

CHAPTER 9

Economic Development



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The unique characteristics of the towns of Orange and New Salem play an important role in making the Route 122 Scenic Byway a critical component of economic development in the North Quabbin region. The two towns are anchors for the 40-mile Byway, which starts in downtown Orange in Franklin County and ends in the City of Worcester, Massachusetts. Their historic architecture, remarkable scenery, bucolic countryside, and recreational opportunities offer travelers an array of experiences and discoveries.

Orange is the western gateway to Route 122 and a major waypoint along the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway (Routes 2 and 2A), which is the main transportation artery through northern Massachusetts and the oldest scenic byway in New England. The two routes intersect in downtown Orange.

The Byway travels just north of the Quabbin Reservoir providing extraordinary views of this huge manmade lake. As such, New Salem is the most accessible to the recreational opportunities that the Quabbin Reservoir and the State afford in this vast natural setting. There is hiking, hunting, boating, fishing, cross country skiing, camping, picnicking and wildlife watching along the network of trails that crisscross Route 122.

Orange and New Salem are at the heart of the North Quabbin region, which stretches from Erving and Wendell in Franklin County to Royalston, Phillipston and Petersham in Worcester County. The North Quabbin region includes three of the seven towns along Route 122 Scenic Byway corridor.

Economic Development Resources

For a number of reasons, the historic, architectural, rural, scenic and recreational resources of Orange and New Salem are central to the economic revitalization and sustainability of the towns along Route 122. Depending on the direction of the traveler, they introduce or summarize the experience and opportunities that can be found by visiting the Byway.

Each community has a quintessential history. Orange Center embodies the industrial development of New England and is a village in the midst of revitalization reusing its historic mill buildings for today's economy. It mirrors the history and development of the other byway town centers.

New Salem exemplifies rural and wild New England with its farms and forests. It has the added attraction of the recreational lands and waters of the Quabbin Reservoir. Owned

and operated by the State, Quabbin provides drinking water to millions of residents and almost one hundred towns in the greater Boston region and eastern Massachusetts. It is also a recreational paradise for anyone who ventures to the region. Because of its beauty and recreational opportunities, New Salem is a prime attraction for Route 122. Visitors come from all over to use the recreational resources of the Quabbin.

Environment, Recreation, and Scenery – Ecotourism

The environmental, recreational and scenic quality of the region near the Quabbin Reservoir is an asset to the Byway area. The seven communities along Route 122 – Orange, New Salem, Petersham, Barre, Oakham, Rutland, and Paxton – have long-known the beauty of the area and want to attract tourists and vacationers from the eastern part of the State to augment the economies of their towns and compliment the rural base of the region. The Byway designation provides the seven towns with an extra recognition for attracting visitors to the area.

Under the aegis of the Scenic Byway, towns can capitalize more fully on their environmental, recreational and scenic resources to compliment their distinctive agricultural and manufacturing economies. The Byway designation provides some tools and resources for local officials to grow the ecotourism sector and the associated economy in the region by promoting outdoor recreation in the area's parks and state forests and highlight their scenery, environment and downtowns through brochures, interpretive centers, town and business web sites, and local and area chambers of commerce.

1. It is reusing the mill buildings, sponsoring festivals, and encouraging the arts.
2. Sponsored by Seeds of Solidarity Farm.

Architectural, Historic and Cultural Resources

The Town of Orange has a historic main street, many historic and architecturally significant buildings, and deep industrial roots that make it a quintessential New England community. For many years, the town has worked diligently to preserve its historic architectural resources, to attract new residents and businesses, and to bolster its economy through the arts.¹

The Town of Orange is working to restore Putnam Hall for commercial, retail and professional offices. Their anchor tenant will be North Quabbin Woods, which promotes and supports local artisans and craftspeople and is a project of the New England Forestry Foundation. Also, the Town is refurbishing Assembly Hall at the historic Town Hall building as a center for performing arts and community gatherings. Orange has created volunteer guidelines for owners of historic buildings and is seeking Community Development Block Grant funding for a streetscape improvement project. In addition, Orange created Riverfront Park as a way to connect the downtown to the Millers River.

Other festivals and attractions in Orange include an annual Garlic and Arts Festival² featuring locally grown foods, crafts, and music that draws thousands to the area and compliments the agricultural economy of the surrounding region. During the summer months, Butterfield Park in Orange hosts a local farmers market every Thursday afternoon.



