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# AMHERST AND MILFORD BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

FINAL REPORT

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**University of New Hampshire**  
Cooperative Extension

UNH COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
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# **Amherst and Milford Business Retention and Expansion Program**

Final Report

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## **Acknowledgement:**

The UNH Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Program and report were modeled after the Business Retention and Expansion Program developed by the University of Minnesota Extension.

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## Summary

The towns of Amherst and Milford began its Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program on June 4, 2014. The Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce played a key role in bringing these two community's together for this effort along with the support from both communities Boards of Selectmen. The BR&E program consist of *Three Steps*:

### **Step 1- Organize → Step 2- Prioritize → Step 3 Implement**

Step 1 was completed in April 2015, and:

- 100 Businesses were selected in each community to sample survey
- 28 volunteers recruited to participate in the program
- 44 Combined Surveys returned
- One Red Flag issue was recorded in Milford

Step 2 started with a Campus Review Meeting on May 13, 2015 to discuss the survey results and begin to develop strategies and projects. In lieu of a Leadership Team and Taskforce retreat, the team agreed to organize an Economic Development Summit in which businesses and community leaders in both communities would be invited to participate. The Economic Development Summit was held on September 24, 2015 at Milford Town Hall and over 50 participants attended. Three themes and five projects were developed as a result of the Campus Review meeting and Economic Development Summit, which concluded Step 2. **The strategies and projects** are:

#### **Strategy 1- Amherst create and Milford enhance identity to promote and develop the business environment**

- Develop a shared resource and technology platform for services to small businesses (Business Services)
- Create or increase opportunities for businesses to network and community to share information
- Create a team to reach out to businesses who have indicated moving and /or expanding in town or moving or relocating out of town.

#### **Strategy 2- Improve Amherst and Milford's workforce by connecting businesses to areas workforce development groups and higher education institutions.**

- Address skills gap through connection between the community college system, school district and local businesses

#### **Strategy 3- Focused infrastructure improvements to enhance the business expansion and workforce environment (Theme revised based on input from Econ. Dev. Summit)**

- Investigate or pilot a public transportation program for the local business workforce

Step 2 concluded with a presentation to each Town's Board of Selectmen on November 23, 2015. Each community is now in Step 3-Implement.

## **Chapter I. Background on the Amherst and Milford Business Retention and Expansion Project**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the Amherst and Milford Business Retention and Expansion Program. The first section of this chapter briefly explains the role of Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) as an economic development strategy. The second section addresses the Amherst and Milford BR&E Program's objectives and sponsorship and highlights the key steps involved in conducting the program. The third section includes the names of the many people involved in the Amherst and Milford BR&E Program. The people involved in organizing the program, visiting businesses, and setting priorities are an important strength of a BR&E visitation program. The final section describes the technical and research assistance provided by the University of New Hampshire Business Retention and Expansion Strategies Program.

### **Importance of Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E)**

Business Retention and Expansion has become a key element of local economic development efforts. The BR&E economic development program focuses on the retention and expansion of existing businesses to assist them in navigating today's global economy. While the attraction of new business start-ups is an important part of an overall economic development strategy, many communities now recognize that helping existing businesses to survive and grow is key element to a successful economic development effort.

An expansion or contraction is defined as a change in employment at an existing plant or business location. A start-up or dissolution is defined as the creation or closing down of a separate plant or business location. This "churning" of business creation, dissolution, expansion, and contraction is a natural part of a local economy. The BR&E challenge to a community is to capture the expansions while taking preventative actions to reduce the number of dissolutions and diminish the contractions.

Commonly, more jobs are created by business expansions than by new business start-ups. Amherst and Milford, in launching this BR&E visitation program, has the potential to improve the climate for existing businesses and therefore benefit from the continued presence and growth of those businesses.

Another benefit of a BR&E visitation program is the information provided by the survey on the community's strengths and weaknesses. The strengths can be highlighted in community promotional material, while the weaknesses give the communities an opportunity to make important changes and show businesses it is responsive. By acknowledging its weaknesses, a community also shows businesses it is trustworthy and will take a realistic look at its situation.

A final benefit of a BR&E visitation program, like the one being conducted in Amherst and Milford, is how the process enhances the team of local leaders. The team is much broader than many other local economic development teams since it includes representatives from education and government in addition to business and economic development leaders. This diverse

membership allows the local BR&E task force to bring in more resources, ideas, and contacts to address problems identified in the survey. Quite often, this local team will continue to interact in addressing other community concerns that arise long after the official program has ended.

## **Overview of the Amherst and Milford BR&E Program**

The Amherst and Milford Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Program is a community effort that began on June 2, 2014. This section of the report details important milestones that have been achieved and details the future goals of the program.

### **Program Objectives**

The Amherst and Milford BR&E Program has five key objectives:

1. To demonstrate support for local businesses
2. To help solve immediate business concerns
3. To increase local businesses' ability to compete in the global economy
4. To establish and implement a strategic plan for economic development
5. To build community capacity to sustain growth and development.

### **Program Sponsors**

The Amherst and Milford BR&E Program is sponsored by the following organizations:

- Town of Amherst
- Town of Milford
- Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce
- University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension

### **Program Organization**

Organizing and launching a BR&E program in a community typically takes initiative from a core group of community members who are interested in seeing the program implemented. As community members begin planning for the program, they identify five to eight individuals willing to serve on the Leadership Team. Each member of the Leadership Team has a clearly defined role to play in the BR&E process. The Amherst and Milford Leadership Team recruited volunteers, identified businesses to visit, gave input into the survey, and performed business visits. The Leadership Team is also responsible for the coordination of the milestone meetings and for building community awareness of the program. The Amherst and Milford Leadership Team held its first meeting on June 2, 2014, thus officially launching the program.

The Leadership Team is responsible for the recruitment of the Task Force. The BR&E Task Force serves as a guide for the BR&E process. The Task Force helps the Leadership Team to complete the business visits. The Task Force also attends a retreat where the group is provided the overall results of the surveys and sets priorities for how to respond to the survey results.

## **Task Force Orientation and Volunteer Training**

The full Amherst and Milford Task Force held its first meeting on August 27, 2014. At this meeting, the Task Force learned about the BR&E program and received training. The Task Force also reviewed the survey.

Volunteer Visitor training sessions were held on October 29, 2014 and October 30, 2014. The Volunteer Visitor training sessions orient volunteer visitors to the BR&E process and train them on delivering the survey.

## **Business Selection**

The Amherst and Milford Leadership Team and Taskforce identified 100 businesses in each community as its sample survey groups. The Team used a combination of random and convenience sampling to select businesses targeted for visits. A list of all businesses in Amherst and Milford was obtained from Reference USA and business information from both communities. The Team examined the list of selected businesses and added businesses they felt were critical in the BR&E process. Any business not included on the list could “opt in” and request to be visited by the team. Efforts were undertaken to ensure that a diversity of businesses were represented on the list in both Amherst and Milford. As a result of this business selection process, the sampled population of businesses was not entirely random; some of the larger businesses which were identified in the most recent New Hampshire Employment and Labor Market Information (ELMI) Bureau’s “Community Profile” were added to the list in each community. Convenience samples are typical of many BR&E programs. They are not statistically representative of the greater business population, yet represent some of the businesses that were interviewed. The Leadership Team and Task Force’s goal was to visit 100 businesses.

## **Business Visits**

The Amherst and Milford Task Force conducted business visits from September 22 to November 15, 2014 and February 1 to March 31, 2015. The visits were conducted by community visitors in teams of two. The visitors were made up of community volunteers and members of the Leadership Team and Task Force. Each participated in each business visit effectively capturing the information asked in the survey and supplemental information shared by businesses during the visits.

Out of 200 businesses targeted to participate in the BR&E program, 100 businesses in each of the communities, 44 total businesses combined completed the survey visits. While the number of returned survey based on the sample size would not be considered statistically valid, it was agreed, by the Leadership Team and Taskforce, that the information gathered was still very important in charting a course of action. While the survey responses are confidential, it is important to acknowledge the effort of participating businesses.

## Amherst Businesses

The following 44 businesses, 25 in Milford and 19 in Amherst, graciously agreed to be interviewed as part of the BR&E visitation process.

Amherst Country Club	Fulcrum Associates
Amherst Orthodontics	Kaplan Chiropractic
Amherst Village Dental	Kinney's Towing & Transport
BMA Architectural Group, P.C.	Moulton's
Classic Signs, Inc.	P.J Currier Lumber Company
ControlAir, Inc.	Pet Life
Countryside Self Storage	Rick Wenzel Oil Co., LLC
Davis & Towle Walnut Hill Insurance, LLC	Skillings & Sons, Inc
DevTech Labs/Preform Plus, Inc.	Triangle Credit Union

## Milford Businesses

Airmar	Hampshire Hill Sports & Fitness
Alene Candles	Hayden Kerk
Amherst Label	JP Pest Services
Ciadelli Fuel Co.	Ledgewood Bay Assisted Living
Cirtronics	Leighton A. White, Inc.
Consigning for Good	Pastiche Boutique
Contemporary Chrysler	Postal CTR USA
Datron Dynamics, Inc.	Prolman Realty, Inc.
Degree Controls	St. Joseph Healthcare
Eaton & Berube Insurance	Suburban Propane
Family Dental Care of Milford	The River Card Room
Granite State Boatworks	

## Campus Research Review

While the Warning Flag Review identifies individual business concerns, the Campus Research Review meeting identifies overarching, universal themes in the survey results. Once these are identified, the Campus Research Review participants suggest ideas for projects the Leadership Team and Task Force might undertake to address these themes. Campus Research Review participants typically include members of the Leadership Team and Taskforce, economic development professionals, which in this case were representatives from the Carsey School of Public Policy, Peter T. Paul School of Business and Economics, and University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension faculty. The Amherst and Milford BR&E Campus Research Review was held on **May 13, 2015**.

## Key Findings Report Development



Following the Campus Research Review meeting, University of New Hampshire Extension prepares the Key Findings Report. The goal of the Key Findings Report is to detail the overarching themes identified by the Campus Research Review team and to put forth potential projects. Potential projects are ideas the Leadership Team and Task Force might use to address the larger themes identified by the survey. The Key Findings Report also summarizes the survey data, gives a history of the BR&E project, provides context on the local economy and demographics, and contains the raw survey data.

The Amherst and Milford BR&E Leadership Team and Taskforce sent the completed surveys to the University of New Hampshire for tabulation and analysis. A summary of the data was prepared for the Campus Research Review meeting. This Key Findings Report was then drafted based on the input of the review panel and other ideas.

### **Task Force Retreat**

A two-hour Economic Development Summit was scheduled for September 24, 2015. At this meeting, which was set up in lieu of a retreat, to present the Key Findings to the businesses and interested stakeholders of Amherst and Milford the overall results of the survey, overarching strategies for addressing the universal issues identified, and potential projects for addressing these issues.

The Leadership Team and Task Force will then set priorities on the major projects it will implement. The Leadership Team and Task Force is free to adopt any of the projects listed in this report, to revise and then adopt any of the projects, or to develop its own projects. Quite often, a community will do all three of these in the process of adopting a final list of three to five priority projects.

