



Pittsfield

In Pittsfield, the Network worked with the City to perform an efficiency study that offered a series of initiatives to reduce expenditures and increase revenues so that the City can invest in necessary economic and community development efforts.

Pittsfield's strategic location and proximity to the region's natural assets is its greatest competitive strength. In addition to the range of outdoor activities and quality of life amenities that drive tourism, the arts and cultural economy in downtown Pittsfield appears stable and has potential for growth. The City and private investors have advanced the redevelopment of North Street – the main “downtown” thoroughfare and home to much of Pittsfield's significant arts and entertainment district. Recent improvements, market rate housing options, and activation of historic buildings add to downtown's appeal. The City and its partners are committed to enhancing the quality of life for residents and supporting local businesses. One component of this strategy is the City's partnership with MassDevelopment within the Tyler Street TDI District where MassDevelopment is funding a full-time fellow.

While Pittsfield has public and private sector support for change, its constrained and serious municipal fiscal situation poses a significant capacity challenge to implement economic and community development necessary to enhance its economic competitiveness. Over numerous years, the City has not sustainably taxed, managed, grown, and planned its finances. This challenge presents a primary impediment to the City's ability to adequately invest in – and lead – necessary community and economic development efforts. The current administration has taken steps to begin the City's journey to recovery, but its vision requires additional fiscal sustainability.

Scope of Work: The Network worked with the City of Pittsfield to perform an efficiency study to identify opportunities to reduce expenditures and increase revenues as part of a broader five-year effort to help the City grow its ratable base and sustainably increase its economic competitiveness. The study identified a series of initiatives that the City could take over the next five years to re-purpose and create new resources to invest in growing its existing economic development and community development efforts – further leveraging TDI investments in the Tyler Street district and Commonwealth investments in the City.

During the course of the project, the project team conducted interviews with key members of the Mayor's staff and department heads, evaluated service levels and service delivery models, analyzed departmental data, benchmarked City performance and staffing to peers, assessed opportunities for partnerships with non-profit and for-profit entities, and researched national and regional best practices that could be adopted by Pittsfield. The Network developed an “as is” analysis of Pittsfield's city government with regard to current operations that was shared with the City midway through the project and which formed the basis for the final report to the City.

The final report contained a list of actionable areas of efficiency improvement by department (along with crosscutting ideas affecting all areas of government) with recommendations identifying opportunities for reducing expenditures, increasing revenues, and/or improving organizational and operational efficiency. All recommendations included an assessment of the feasibility of implementation and an estimate of the potential budgetary impact over a five year period. The total estimated new revenue and savings materially exceeded the City's identified investment and fiscal relief needs – allowing the City to effectively choose a course of implementation that best matched its fiscal, political, and operational realities.

Timeline: September 2017 - December 2017 | **Funding:** \$62,520 (MassDevelopment: \$46,890, Local: \$15,630)