Orange Garlic and Arts Festival

In north New Salem Route 122 has a distinctive rural landscape dotted with historic farmsteads; then the roadway gives way to a wild landscape of forest lands and expansive views of water as it enters Quabbin Reservoir Reservation. Few people live in this part of New Salem, but the area is laced with trails, dirt roads and facilities managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) for recreation.

Small-scale agriculture in New Salem includes the production of dairy goats and cows, fresh fruits, vegetables, cheeses and meats, cider, and maple syrup. Hamilton's Orchard, while not on Route 122, is close by off of Route 202 on West Street. At the farm's Apple Barn, you will find fresh fruit in season, homemade pies, apple dumplings, cider, donuts and a large selection of preserves including jams, maple syrup, apple sauce and candies including fudge.

Industrial Resources – Small, Growth Oriented Manufacturing

Orange has many industrial resources – its town center's manufacturing heritage, historic mills, and industrial parks – and is undertaking a variety of activities to tap into these underutilized resources and breed new life into its local economy.³ Orange is working to:

- Reuse their historic mill complexes for incubator facilities, interpretive centers, performing arts programs, and galleries;
- Attract economic development with new small, growth-oriented businesses;
- Provide business technical assistance and “gap” financing from the Franklin County Community Development Corporation to start-up and expanding businesses; and
- Take part in the Massachusetts Chapter 43D Expedited Permitting Program by designating priority development sites.

Town Centers and Identities – Renewable and Alternative Energy

With a new emphasis on renewable and alternative energy, Orange is trying to recapture its manufacturing past and vital main street by capitalizing on going “green.” Recommendations for municipalities to reduce energy consumption and increase production of clean energy are included in the *Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan* (2008). Orange has signed onto the plan through a memorandum of agreement to consider these recommendations locally.

3. An analysis of manufacturing in Franklin County by FXM shows that the number of small manufacturing firms is increasing in the region. At present there are about 150 small manufacturers in the County.

Issues and Recommendations

Issues

Architecture, Historic and Cultural Resources

- There are few brochures or educational materials highlighting the unique historic architectural resources of the Scenic Byway.
- There is no listing of arts and cultural organizations, museums, galleries, and events in the region or along the Route 122 Scenic Byway.

Environment, Recreation and Scenery (Ecotourism)

- There is no web site or brochure about the Route 122 Scenic Byway and its many recreational opportunities for hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, camping, picnicking and wildlife watching.
- The communities and businesses have not developed a regional approach to tourism, which the Scenic Byway could stimulate.

Historic Industrial Resources (Mills, Small, Growth-Oriented Manufacturing)

- There is little information about the historic mills and buildings in the town centers along the Scenic Byway – total number of buildings, square footage and feasibility for reuse, cost of adaptive reuse and restoration for new industries, particularly renewable and alternative energy.

Town Centers and Identities (Renewable and Alternative Energy)

- Historic mill complexes could be sites for the new energy economy and green jobs.
- Franklin County has many green energy entrepreneurs.

Recommendations⁴

Architecture, Historic and Cultural Resources

- Create a brochure and web site to promote the Byway and encourage tours of galleries, museums, historic societies, and studios.
- Work with the Chambers of Commerce, Community Development Corporations, Town Business Associations, and Town officials to encourage development of arts and crafts businesses along the Byway.
- Promote existing artisan and crafts related businesses.
- Capitalize on the tourism synergies among different economic sectors along the Scenic Byway – arts and crafts, farming, and recreation.

Environment, Recreation and Scenery (Ecotourism)

- Develop a brochure and web site about the environmental, recreational, historic and scenic resources along the Byway.
- Include information on eco- and heritage tourism in Route 122 Scenic Byway promotional materials that are developed.
- Convene a Route 122 Scenic Byway ecotourism working group.
- Develop touring and recreational packages.
- Broaden the region's tourism infrastructure – financing, technical assistance, computer-based marketing; collaboration between bed and breakfast, inn, and restaurant owners.
- Support the ecotourism sector.

Historic Industrial Resources (Mills, Small, Growth-Oriented Manufacturing)

- Seek funding to inventory and conduct feasibility studies of the historic mills along the Byway for reuse as incubators, industrial and manufacturing, and museums/galleries.
- Support activities to restore and retrofit historic mills for re-use.

Town Centers and Identities (Renewable and Alternative Energy)

- Support the creation of a strong economic development leadership capacity in renewable energy in the region.

4. Many of the recommendations were adapted from the *Northern Tier Strategic Investment Initiatives Report*, prepared by Mt. Auburn Associates, Inc., October 21, 2004.