A project is not considered as a priority project unless at least three people on the Leadership Team and Task Force are willing to take responsibility to see that steps are taken to implement it. The people who agree to work on each project do not need to be experts on the topic and can recruit others from outside the Leadership Team and Task Force to work on the project.

### **Implementation Resources Meeting**

Following the Economic Development Summit, the Amherst and Milford Leadership Team and Task Force will work with individuals from outside the group who might have projects similar to theirs. The group will usually ask these resource people three questions: 1) Is your group doing any work similar to our proposed project that benefits businesses in our area?; 2) If yes, what are you doing and to what degree are you reaching businesses in Amherst and Milford?; and 3) Would you be willing to collaborate with us and/or how could our BR&E Leadership Team and Task Force help your program? The priority projects might be modified after this meeting to account for additional resources identified.

### **Community Commencement Meeting**

This is the meeting to celebrate the end of the BR&E visitation and planning phase and the beginning of the Amherst and Milford BR&E implementation phase. This should be a community-wide event. All of the Task Force members, volunteer visitors, local media, and visited businesses are invited. Other local government, business, and community leaders are also invited, as well as regional and state agency representatives and members of the community. A report summarizing the BR&E program and the priority projects selected for implementation will be prepared by University of New Hampshire Extension for the commencement.

### **Quarterly Implementation Meetings**

After the community commencement meeting, the Project team meets quarterly to discuss progress on the projects and how they might overlap. Each project work group reports on their progress and solicits input from group members.

### **People Involved in the Amherst and Milford BR&E Program**

Three groups of people have been very important to Amherst and Milford's success to date in its BR&E Program. These include: 1) the Leadership Team, 2) the Task Force, and 3) the businesses visited. The Campus Review team also deserves acknowledgement for their participation in the process.

### **BR&E Leadership Team**

The Leadership Team coordinates the BR&E program as well as participates in everything, including business visits. The team will lead the group into the implementation phase once the retreat is completed. The Leadership Team is part of the Task Force.

### **Amherst and Milford BR&E Leadership Team Members**

- Overall Coordinator – Donald H. Sienkiewicz, Esq- Estate Preservation & Planning Law Office
- Business Resource Coordinator – Bill Parker, Milford Community Development Director and Colleen Mailloux, AICP, Amherst Community Development Director
- Milestone Meeting Coordinator – Karen Keating and Heather Leach
- Visitation Coordinators – Trent Blaylock, Financial Advisor and Jay Maiona, Attorney
- Media Coordinator – Tracy Hutchins, Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce and Wendy Hunt

### **Amherst and Milford BR&E Task Force**

Many community members participated as Task Force members. This group addressed the warning flag issues, will set priorities for action, and will lead implementation of selected projects. Task Force members also participated in business visits.

### **BR&E Task Force Members**

Matt Ciadelli  
Peg Bennett  
Michael Putnam  
Lyle Fulkerson  
Paul Dargie

### **Amherst Volunteers**

Mike Akillian	Heather Leach
Dwight Brew	May Balsama
MJ Bachman	Jen Cook
Mike Bonacorsi	Paula Whittier
Mark Bender	Marcey Mason
Daryl D'Angelo	Julie Sullivan
Allen Merriman	Becky Tripp
Rob Christopher	Kris Young
Nathaniel Jensen	Tina Smith

### **Milford Volunteers**

Heather Leach	Brandi Litts
Paula Whittier	Paul Dargie
Jen Crook	Shirley Wilson
Jodie Levandowski	Gerald (Jerry) Gutierrez

### **Campus Research Review Team**

The Campus Research Review panel was comprised of university faculty and Amherst and Milford Task Force members. A list of participants in the Campus Research Review follows.

### **Campus Research Review Members**

- Amherst and Milford BR&E Task Force
  - Tracy Hutchins, Executive Director-Souhegan Chamber of Commerce
  - Trent Blaylock, Financial Advisor Edward Jones Investments
  - Bill Parker, Community Development Director
- University of New Hampshire
  - Michael Swack, Carsey School of Public Policy
  - Kim Clark, Peter T. Paul School of Business and Economics
  - Charlie French, UNHCE Program Leader-Community and Economic Development Program

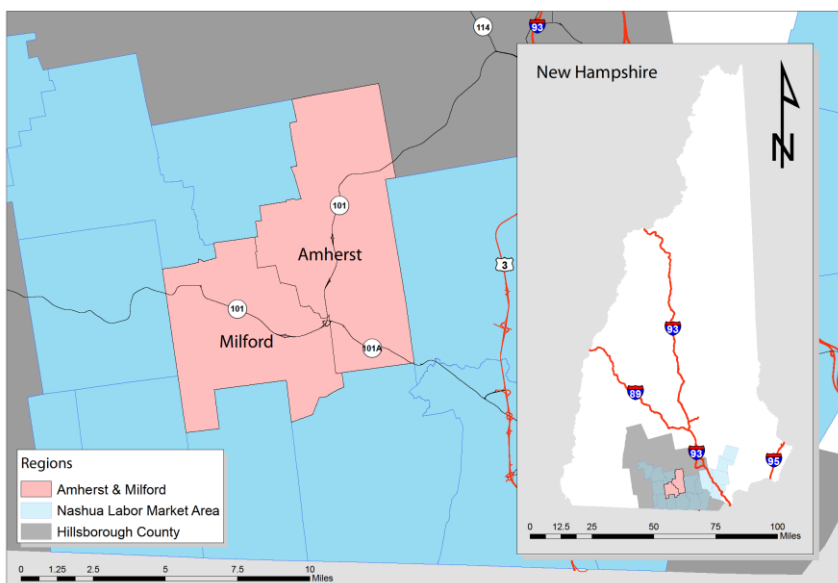
- Geoff Sewake, Community and Economic Development Field Specialist
- Brendan Prusik, Forestry Field Specialist
- Andre L. Garron, Economic Development State Specialist

## Chapter II. Profile of Amherst and Milford’s economy and demographic.

The towns of Amherst and Milford reside in Hillsborough County and the Nashua Labor Market, in southern New Hampshire, about 10 miles from the Massachusetts border. **See Map 1, below.** The Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area) includes the New Hampshire communities of Amherst, Milford, Brookline, Chester, Derry, Greenfield, Greenville, Hudson, Hollis, Litchfield, Londonderry, Lyndeborough, Mason, Merrimack, Mont Vernon, Nashua, Raymond, Wilton, and Windham. A Labor Market is an area defined by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics that can be distinguished by its geographic and economic integration that provides employment, close to a person’s place of residence. Geographically, Hillsborough County occupies about 9.6 percent (892 square miles) and the Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area) occupies about 5.5 percent (515 square miles) of New Hampshire’s landmass (9,304 square miles).

New Hampshire’s most populous community, Manchester (population 109,565), and New Hampshire’s state capitol, Concord (population 42,695), are conveniently located to the northeast, of Amherst and Milford, approximately a 30 and 40 minutes’ drive, respectively. In addition, Boston, Massachusetts (population 617,594), is about an hour drive to the southeast (US Census). Major transportation routes include New Hampshire Route 101, which runs northeast through Milford and Amherst terminating at Interstate 93 in Manchester. An alternate route, New Hampshire Route 101A diverts southeast from New Hampshire Route 101 through Milford and Amherst, ending at the Nashua City / Hudson Town line. Although no direct access exists from Amherst and Milford to Interstates 89, 93 and US Route 3, they provide the most significant north south transportation routes for the two towns.

**Map 1. The Towns of Amherst and Milford as located in the Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area), Hillsborough County, and the State of New Hampshire.**



## A. Demographics.

According to the United States Census, there were approximately 11,201 people residing in Amherst and 15,115 people residing in Milford (2010). Looking at Hillsborough County and the Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area), there were an estimated 400,721 and 282,458 people, respectively (US Census, 2010). When compared to the population of the State of New Hampshire (1,316,470 persons), Hillsborough County and the Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area) respectively make up about 30.4 and 21.5 percent, of the state's population (US Census, 2010). Of note, Hillsborough County is the largest populated county in the State. If we look at the population trend from 2000 to 2010 for Amherst and Milford we find that they have grown by 4 and 11.7 percent, respectively. **See Table 1.** By comparison, Hillsborough County, the Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area), and the State have grown by 5.2, 4.1 and 6.5 percent, respectively. **See Table 1.** As a point of additional comparison, Merrimack and Rockingham Counties, which border Hillsborough County to the north and east, have seen population growth at 7.5 and 6.4 percent, respectively. **See Table 1.**

**Table 1. Population Trend, 2000-2010 (US Census, 2000 & 2010).**

Area	Population (2000)	Population (2010)	Percent Change
Amherst	10,769	11,201	4.00%
Milford	13,535	15,115	11.70%
Hillsborough County	380,841	400,721	5.20%
Merrimack County	136,225	146,445	7.50%
Rockingham County	277,359	295,223	6.40%
Nashua Labor Market (NH Area)	271,334	282,458	4.10%
New Hampshire	1,235,786	1,316,470	6.53%

If we look at the communities located within Hillsborough County and the Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area), we find that there's a wide range of communities, from the small Town of Windsor (population 224) to the largest city in New Hampshire, Manchester (population 109,565). **See Table 2.** The three communities experiencing the highest growth in the Hillsborough and the Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area) are, New Boston (28.6 percent), Windham (26.9 percent), and Chester (25.9 percent). **See Table 2.** The communities experiencing the slowest growth are Greenville (-5.4 percent), Hancock (-4.9 percent) and Derry (-2.7 percent). **See Table 2.** The towns of Amherst and Milford generally fall in the middle, experiencing moderate growth (4 and 11.7 percent, respectively), with moderate populations (11,201 and 15,115, respectively). **See Table 2.**

The towns of Amherst and Milford have slightly different age make ups in comparison to the State. For example, of their total population both Amherst and Milford have about 2.5 percent more persons aged 0 to 14 than the State average of 17.64 percent. This trend of being around 2 percent (+ or -) from the State average tends to generally follow for most of the age groups, with the exception of the 25 to 34 age group, where Amherst (6.6 percent) sits behind the State (13.53 percent) by around 4.37 percent. **See Table 3.**

In regards to race/ethnicity, the towns of Amherst and Milford have 1.93 and 0.94 percent fewer persons of color than the State average. **See Table 4.** However, when compared to Hillsborough County and the Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area), Amherst is estimated to have around 5.44 and 4.23 percent fewer persons of color, respectively, and Milford around 4.45 and 3.24 percent, respectively. **See Table 4.** This disparity between Amherst and Milford as compared to their County and Labor Market can be contributed to the large number of persons of color that reside in the City of Manchester, which is part of the Hillsborough County and Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area). However, when compared to other counties in southern New Hampshire, and, as mentioned above, the rest of the State, Amherst and Milford fall within a percent (+ or -). **See Table 4.**

**Table 2. Population Trend, 2000-2010, for Hillsborough County and the Nashua Labor Market (NH Area) (US Census, 2000 & 2010).**

Town/City	In Nashua Labor Market (NH Area)	Population (2000)	Population (2010)	Percent Change
<b>Hillsborough County</b>				
Amherst	X	10,769	11,201	4.00%
Antrim		2,449	2,637	7.70%
Bedford		18,274	21,203	16.00%
Bennington		1,401	1,476	5.40%
Brookline	X	4,181	4,991	19.40%
Deering		1,875	1,912	2.00%
Francestown		1,480	1,562	5.50%
Goffstown		16,929	17,651	4.30%
Greenfield	X	1,657	1,749	5.60%
Greenville	X	2,224	2,105	-5.40%
Hancock		1,739	1,654	-4.90%
Hillsborough		4,928	6,011	22.00%
Hollis	X	7,015	7,684	9.50%
Hudson	X	22,928	24,467	6.70%
Litchfield	X	7,360	8,271	12.40%
Lyndeborough	X	1,585	1,683	6.20%
Manchester		107,006	109,565	2.40%
Mason	X	1,147	1,382	20.50%
Merrimack	X	25,119	25,494	1.50%
Milford	X	13,535	15,115	11.70%
Mont Vernon	X	2,034	2,409	18.40%
Nashua	X	86,605	86,494	-0.10%
New Boston		4,138	5,321	28.60%
New Ipswich		4,289	5,099	18.90%
Pelham		10,914	12,897	18.20%
Peterborough		5,883	6,284	6.80%
Sharon		360	352	-2.20%
Temple		1,297	1,366	5.30%
Weare		7,776	8,785	13.00%
Wilton	X	3,743	3,677	-1.80%
Windsor		201	224	11.40%
<b>Rockingham County</b>				
Chester	X	3,792	4,768	25.70%
Derry	X	34,021	33,109	-2.70%
Londonderry	X	23,236	24,129	3.80%
Raymond	X	9,674	10,138	4.80%
Windham	X	10,709	13,592	26.90%

**Table 3. Population by Age (US Census, 2010).**

Area	Total	0-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and Over
Amherst	11,201	20.40%	11.38%	6.60%	12.75%	20.73%	15.62%	12.52%
Milford	15,115	20.37%	12.35%	11.58%	15.48%	16.93%	11.41%	11.88%
Nashua Labor Market (NH Area)	400,721	19.60%	12.75%	10.93%	14.81%	18.28%	12.70%	10.93%



Hillsborough County	146,445	19.10%	12.97%	12.25%	14.37%	17.09%	12.36%	11.86%
Merrimack County	295,223	17.49%	13.24%	11.04%	13.55%	17.26%	13.77%	13.66%
Rockingham County	282,458	18.30%	11.84%	9.91%	14.59%	18.81%	13.88%	12.68%
New Hampshire	1,316,470	17.64%	13.53%	10.97%	13.61%	17.16%	13.54%	13.54%

**Table 4. Population Estimate by Race/Ethnicity (US Census, 2010).**

Area	Population (2000)	White	Other
Amherst	11,201	95.82%	4.18%
Milford	15,115	94.83%	5.17%
Hillsborough County	400,721	90.38%	9.62%
Merrimack County	146,445	95.33%	4.67%
Rockingham County	295,223	95.51%	4.49%
Nashua Labor Market (NH Area)	282,458	91.59%	8.41%
New Hampshire	1,316,470	93.89%	6.11%

In 2013, the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning in partnership with the state Regional Planning Commissions, conducted a projected population study. Based on the findings of that study, by the year 2040, Amherst and Milford projected to grow by 6.45 and 12.59 percent (NH OEP, 2013). **See Table 5.** Significantly, Milford is projected to grow 4.84 percent more than the State average (7.75 percent), and 5.05 and 6.22 percent more than Hillsborough County (7.54 percent) and the Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area) (6.37 percent), respectively. **See Table 5.** Amherst, unlike Milford, is estimated to see growth within a percent (+ or -) from the State, and its County and Labor Market. **See Table 5.**

**Table 5. Projected Population Growth (NH Office of Energy and Planning, 2013).**

Area	Population (2010)	Population (2020)	Population (2040)	Percent Change
Amherst	11,201	11,448	11,973	6.45%
Milford	15,115	16,532	17,292	12.59%
Hillsborough County	400,721	414,356	433,381	7.54%
Merrimack County	146,445	150,652	159,845	8.38%
Rockingham County	295,223	306,867	321,226	8.09%
Nashua Labor Market (NH Area)	282,458	288,358	301,676	6.37%
New Hampshire	1,316,470	1,359,836	1,427,098	7.75%

## B. Unemployment.

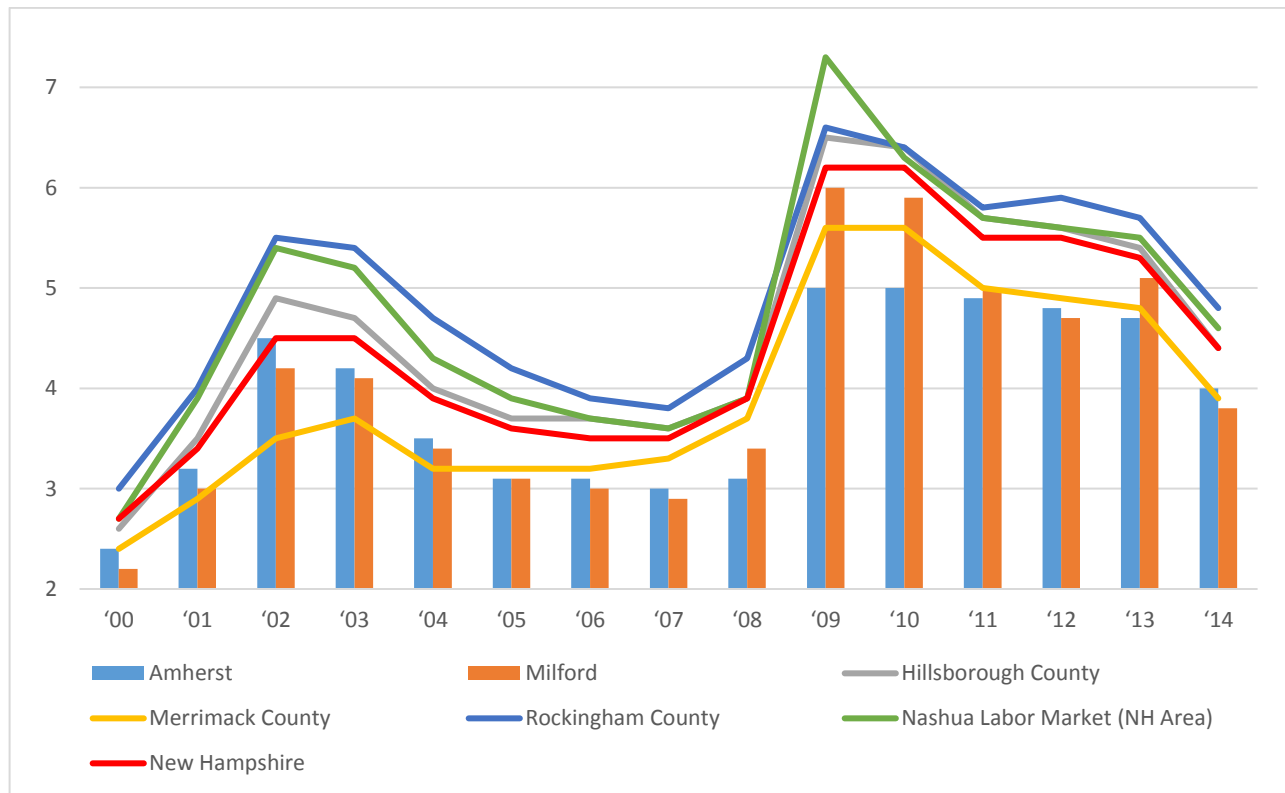
Since 2000, the unemployment rate in the towns of Amherst and Milford have generally held below the New Hampshire average. **See Table 6 & Chart 1.** Moreover, when compared to the rest of Hillsborough County and the Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area), Amherst and Milford again have done better than their region. **See Table 6 & Chart 1.** If you compare the two towns to Merrimack County, we find that Merrimack County most follows the historic low unemployment rates of Amherst and Milford. **See Table 6 & Chart 1.** Finally, if you compare Amherst and Milford to Rockingham County, you find that the two towns historically have unemployment rates lower than Rockingham County. **See Table 6 & Chart 1.**

**Table 6. Percent Unemployment, 2000-2013 (NH Employment Security, 2006 to 2014).**

Area	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14*
Amherst	2.4	3.2	4.5	4.2	3.5	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.1	5.0	5.0	4.9	4.8	4.7	4.0
Milford	2.2	3.0	4.2	4.1	3.4	3.1	3.0	2.9	3.4	6.0	5.9	5.0	4.7	5.1	3.8
Hillsborough County	2.6	3.5	4.9	4.7	4.0	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.9	6.5	6.4	5.7	5.6	5.4	4.4
Merrimack County	2.4	2.9	3.5	3.7	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.7	5.6	5.6	5.0	4.9	4.8	3.9
Rockingham County	3.0	4.0	5.5	5.4	4.7	4.2	3.9	3.8	4.3	6.6	6.4	5.8	5.9	5.7	4.8
Nashua Labor Market (NH Area)	2.7	3.9	5.4	5.2	4.3	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.9	7.3	6.3	5.7	5.6	5.5	4.6
New Hampshire	2.7	3.4	4.5	4.5	3.9	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.9	6.2	6.2	5.5	5.5	5.3	4.4

\*2014 not calculated by NH Employment Security. Independently calculated by the author of this Report based on the 2014 monthly rates provided by NH Employment Security.

**Chart 2.1. Percent Unemployment, 2000-2013 of Amherst & Milford as Compared to Other Regions. (NH Employment Security, 2006 to 2014).\***



\*2014 not calculated by NH Employment Security. Independently calculated by the author of this Report based on the 2014 monthly rates provided by NH Employment Security.

In 2014, encouragingly, the towns of Amherst and Milford experienced a drop in unemployment of 0.7 and 1.3 percent, respectively, over the previous year. **See Table 6 & Chart 2.1, above.**

### C. Employment and Wages.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter of 2014, the towns of Amherst and Milford had approximately, 4,224 and 6,110 jobs, respectively, with an average weekly wage of \$844.18 and \$787.45, respectively. **See Table 7.** By comparison, the State average weekly wage for the same time period was \$954.96, or a difference of -\$110.78 (Amherst) and -\$167.51 (Milford). **See Table 7.** When Amherst and Milford's weekly wages are compared to the rest of Hillsborough County (\$1,056.66) and the Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area) (\$1,092.73), the disparity in weekly wages rises to -\$218.48 and -\$248.55, respectively for Amherst, and -\$269.21 and -\$305.28, respectively, for Milford. **See Table 7.**

**Table 7. 2014 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, Employment and Wages for All Sectors (NH Employment Security, 2014).**

Area	Units	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wage
Amherst	436	4,224	\$844.18
Milford	419	6,110	\$787.45
Hillsborough County	11,348	193,829	\$1,056.66
Merrimack County	4,597	74,894	\$865.25
Rockingham County	9,899	142,101	\$943.19
Nashua Labor Market (NH Area)	7,647	122,649	\$1,092.73
New Hampshire	45,704	628,822	\$954.96

An examination of the towns of Amherst and Milford reveal causation of the lower average weekly wage as compared to the State, Hillsborough County and the Nashua Labor Market (New Hampshire Area). **See Table 8.** According to data collected by the New Hampshire Employment Security, the Service-Providing and Retail Trade industries dominate the available job market within the two communities. **See Table 8.**

**Table 8. 2014 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, Employment and Wages for Amherst & Milford (NH Employment Security, 2014).**

NAICS Code	Industry	Amherst			Milford		
		Units	Avg. Employment	Avg. Weekly Wage	Units	Avg. Employment	Avg. Weekly Wage
	<b>Total, Private plus Government</b>	436	4,224	\$844.18	419	6,110	\$787.45
	<b>Total Private</b>	428	3,636	\$826.85	404	5,375	\$783.44
<b>101</b>	<b>Goods-Producing Industries</b>	69	812	\$1,068.62	70	1,853	\$1,054.12
<b>11</b>	<b>Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing</b>	0	0	\$0.00	n	n	n
<b>21</b>	<b>Mining</b>	0	0	\$0.00	0	0	\$0.00
<b>23</b>	<b>Construction</b>	28	155	\$1,419.59	n	n	n
<b>31-33</b>	<b>Manufacturing</b>	41	657	\$985.59	35	1,712	\$1,076.28
<b>102</b>	<b>Service-Providing Industries</b>	360	2,824	\$757.30	334	3,522	\$640.98
<b>22</b>	<b>Utilities</b>	0	0	\$0.00	n	n	n
<b>42</b>	<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	50	130	\$1,579.13	21	166	\$1,213.10

44-45	Retail Trade	64	990	\$506.39	75	1,077	\$496.36
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	6	195	\$832.26	7	54	\$1,082.89
51	Information	6	17	\$1,515.67	n	n	n
52	Finance and Insurance	17	89	\$1,028.70	18	107	\$1,134.29
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	12	41	\$1,071.03	9	26	\$702.81
54	Professional and Technical Service	69	317	\$1,255.32	34	264	\$1,332.33
55	Management of Companies/Enterprises	6	47	\$2,412.59	0	0	\$0.00
56	Administrative and Waste Services	22	90	\$745.93	36	260	\$799.04
61	Educational Services	17	111	\$582.45	n	n	n
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	34	321	\$800.46	41	536	\$745.89
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	4	64	\$461.41	5	214	\$294.38
72	Accommodation and Food Services	18	272	\$398.09	41	589	\$290.18
81	Other Services Except Public Admin	37	138	\$501.64	42	196	\$465.51
99	Unclassified Establishments	0	0	\$0.00	n	n	n
	<b>Total Government</b>	8	588	\$951.39	15	735	\$816.84
	<b>Federal Government</b>	1	19	\$924.44	2	36	\$1,070.48
	<b>State Government</b>	0	0	\$0.00	5	29	\$691.40
	<b>Local Government</b>	7	569	\$952.28	8	670	\$808.84

According to the data, these two industries are responsible for 8,414 out of 10,334 jobs available in Amherst and Milford, or 81.4 percent. **See Table 8, above.** Although these two industries do not provide the lowest average weekly wages, this combined with other lower wage positions in Amherst and Milford have resulted in an overall lower average weekly wage as compared to the State and other regions. **See Table 8, above.**

Other areas of major employment in Amherst and Milford are in the Goods Producing Industries (2,665 jobs), Manufacturing (2,369 jobs), and Government (1,323 jobs). **See Table 8, above.**

Interestingly, for industries residing in both Amherst and Milford, outside of the Professional and Technical Service are, the highest average weekly wages are in: (1) Wholesale Trade, (2) Finance and Insurance, and (3) Transportation and Warehousing. **See Table 8, above.**

**Table 9**

Educational Attainment	Amherst	Milford	Hillsborough County	NH	US
<b>Total Population 25 yrs or older</b>	7,474	10,433	272,916	907,338	204,336,017

<b>No high school degree</b>	346	542	25,652	77,643	29,179,819
<b>High school graduate</b>	7,128	9,891	247,264	829,695	175,156,198
<b>Associates degree</b>	734	1,161	26,041	87,017	15,736,009
<b>Bachelor's degree or higher</b>	4,549	3,771	96,327	303,370	58,205,022
<b>Bachelor's degree</b>	2,737	2,558	62,046	191,995	36,529,875
<b>Graduate or professional</b>	1,812	1,213	34,281	111,375	21,675,147
<b>Percent of Total</b>					
<b>No high school degree</b>	4.63%	5.20%	9.40%	8.56%	14.28%
<b>High school graduate</b>	95.37%	94.80%	90.60%	91.44%	85.72%
<b>Associates degree</b>	9.82%	11.13%	9.54%	9.59%	7.70%
<b>Bachelor's degree or higher</b>	60.86%	36.14%	35.30%	33.44%	28.48%
<b>Bachelor's degree</b>	36.62%	24.52%	22.73%	21.16%	17.88%
<b>Graduate or professional</b>	24.24%	11.63%	12.56%	12.27%	10.61%

Source: Headwaters Economics

Educational attainment is often used to measure the quality of the local workforce. New Hampshire, nationally, has historically placed in the top third of all 50 states in terms of an educated workforce. In accordance with the latest statistics, New Hampshire ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in percentage of persons 25 years or older with a bachelor's degree or higher at 32 percent. **Tables 9** show that both Amherst and Milford have a well to very well educated population with a 95.4 percent and 95.8 percent high school graduation rates respectively. Milford is several percentage points above the state average in regards to those aged 25 years or older with a bachelor's degree of 36.1 percent and state at 33.4 percent. Amherst has a significant percentage of its population over the age of 25 years old with a bachelor's degree or higher at 60 percent.

## **CHAPTER III. BR&E Survey Key Findings**

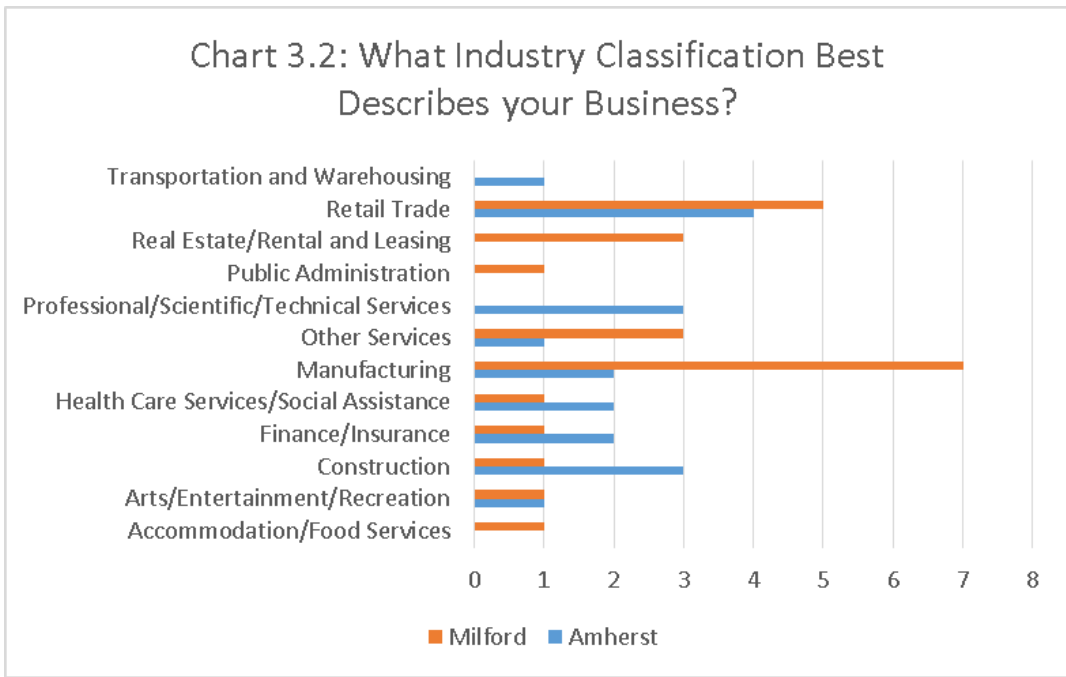
This chapter presents survey results from the 44 businesses (i.e. 19 in Amherst and 25 in Milford) visited by the Amherst and Milford BR&E Leadership Team and Taskforce from October to November 2014 and February to March 2015. The chapter begins by describing the types of businesses visited and their characteristics. General survey results are highlighted and discussed. The chapter then introduces three strategies for addressing the issues and opportunities identified by the businesses in the survey. Under each strategy, the survey results relevant to that strategy are reported and a set of potential local projects is given. The potential local projects were developed by the author based on feedback from the Campus Research Review meeting and on general economic development theory and practice. University of New Hampshire Extension faculty, Carsey School of Public Policy, Peter Paul School of Business and Economics and Amherst and Milford's BR&E Task Force members participated in the Campus Research Review meeting hosted at the University of New Hampshire on May 13, 2015. The potential local projects are suggestions for the Leadership Team and Task Force to consider in order to address business concerns in the community. Recommendations for projects to implement will be made by the Leadership Team and Task Force on September 24, 2015 at the Economic Development Summit (in lieu of a BR&E Leadership Team and Taskforce retreat). The final priority projects will then be selected and developed by the Amherst and Milford BR&E Leadership Team and Taskforce. Amherst and Milford might use the suggested projects from this report, they might modify them, or they might adopt new projects developed locally. Typically, a community BR&E will result in three to five projects to move into immediate implementation. However, Amherst and Milford may choose to phase more projects in over time.

### **Key Findings of Businesses Visited**

Participants in the Amherst and Milford BR&E program visited 44 businesses (i.e. 19 in Amherst and 25) in Milford). The Amherst and Milford Task Force used a comprehensive method to select businesses targeted for visits. See Ch. 1 of this report for the business selection process used. Of the 19 businesses visited in Amherst, 89 percent are locally-owned (see Chart 3-1) and of the 25 businesses visited in Milford, 84 percent are locally-owned (see Chart 3-1). Only 11 percent in Amherst and 16 percent in Milford are not locally-owned. Fifty-one percent of the companies have other locations as well.



Amherst and Milford decided on a mixed sector sample of businesses to have a BR&E visit (see chapter 1 for details, p. 3). The combined final mix of visits to 44 companies resulted in the most common visits being to Retail Trade (11), Manufacturing (9), and Construction (4). See Chart 3-2 below.



Surveyed businesses in Amherst and Milford currently employ a combined total of 2,224 individuals. According to chapter 2 of this report, in 2014, there are 10,334 total jobs in Amherst and Milford. Total combined surveyed businesses employment grew by 252 jobs or 11 percent of

employment three years prior to the visits. Chart 3.3 shows that Amherst’s surveyed businesses grew by 50 full time jobs from three years ago.

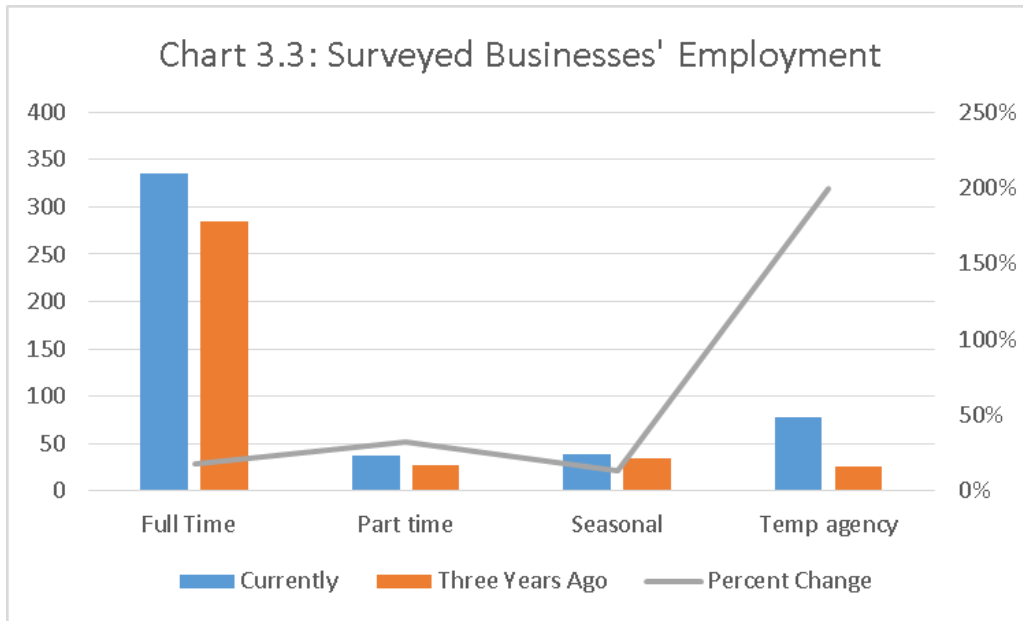


Chart 3.3a show the Milford’s surveyed businesses grew by 39 full time jobs from three years ago.

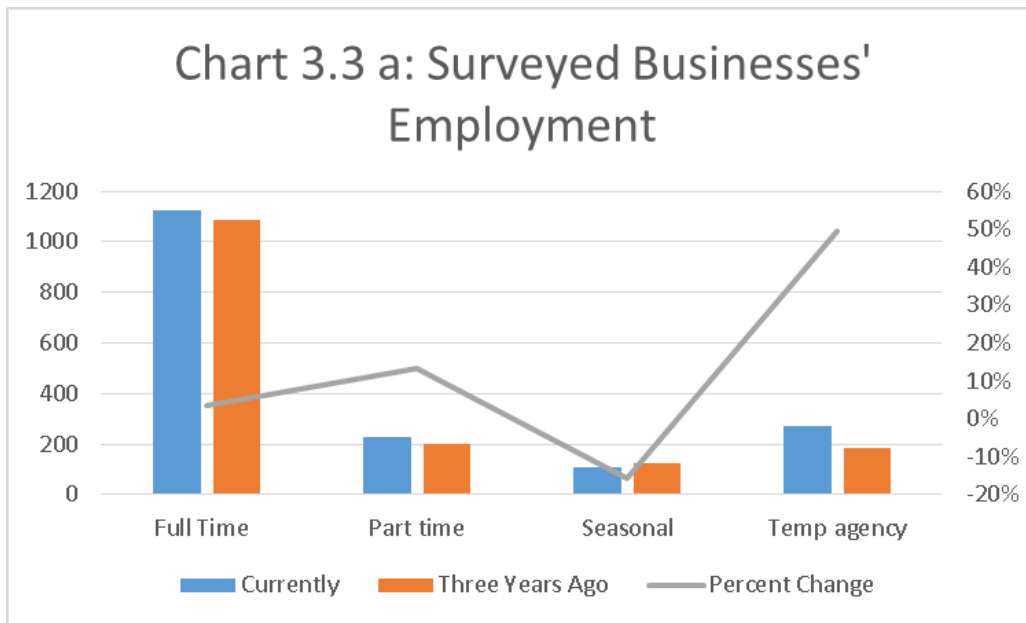


Table 3.3 shows the many reasons for this huge increase in employment in the companies.

Growth in demand was cited by 33 percent in Amherst and 37 percent in Milford, expansion by another 27 percent in Amherst and 36 percent in Milford and Entered new markets by 20 percent in Amherst and 21 percent in Milford.

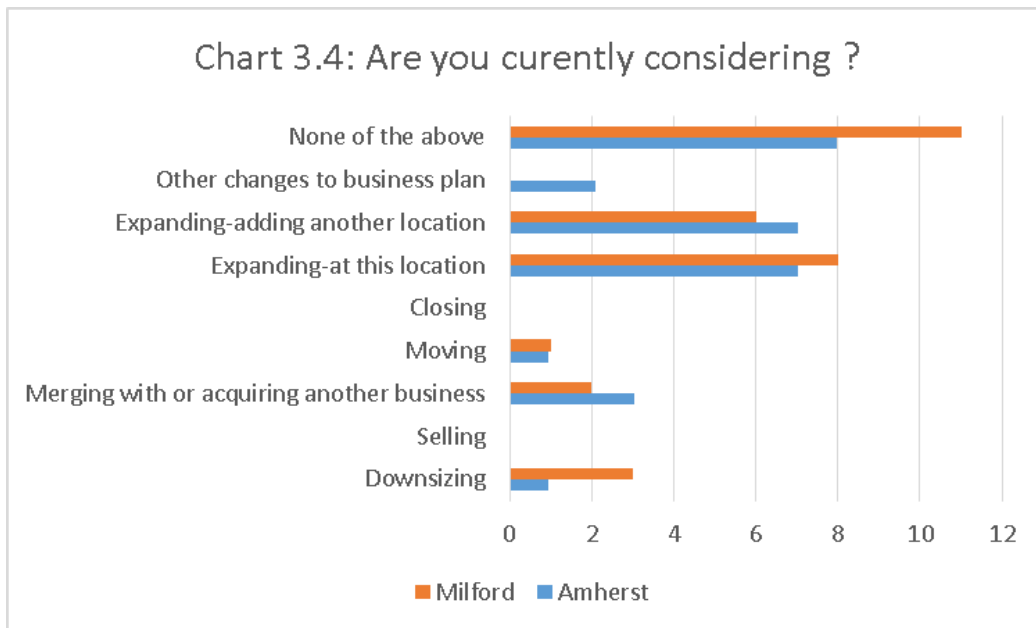


<b>Table 3.3: Reasons for Change in Employment over Past Three Years</b>	<b>Amherst</b>	<b>Milford</b>
Business did not exist 3 years ago	0%	11%
Change in management	7%	21%
Change in profits	20%	16%
Change in subcontracting	7%	5%
Changes in worker efficiency	13%	5%
Corporate decisions/policies	0%	5%
Entered new markets	20%	21%
Expansion	27%	26%
Government regulation	7%	5%
Growth in demand	33%	37%
Increased competition	7%	11%
Lack of demand	20%	16%
New products/services	20%	11%
Renovation	0%	0%
Technological changes	13%	0%
Other	27%	11%

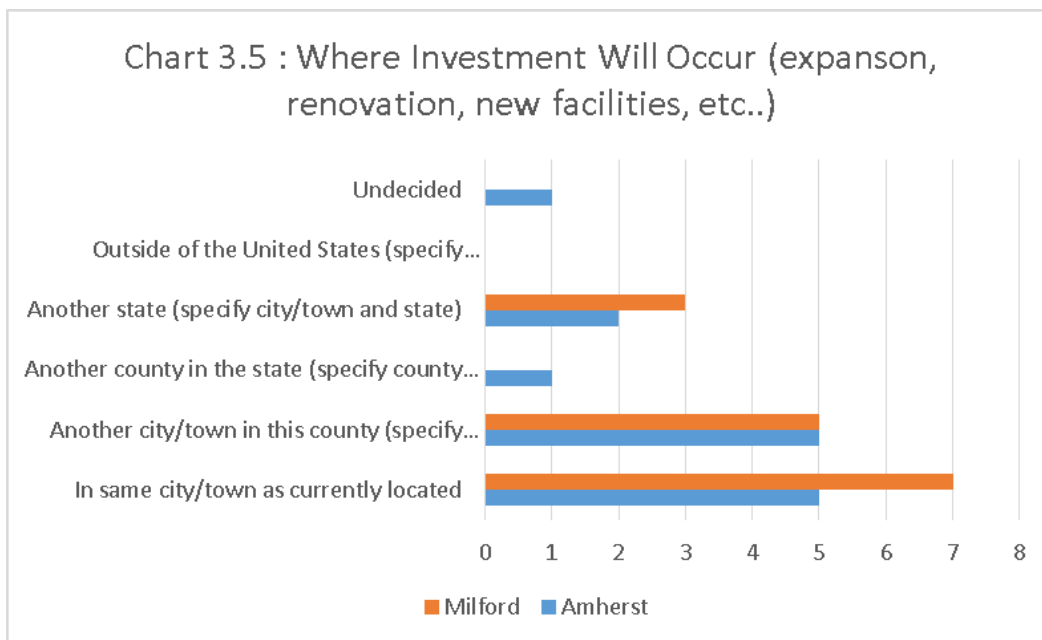
The average starting wage for all businesses ranges from \$10.58 an hour for Unskilled Service Workers, to \$32.50 an hour for Engineers, Scientists and Technicians (Table 3.4). These rates translate into weekly starting wages for full-time employees of \$423 for the lowest category to \$1,300 for the highest category. The average weekly wage in Amherst and Milford, as highlighted in chapter 2, is \$844 and \$787 respectively. The highest weekly wages in Amherst was Management of Companies of \$2412.59 and in Milford was Professional and Technical Services if \$1331.33.

<b>Table 3.4: Average Hourly Starting Wage Paid by Category</b>	<b>Amherst</b>	<b>Milford</b>
Professional/Managerial (managers, accountants, HR professionals etc.)	\$26.82	\$28.13
Information Technology	\$21.00	\$27.44
Engineers, Scientists and Technicians	\$32.50	\$32.34
Arts, Design and other Creative Occupations	\$20.50	\$26.77
Healthcare Related	\$21.50	\$26.00
Office and Administrative (secretaries, office clerks, receptionists, etc.)	\$17.27	\$15.73
Unskilled Service Workers (food prep., retail sales, housekeeping, etc.)	\$10.58	\$11.50
Agricultural		\$0.00
Construction	\$25.75	\$0.00
Repair and Skilled Maintenance (not janitorial)	\$18.50	\$22.60
Unskilled Manufacturing (assembly, production helpers, etc.)	\$14.33	\$14.31
Skilled Manufacturing (welders, machinists, etc.)	\$18.00	\$21.05
Transportation	\$15.88	\$16.25

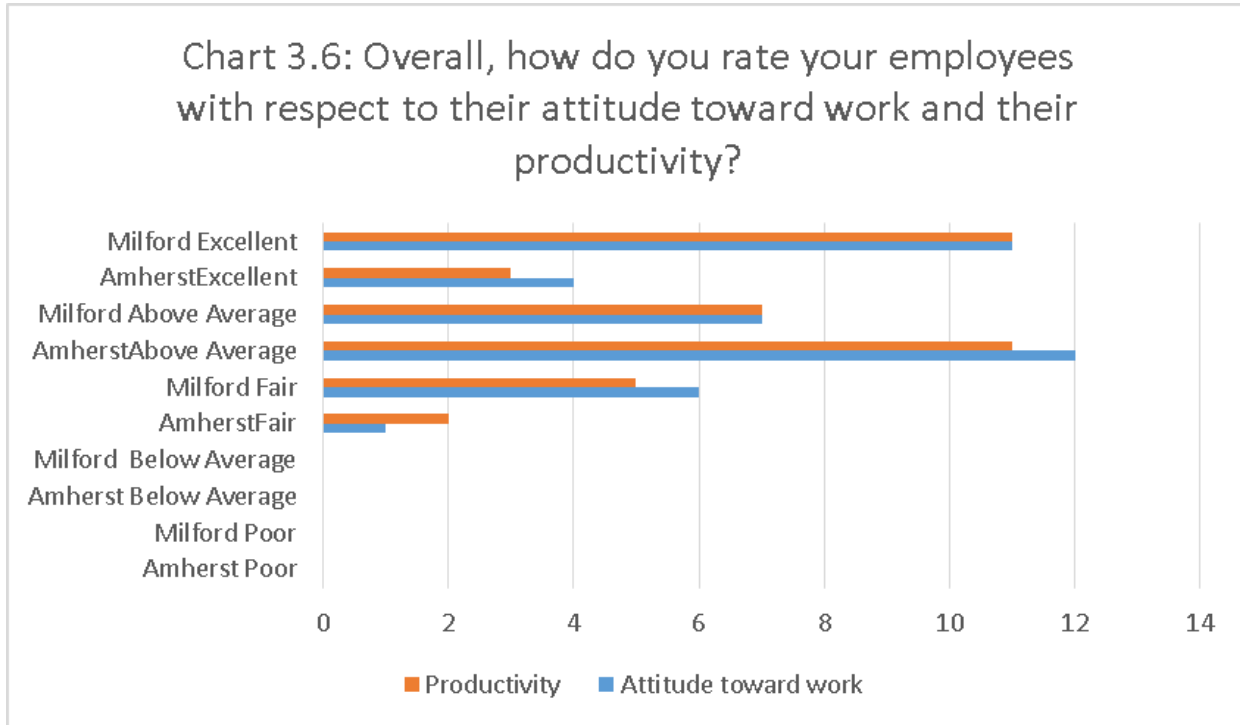
Several businesses in Amherst and Milford are planning to expand or add a new location. No businesses planned to close and only one in each community indicated moving, as shown in Chart 3-4. The majority of the respondents in Amherst and Milford indicated “None of the above”, which can be concluded that they are content at their current location.



Five businesses in Amherst and seven in Milford have indicated that their investments will occur in the current location and five in each community have indicated that their investment will occur elsewhere in the same county. However, as many as nine of the investments would occur elsewhere (see Chart 3-5).



Businesses surveyed in Amherst appear to have fair to above average view on its community’s rating of its attitude towards work and productivity. Milford rating on the two criteria are more positive with attitude towards work and productivity being rated as above average to excellent in both categories. None of the businesses surveyed in either community rated their community’s workforce below a rating of fair.



Finally, businesses shared their opinion of Amherst and Milford as a place to do business and as a place to live. On average, businesses feel both Amherst and Milford is a slightly better place to live than to do business. This is a typical result of a BR&E survey because the “live in” score usually exceeds the “do business in” score.

Chart 3.7: What is your overall opinion of your community (i.e. where your business is) as a place to conduct business?

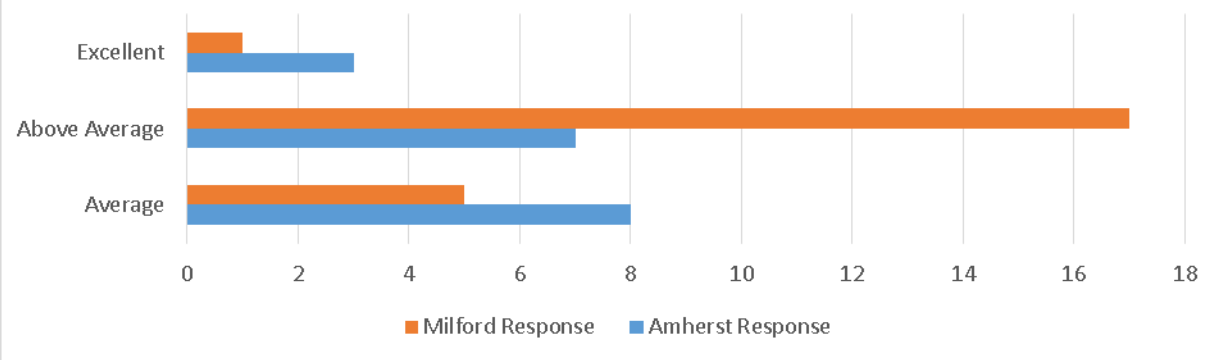
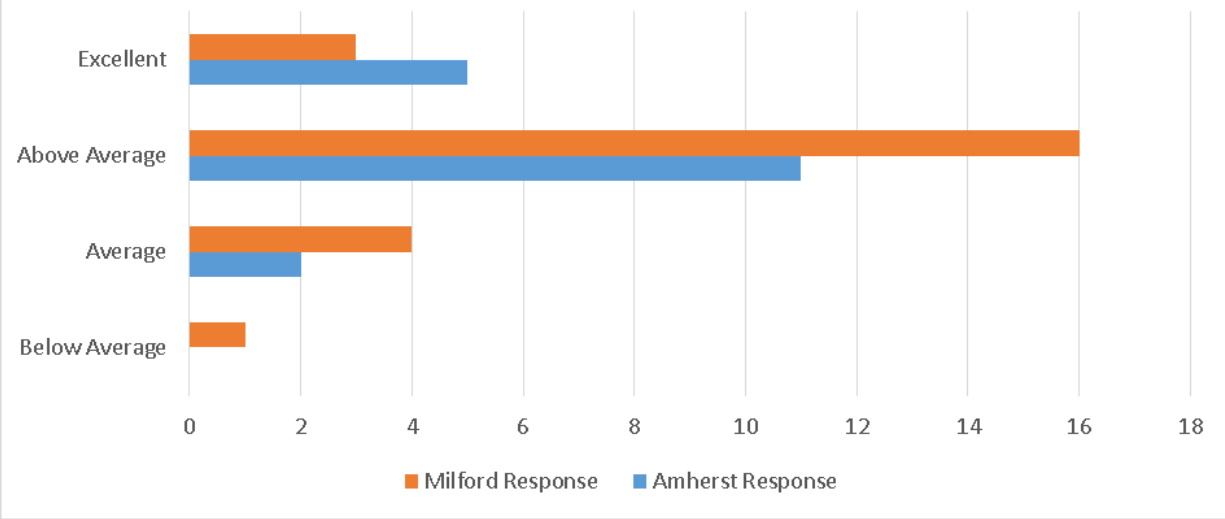


Chart 3-8: What is your overall opinion of your community (i.e. where your business is) as a place to live?



## Chapter IV. Survey Analysis and Results

The previous chapter identified the key findings of the survey data tabulated between the Town of Amherst and Milford. We thank each visitor that gave of their time to visit each of the businesses to help gather the information and we thank the businesses that took the time to fill out the survey forms and be interviewed by the visitors as part of the program. The information gathered by the surveys will be the foundation of establishing projects that will attempt to address the issues the businesses communicated through the surveys to help them grow and expand.

### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats**

During the Campus Research Review meeting (see Chapter 1 of this report), participants were asked to look critically at a summary of the survey results and identify any strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the data. Overall, the 44 completed combined surveys reveal a strong business sector in Amherst and Milford which both communities lie between two of the biggest cities in New Hampshire, Manchester to the north and Nashua to the south. These businesses are capitalizing on the improving economy by growing, expanding, and modernizing, and have experienced a modest increase in employment (increased by over 89 combined full time jobs in the participating businesses). Businesses demonstrated they have a vision for the future, with both technology changes and the need to train their workforce to meet their future technological aspirations. **Strengths** identified include: community attitudes toward business, a moderate concentration of headquarters locations (42%) in Amherst and (46%) in Milford, proximity to customers/markets, highway and airport access, stable leadership, and the amenities that Amherst and Milford have to offer.

The **weaknesses** identified were: limited transportation option for workers, housing costs, 63% of the firms surveyed in Amherst and 43% in Milford are without written business plans, some labor force issues, concerns over state business climate, lack of business networking opportunities, and public transit.

The Campus Research Review panel identified several opportunities within the survey responses. Those **opportunities** included: helping business invest in updated facilities, developing employee training programs, connecting/promoting business development resources, helping businesses that are considering expansion, enhancing business networking, making businesses aware of housing opportunities, and forging connections with local and higher education programs. **Threats** included: running out of room for business expansion and issues related to expansion, creating a more friendly business environment in Amherst and limited infrastructure access in certain areas in each community.

Most of the ideas presented in this report as pertinent to Amherst and Milford's situation were contributed by the eight people that attended the Campus Review meeting held on the main campus of the University of New Hampshire.

### **Overview of Business Retention and Expansion Strategies**

Business retention and expansion programs exist to serve the existing business community by educating decision makers and community leaders on better understanding what issues are restraining the growth and prosperity of the business sector. Realizing profits are a key component to the retention and expansion of businesses. A community's environment, its sense of place, to live and raise a family are important as well in attracting and retaining a diverse and productive workforce. Loyalty to the community alone cannot keep businesses in a community. In a free market economy, such as the United States, making a profit is the responsibility of business owners and managers. Government and community groups cannot singularly make a business profitable. However, to the extent that government and community groups can influence the business environment in their community, they can help businesses survive and grow. The next section of this report details strategies and potential projects Amherst and Milford can consider to help its businesses become more competitive and, therefore, remain in and contribute to the its local economy.

The potential projects included in this report are intended to be ideas the community can consider during its Economic Development Summit (in lieu of a Leadership Team and Task Force Retreat) on September 24, 2015. The propose themes and Projects were developed using the input received at the Campus Review Team meeting held on May 13, 2015 and based on economic development theory, experience and practice. The projects reflect the results and analysis of the business survey.

None of the projects included in this report will address all of the businesses' concerns or serve as a key to prosperity for all businesses and the community. However, they are all potential options that can help strengthen the business sector and the local economy. Note that feasibility analysis has not been conducted on these potential project ideas.

After the Leadership Team and Task Force has prioritized its recommendations, the recommendations will be taken to the Amherst and Milford Boards of Selectmen to report. The Amherst and Milford Leadership Team and Taskforce will determine how the recommendations will move into implementation. The most effective BR&E implementation involves collaboration among various sectors in the community. This collaboration is a benefit in itself to the local businesses as it provides a forum for addressing important issues, efficiently links businesses to policy makers, helps minimize the duplication of services, and helps inform a cross-section of the community about economic and business issues.

### **Business Retention and Expansion Strategies for Amherst and Milford**

Strategy 1- Amherst create and Milford enhance identity to promote and develop the business environment

Strategy 2- Improve Amherst and Milford's workforce by connecting businesses to areas workforce development groups and higher education institutions.

Strategy 3- Plan, develop and implement development review procedures focused infrastructure improvements to enhance the business expansion environment

### **Process for Setting Priority Recommendations**

For each of the above strategies, we will use the following process at the Amherst and Milford Economic Development Summit meeting on September 24, 2015:

1. Survey results from the BR&E business visits will be reviewed
2. The Leadership Team, Taskforce and Summit participants will review the suggested themes and projects for responding to the businesses' concerns
3. The Leadership Team, Taskforce and Summit participants will nominate projects they feel best fit the local area (including new suggestions or modifications of the potential projects in this report)
4. After final discussion, the Leadership Team, Taskforce and Summit participants will vote for three to five projects

The recommendations of the BR&E Leadership Team and Taskforce will be presented to the Amherst and Milford Boards of Selectmen.

The following are the proposed strategy themes and projects that were developed by the Campus Review Team on May 13, 2015.

The following three strategies were developed as result of the campus review meeting:

1. Create and enhance an identity to promote and develop the business environment.
2. Improve workforce by connecting businesses to areas workforce development groups and higher education institutions.
3. Plan, develop and implement development review procedures focused infrastructure improvements to enhance the business expansion environment.

### **Over view of Strategy 1: Create and enhance an identity to promote and develop the business environment**

The Towns of Amherst and Milford are at different stages of maturation when it comes to economic development. Amherst is just beginning organizing itself in regards to economic development. Whereas, Milford's economic development efforts are on-going led by its economic development advisory committee and community development department. In the survey results for Amherst, the businesses identify recruiting problems such as:

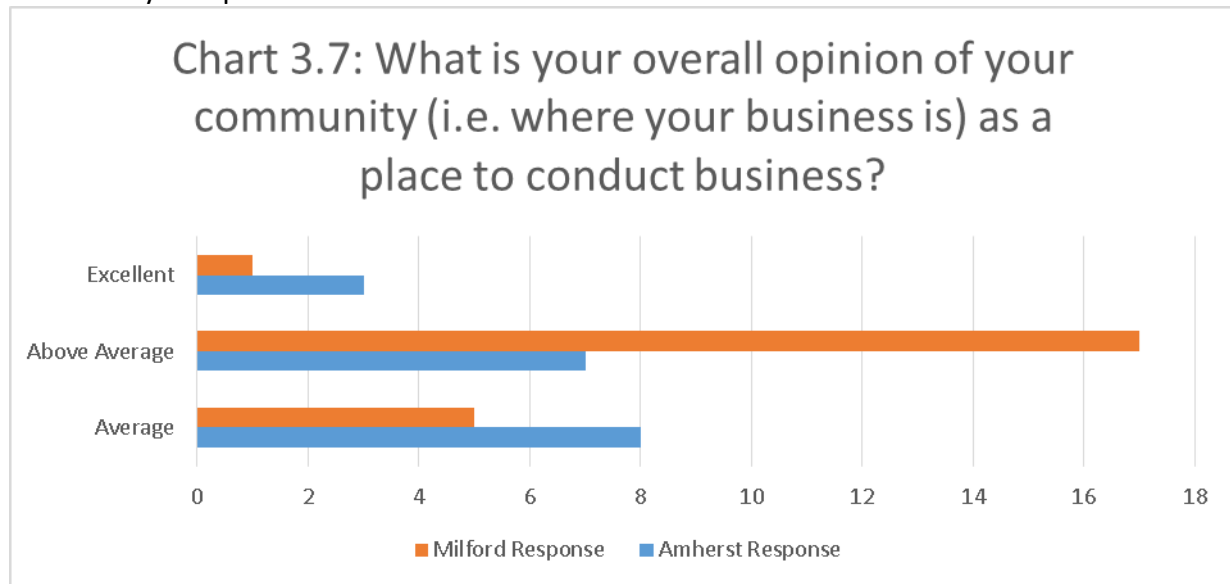
- Competition for employees
- Inadequate labor skills

- Poor work attitude
- High Wage rates for labor

When asked what can help Amherst and Milford business to grow and expand, the top responses were:

- Advertising the community and what it is available in town
- A town wide map/brochure that identifies businesses and location
- Standard access point to research businesses and community services offered

Lastly, the overall opinion by the business community which rated their thoughts on each community as a place to conduct business:



Improving the business sector’s opinion of both communities as places to conduct business from Average in Amherst to Above Average and in Milford from Above average to Excellent would help move both economic development agendas forward.

Businesses also indicated that business growth and expansion was also being contemplated by the local businesses. An entity established or enhanced in each community could be the conduit for the business community to access to help address concerns and to foster an atmosphere of good communication and progress.

Proposed Projects:

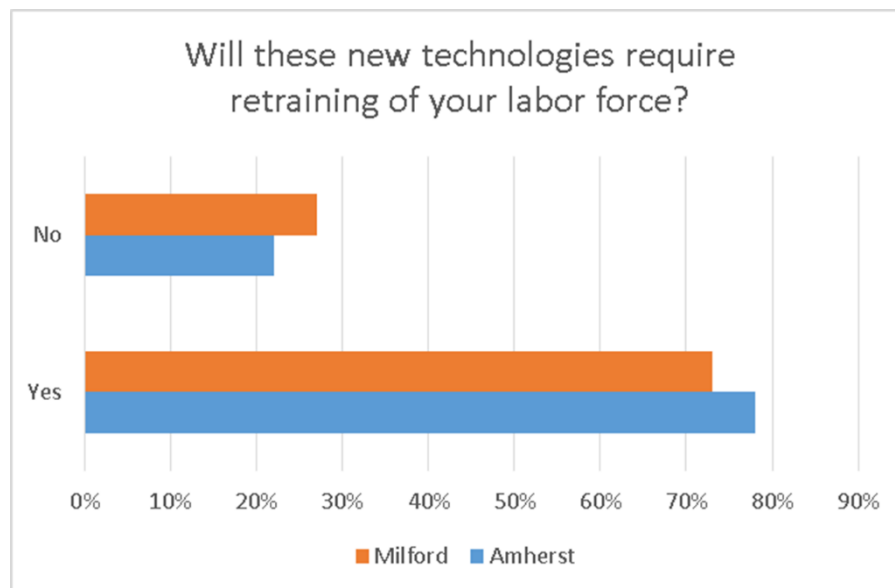
1. Amherst create an Economic Development Committee to focus on business retention and expansion and improving the business environment
2. Create or increase opportunities for businesses to network and community to share information
3. Create a team to reach out to businesses who have indicated moving and/or expanding in town or moving or relocating out of town.



## Strategy 2- Improve the workforce by connecting businesses to areas workforce development groups and higher education institutions.

In reading many articles about New Hampshire's economy and the business sector, a major area of concern is the ability to get adequate and sufficiently skilled labor. With New Hampshire's historically low unemployment rate, one would think that NH employers are finding their workforce. There appears to be a growing specialization of New Hampshire's business environment and the survey results seem to be in line with the growing sentiment of the broader business sector.

- 69% in Amherst and 50% of the businesses surveyed reported that one of the biggest recruiting problem is *inadequate labor skills*
- Close to 1400 employees in Milford and 200 in Amherst of the businesses surveyed indicated that their employee needed more training in general business skills and computer skills
- Over 45% of the businesses surveyed in Amherst and Milford indicated that major technological changed are on the horizon that might affect their companies



Significantly, close to 80% of the businesses surveyed in Amherst and Milford responded “yes” to the question about “Will these new technologies require retracing of your labor force”. Helping address this workforce issue appears to be a key to helping to retain and grow each respective business sector. Business are attracted to areas with a smart, skilled and talented labor force.

Potential project:

1. Address skills gap through connection between the community college system, school district and local businesses

## Strategy 3- Focused infrastructure improvements to enhance the business expansion and workforce environment (Theme revised based on input received from Econ. Dev. Summit)

Well maintained and appropriate infrastructure (i.e. broadband, water, sewer and natural gas) has always been a key factor in any sound economic development strategy. Other factors like knowing what types of businesses you have in your community, what their infrastructure needs are, and, what the future infrastructure needs are, will allow community leaders to effectively plan to meet its economic development and business needs. The businesses surveyed indicated that in Amherst, Utility expansion was very important to their growth, and in Milford broadband speed was an area that businesses thought could be improved. Businesses surveyed in both communities indicated that public transportation would help with their workforce issues.

Potential projects:

1. Examine targeted infrastructure expansion (i.e. broadband, water, sewer and natural gas)
2. Investigate or pilot a public transportation program (Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce)
3. Address housing affordability

In lieu of a Leadership Team Taskforce retreat, Amherst and Milford opted to organize an Economic Development Summit to solicit input on the proposed strategies and goals drafted by the Campus Review Team. The Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce organized the event, Milford was the host and, both, Amherst and Milford business leaders were invited.

On September 24, 2015, the Economic Development Summit was held at Milford Town Hall. Over 40 business, state, regional and community leaders were in attendance. Andre Garron, State Specialist, Economic Development has been the UNH Cooperative Extension consultant to Amherst and Milford's BR&E program. Sarah Smith, Forestry Specialist and Casey Hancock, Program Coordinator, attended the event and assisted in facilitating the discussion on the proposed strategies and projects developed by the Campus Review Team.

Andre Garron, presented an overview of the BR&E program and reviewed the Key Findings Report (See Chapter III of this report) to the audience. After which, the audience was asked to break into three groups, each facilitated by a UNH Cooperative Extension representative, Andre Garron, state Specialist, Economic Development, Sarah Smith, Forest Industry Specialist or Casey Hancock, Program Coordinator, Community and Economic Development. The purpose of the breakout groups was to review the proposed projects developed by the Campus Review Team, asked if they were consistent with the survey results, ask if any projects were missing, and then, using the feasibility grid, place each project on the grid based on the group's consensus on which projects had the highest feasibility of being implemented and highest impact on the community.

After each breakout group discussed and rated each project, the groups were asked to come back together to report out their top projects. Andre Garron then combined all the like projects into one feasibility grid which showed the combined effort of all three groups consensus on the top projects discussed.

The top projects were:

**Strategy 1- Amherst create an identity to promote and develop the business environment**

1. Amherst create an Economic Development Committee to focus on business retention and expansion and improving the business environment
2. Create opportunities for businesses to network and community to share information
3. Create a team, program or initiative to reach out to businesses who have indicated moving and /or expanding in town or moving or relocating out of town.

**Strategy 1- Milford enhance identity to promote and develop the business environment**

1. Increase opportunities for businesses to network and community to share information
2. Create a team, program or initiative to reach out to businesses who have indicated moving and/or expanding in town or moving or relocating out of town
3. Develop a shared resource and technology platform for services to small businesses (Business Services)

**Strategy 2- Improve Amherst and Milford’s workforce by connecting businesses to areas workforce development groups and higher education institutions.**

1. Address skills gap through connection between the community college system, school district and local businesses

**Strategy 3- Focused infrastructure improvements to enhance the business expansion and workforce environment (Theme revised based on input received from Econ. Dev. Summit)**

1. Examine targeted infrastructure expansion (i.e. broadband, water, sewer and natural gas)
2. Investigate or pilot a public transportation program (Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce)
3. Address housing affordability

**The Final strategies and projects for the Amherst and Milford Business Retention and Expansion program is as follow:**

**Strategy 1- Amherst create an identity to promote and develop the business environment**

**Strategy 1- Milford enhance identity to promote and develop the business environment**

1. Develop a shared resource and technology platform for services to small businesses (Business Services)
2. Create or increase opportunities for businesses to network and community to share information

3. Create a team to reach out to businesses who have indicated moving and /or expanding in town or moving or relocating out of town.

**Strategy 2- Improve Amherst and Milford’s workforce by connecting businesses to areas workforce development groups and higher education institutions.**

- Address skills gap through connection between the community college system, school district and local businesses

**Strategy 3- Focused infrastructure improvements to enhance the business expansion and workforce environment (Theme revised based on input from Econ. Dev. Summit)**

1. Investigate or pilot a public transportation program for the local business workforce

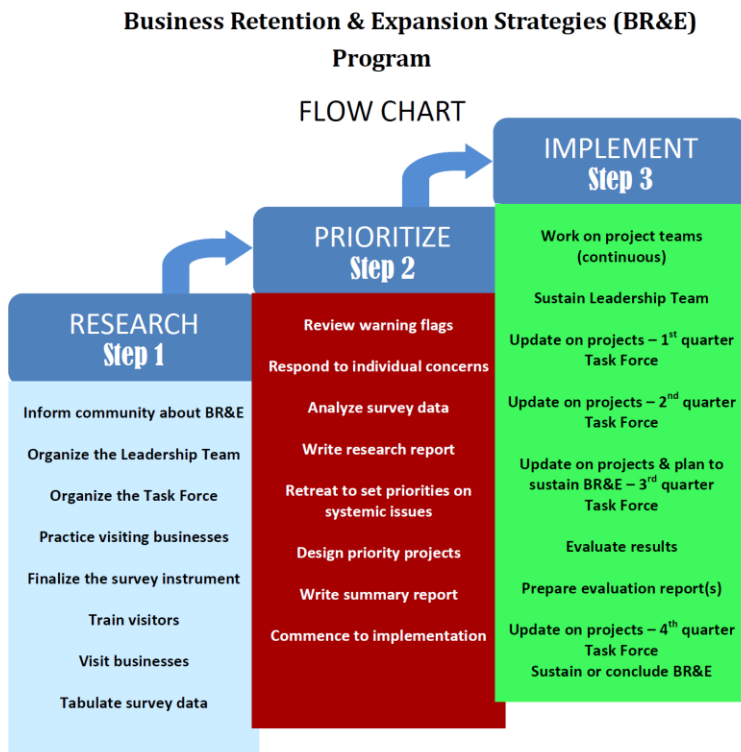
The Leadership Team and Taskforce in Amherst, Milford and the Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce are commended for keeping this project on course. Now the most difficult task remains, implementing the projects selected. A request was made to the people in the Economic Development Summit audience to commit to the project that they felt most interested in and put their names to that project to help to move it forward. A list of people was generated that had indicated the project that they would be willing to commit to at the conclusion of the Economic Development Summit.

The final projects were presented to the Boards of Selectmen in Amherst and Milford on Monday, November 23, 2015.

## CHAPTER V. HINTS ON SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF BR&E PROJECTS

The Amherst, Milford and Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce’s Economic Development Summit (in lieu of the Leadership Team and Taskforce Retreat) completed steps 1 and 2 of the BR&E program.

Implementation is the 3<sup>rd</sup> step of the program.



As indicated at the beginning of this program, the reason that the third step is higher than the first two is because it is the hardest step to accomplish.

The community started the BR&E process by asking the business community about their issues, concerns and barriers within the business survey conducted in Step 1. We analyzed that data, discussed it at multiple events and developed projects to address their concerns towards creating an environment conducive to their growth.

Now it is time to put that information into action through the projects identified in the

chapter 3. The following information on implementation strategies was developed by the University of Minnesota Business Retention and Expansion Strategies Programs and information contained in the “Local Leadership Manual”.

The following tips for successful project implementation come from two sources: 1. the experiences of more than 200 communities that have carried out BR&E programs in the past (Information gathered from the University of Minnesota Business Retention and Expansion Strategies Programs). These tips are reprinted, with permission, from the BR&E program booklet entitled “Local Leadership Team Manual”. The experiences of nine Minnesota communities as well as a literature search of published articles about BR&E successes (see bibliography below). Note: these tips are for the approach taught by the University of Minnesota Extension. Local modifications to the BR&E process may make some of these tips less relevant.

## Tip for Success:

- Follow sound strategic planning processes.
- From the beginning, stress that the BR&E Visitation Program is a two or three-year effort.
- Projects that have an economic development professional or other staff person involved with a percentage of their time allocated to it are correlated with greater success.
- At the Economic Development Summit (in lieu of BR&E Task Force Retreat), a UNH Extension Specialist asked those present at the meeting to indicate one of the projects on which they will work. Accountability for implementation is correlated with greater success.
- Even more success is correlated with projects that are done in teams rather than done by an individual.
- Set up a special implementation panel to help the Leadership Team and Task Force oversee project implementation progress.
- Meet at least quarterly to monitor implementation progress.
- Set a date for the first quarterly Implementation meeting before the community commencement meeting.
- Plan each quarterly meeting well.
- Contact the priority project teams between quarterly meetings of the Task Force to encourage them to meet regularly and make progress on their projects.
- Elect or appoint a new Leadership Team at the first quarterly Task Force meeting.
- Keep in touch with the University of New Hampshire Extension BR&E Program.
- Invite regional and state agency, chamber, or other representatives to your quarterly meetings<sup>1</sup>.
- Frequently distribute one page outlines or bulleted lists of projects.
- Keep publicizing the projects, especially the successes.

Select some priority projects that are easier to accomplish (i.e. “winnable”) among the other more difficult, long-term projects. Sports teams build momentum by having little victories as they move forward. Sport commentators often comment on who has the momentum in sporting events. In the same way, the BR&E Task Force can build momentum by celebrating its accomplishments as it moves forward toward full implementation of all its priority projects. Thus, picking some “low hanging fruit” among the projects can build the team’s spirit and confidence.

- Ensure that the projects selected do not have major opposition.
- Adequate funding is necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> Loveridge, Scott and George Morse, “Local Leadership Team Manual,” in the series entitled *Implementing Local Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Programs*, Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, NERCRD

Details on these tips are provided in the “Local Leadership Team Manual” and/or are cited in the bibliography below.

### **Design Priority Projects**

Getting from the Prioritize Step 2 of the BR&E process to Implement Step 3, and being successful in implementation, takes effort and planning. Once the priority projects are selected, the next step is to design specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time bound projects (i.e. “SMART”, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART\\_criteria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria)). Extension can help the community with this process if it wishes by convening the priority project teams at a joint meeting (i.e. where all the teams are there simultaneously) and facilitate SMART project planning. Regardless, the priority projects need to be designed and sourced for success.

### **BR&E Presentation Meeting**

At this meeting, the results of your BR&E survey and your priorities will be shared with community leaders, community members, the businesses, state representatives & BR&E participants. The meeting is a “commencement ceremony” of sorts that celebrates the end of the Research and Prioritize, Steps 1 & 2, and the beginning of the Implement Step 3 of BR&E. At the same time, it honors the significant contributions of participants, including the leadership team, task force, volunteer visitors, the businesses, and others. It is important, of course, to recognize volunteer contributions for their own sake, but also because it reinforces the credibility of the BR&E visitation process as stemming from the breadth and depth of community involvement.

This meeting is both a celebration and it is informational. The results of the survey and the conclusions of the leadership team and task force are presented to those attending. After the meeting, participants are encouraged to ask questions of the leadership team and task force members individually or discuss ways in which they can participate in implementation of priority projects.

### **Continuing BR&E Visits**

Communities need to continually reach out and communicate with their existing businesses by making in-person BR&E visits. The University of New Hampshire Extension BR&E Program is improving its assistance for BR&E work in New Hampshire. In the near future, Amherst and Milford may wish to do some additional BR&E visitation and follow-up action.

## **Bibliography of Literature Pertaining to Successful Priority Project Implementation**

Bosma, Linda. "From BR&E Theory to Practice in Minnesota: Lessons Learned from Local Community Modifications in Implementation". A nonpublished program evaluation of the University of Minnesota Extension Business Retention and Expansion Program. Abstracted "A-Ha's" synthesized by Michael Darger, (March, 2012) on the program website, <http://z.umn.edu/bosma> (scroll down and choose Program Evaluation (2006-2007))

Phillips, Philip D. "Business Retention and Expansion: Theory and an Example in Practice" *Economic Development Review*. 1996. 14(3) pp. 19-24.

Bradford, Richard. "Elements of a BEAR Program." *Economic Development Review*. 07423713 June 1996. 1413.

Loveridge, Scott, Thomas Smith and George Morse. "Immediate Employment Effects of Business Retention and Expansion Programs." St. Paul: Department of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota Staff Paper 1992.

Morse, George and Inhyuck Ha. "How Successful are Business Retention and Expansion Implementation Efforts?" *Economic Development Review*: 1997 pp8-13.

Maples, Melissa. "Business Retention: The Basics and Beyond." *Economic Development Review*. 1996 14(3) 4-8.



## CHAPTER VI. Miscellaneous Resources

### New Hampshire Department of Resource and Economic Development (DRED)

#### NH Division of Economic Development

172 Pembroke Road  
Concord, NH 03302-1856  
T: 603.271.2591  
F: 603.271.6784  
E: [info@nheconomy.com](mailto:info@nheconomy.com)

#### Workforce Community Development

172 Pembroke Road  
Concord, NH 03302-1856  
**Contact: Michael Power**  
[michael.power@dred.nh.gov](mailto:michael.power@dred.nh.gov)  
**603-271-7275**

### New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority

The Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) was established by legislation ([RSA 162-L](#)) in 1983 to address the issues of affordable housing and economic opportunity for low and moderate income New Hampshire residents.

Whether it's providing funding for infrastructure improvements, helping break ground on a new affordable housing development, or providing working capital that allows a business to hire low-to-moderate income workers, the **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** is a powerful tool for community growth and benefits to LMI residents.

14 Dixon Ave, Suite 102  
Concord, NH 03301  
P 603-226-2170  
F 603-226-2816  
<http://www.nhcdfa.org/>

### Nashua Community College

The Community College System of NH is committed to providing comprehensive, market-driven, accessible, quality programs of higher education that respond to the needs of students, business, and communities.

505 Amherst St  
Nashua, NH 03063  
**Business/Bursar's Office**  
Hours: Monday - Thursday; 8:00am - 5:00pm- Friday; 8:00am - 4:30pm  
Phone: (603) 578-8902  
Fax: (603) 882-3125  
<http://www.nashuacc.edu/>

**Nashua Regional Planning Commission**

9 Executive Park Drive, Suite 201

Merrimack, NH 03054

Phone: 603.424.2240

Fax: 603.424.2230

<http://www.nashuarpc.org/>

## APPENDICES