete the specific project (Short-Term: 12-18 months, Intermediate: 2-4 years and Long-Term: 5+ years). Projects funded by EDA must either be located in an area that has an unemployment rate of at least 1% higher than the national average for the preceding 24 months or have a per capita income level equal to or less than 80% of the U.S. average. EDA-funded projects will be consistent with the specific program requirements and the 2008 EDA Investment Policy Guidelines.

For the purposes of the *Annual CEDS Update for 2008*, the criteria for priority projects are outlined below. All projects will be required to be consistent with community objectives and have local support. The priority project criteria are as follows:

Short-Term (Up to 12-18 months)

Regional Criteria

- Project exhibits inter-municipal cooperation and coordination on development.
- Project addresses regional issues, such as affordable housing, trained workforce, small business assistance and financial tools for economic development.
- Project addresses problems with the current highway and/or mass transit system.
- Project provides improvements to the region's infrastructure that have a positive impact on the regional economy.
- Project supports quality of life issues related to open space, "greenfields", and recreational and cultural facilities.

Community Criteria

- Project is consistent with community goals and has evidence of support within the community (required).
- Project addresses the need for affordable housing.
- Project promotes local economic development projects or improves economic development capacity at the local level.
- Project reutilizes former industrial or commercial sites and converts them into positive, job-creating uses (example: brownfields).

- Project provides a positive environmental impact.
- Project addresses emergency need, such as the closure of military bases, layoff situations, the closure or consolidation of businesses or natural disasters.

Job Creation /Workforce Development Criteria

- Project supports job creation/retention that benefits the unemployed and underemployed.
- Project provides workforce development assistance, including skill training and supportive services, i.e. child care, transportation, English-as-a-second language, etc.
- Project broadens skills for incumbent workers and provides new skills or entrepreneurial training for laid off workers.
- Project targets assistance to those areas in the region most in need.
- Project creates jobs at living wage salaries.

Project Readiness Criteria

- Project is ready for construction or implementation within 12-18 months.
- Project proponents have site control for the project.
- Financing for the project has been identified and is in the process of being secured.

Intermediate (2-4 years)

Intermediate projects are those economic development projects that are expected to take 2-4 years to begin construction or implementation and that meet the previous criteria. Under this priority, site control and financing do not have to be under control.

Long-Term (5+ years)

Long-Term projects are those economic development projects that are expected to take 5 years to begin construction or implementation. These projects may be in the formation stages today and, due to limited resources or the amount of time until the project can be implemented, are not expected to begin for five years.

Please contact Jay Donovan, Assistant Director, at (978) 454-8021 x 16 or jdonovan@nmcog.org if you have any questions on the Priority Project criteria.

NMCOG CEDS Project Description

This one-page form has been designed to provide a straightforward means of collecting information on CEDS projects in the Greater Lowell region. Separate forms should be submitted on each project so that they may be included on this year's CEDS Priority Project List. Applicants should review the NMCOG CEDS Project Criteria to determine whether the proposed project meets the criteria before submitting the form. Submission of this project form does not automatically qualify a project to be included on this year's CEDS Priority Project List. Attach only one additional sheet if you need to provide additional information.

The CEDS Project Form(s) should be submitted to Jay Donovan **by 5:00 P.M. on Friday, May 2, 2008** in order to be considered for inclusion on the NMCOG CEDS Priority Project List for 2008. Completed forms can be dropped off or mailed to NMCOG at Gallagher Terminal, Floor 3B, 115 Thorndike Street, Lowell, MA 01852-3308. If you wish to fax the CEDS Project Form(s), please fax the document(s) to (978) 454-8023. If you have any questions or require any additional information, contact Jay directly at (978) 454-8021 x 16 or jdonovan@nmcog.org.

Community or Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Person: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Name and description of project:

Expected start date for project? _____ Total Project Cost \$ _____

Funding sources and amounts: Federal _____ State: _____

Private: _____ Non-Profit: _____

Describe how this project addresses the respective project criteria.

Regional Criteria:

Community Criteria:

Job Creation/Workforce Development Criteria:

Project Readiness Criteria: