

**TOWN OF HARTFORD, VERMONT  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROFILE**

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## **I. OBJECTIVES:**

- Describe the economic structure and resources in Hartford
- Identify strengths and weaknesses
- Suggest strategies to maintain positive factors in the economy, improve weaker areas, and guard against economic downturn

## **II. DEMOGRAPHICS:**

### **Race.**

The Town of Hartford is predominantly White (97%). This is comparable to the State of Vermont as a whole (96.8% White) and considerably higher than the nation as a whole (75.1% White).

### **Education.**

Residents of Hartford are highly educated, relative to the nation as a whole as well as the State of Vermont. 88.7% of the population has at least completed high school, while only 80.4% nationally and 86.4% of Vermonters have finished high school. 32.4% of Hartford residents have a college degree or better, compared to 24.4% nationally and 29.4% of Vermont's population.

### **Income.**

The median household income in Hartford is \$42,990, slightly higher than both the national median of \$41,994 and the Statewide Vermont median of \$40,856.

### **Poverty.**

The proportion of people living in poverty in Hartford is relatively low. 5.3% of families and 8.5% of individuals in Hartford are living below the poverty line. As a nation, 9.2% of families and 12.4 percent of individuals live in poverty. In Vermont, 6.3% of families and 9.4% of individuals live below poverty level.

### **Family Structure.**

The majority (62.1%) of households in Hartford are families. 28.7% of family households in Hartford include children under 18.

### III. EMPLOYMENT:

#### Unemployment.

The unemployment rate in Hartford is low at 2.2%. The unemployment rate in Vermont is 2.9% and nationwide unemployment is at 3.7%.

#### Labor Force Participation.

32.2 % of Hartford residents are not in the labor force, but this is accounted for largely by children and the elderly.

#### Employment by Sector.

Hartford is dominated by Government jobs, with a large share of employment also in the services and retail sectors. Services is the most rapidly growing sector in Hartford, while government is experiencing slower but steady growth and retail and transportation/public utilities are declining sectors in Hartford. See Table 1 for a detailed breakdown by sector.

**TABLE 1.**  
**Hartford, VT**  
**Employment Breakdown by Sector, 2000**

	<b>Total #</b>	<b>% of Total Employment</b>	<b>% Change 1991-2000</b>	<b>% Change 1997-2000</b>
<b>Transportation and Public Utilities</b>	454	7.87%	25.76%	-8.65%
<b>Retail</b>	1080	18.71%	13.56%	-1.55%
<b>Services</b>	1450	25.13%	47.21%	15.81%
<b>Government</b>	1961	33.98%	6.11%	5.54%
<b>Other Private</b>	826	14.31%	0.24%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5771</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>16.14%</b>	<b>4.51%</b>

Based on this analysis, a deeper look into Hartford's three largest employment sectors, Government, Retail, and Services, is needed to develop a more detailed profile of Hartford's economy.

#### IV. SECTOR DETAIL:

##### Retail.

Hartford's retail sector currently comprises 18.71% of total employment and is therefore a major component of Hartford economic picture. While this sector expanded over the past decade, it has declined slightly during the past three years.

Hartford Vermont is very near to the state border with New Hampshire, and because that state has no sales tax, the retail sector along the border in Vermont suffers. However, New Hampshire has had no sales tax for a very long time, and so while this fact must inform economic strategy in Hartford, it does not explain the decline of retail over the past three years.

Table 2 shows the breakdown of major subdivisions of the retail industry to get a better picture of where the retail sector in Hartford has suffered in recent years.

<b>TABLE 2.</b>					
<b>Hartford, VT</b>					
<b>Retail Employment</b>					
	<b>Total #</b>	<b>% of Retail</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
	<b>Jobs</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>1991-2000</b>	<b>1997-2000</b>
Eating and Drinking Places	453	41.94%	7.85%	14.39%	1.57%
Auto Dealers and Service Stations	218	20.19%	3.78%	-7.23%	-14.84%
Food Stores	100	9.26%	1.73%	-1.96%	-32.43%
Miscellaneous and Other Retail	309	28.61%	5.35%	41.74%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1080</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>18.71%</b>	<b>13.56%</b>	<b>-1.55%</b>

By breaking down the retail sector into its sub-parts, a clearer picture emerges:

- **Eating and Drinking Places** make up 41.94% of the retail sector and 7.85% of total employment in Hartford. This sub-sector has been expanding continually but growth has slowed over the past three years. Further research should be undertaken to determine the source of this slowdown and to determine how to retain Hartford's 'Eating and Drinking' jobs, especially since these jobs are likely to be linked to other related industries such as tourism and hospitality.
- **Auto Dealer and Service Stations** are just over 20% of Hartford's retail employment and 3.78% of total employment. This is a relatively small proportion, but the loss of these jobs is puzzling because Hartford is positioned at the intersection of two interstate highways, and therefore it is curious why Hartford should suffer job losses in this sector. Here too further research is needed to determine the source of this job loss to make sure that this is not indicative of a more substantial economic problem.
- **Food Stores** bring 100 jobs to Hartford. This sub-sector has declined slightly over the past ten years and more sharply in the past three years. It would be interesting to discover whether this decline is due to a store closing or the general contraction of employment in food stores, but this sub-sector is not a major economic engine in Hartford.

- Since the majority of retail jobs in Hartford are unclassified in national-level data, **(Miscellaneous and Other)**, more fieldwork is necessary to determine the performance of the retail sector in Hartford, since these jobs are 28.61% of the retail sector and 5.35% of total employment.

## Government.

Government employment dominates Hartford's economy, making up 33.98% of total employment, and has been increasing by a rate of just over 6% in the past decade and 5.54% in the past three years. But a further breakdown of this sector (see Table 3) shows that the majority (60.07%) of government employment is Federal, which has experienced a growth rate of -5.00% over the past decade and a negligible increase rate of 0.77% in the past three years. State and Local government jobs have been increasing steadily, but they comprise less than half of the government jobs in Hartford.

**TABLE 3.**

**Hartford, VT**

**Government Employment**

	<b>Total #</b>	<b>% of Govt Employment</b>	<b>% of Total Employment</b>	<b>% Change 1991-2000</b>	<b>% Change 1997-2000</b>
Federal	1178	60.07%	20.41%	-5.00%	0.77%
State	245	12.49%	4.25%	34.62%	31.02%
Local	538	27.43%	9.32%	26.29%	7.39%
<b>Government Total</b>	<b>1961</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>33.98%</b>	<b>6.11%</b>	<b>5.54%</b>

Federal Government has been a major source of employment in Hartford, but an over-dependence on this sector could make Hartford's economy vulnerable to national political shifts and budgets cutbacks. Under a Republican administration, Vermont Senator Jim Jeffords is not in a good position to lobby for retaining federal jobs in Vermont after recently leaving the Republican Party and altering the balance of power in the Senate.

## Services.

25.13% of Hartford's employment is in the service sector, and this sector has been growing steadily. Table 4 shows the breakdown of service jobs in Hartford compared to the state of Vermont as a whole. More than a third of Hartford's service sector jobs are in health services and social services, and another 13.52% are in hotels and lodging.

**Table 4.**

**Hartford, VT**

**Services Employment**

	<b>Total #</b>	<b>% of Services Employment</b>	<b>% of Total Employment</b>	<b>Hartford, VT</b>		<b>Vermont</b>	
				<b>% Change 1991-2000</b>	<b>% Change 1997-2000</b>	<b>% Change 1991-2000</b>	<b>% Change 1997-2000</b>
Hotels and Other Lodging Places	196	13.52%	3.40%	-7.98%	-2.00%	21.67%	7.22%
Business Services	132	9.10%	2.29%	-2.94%	-28.65%	99.39%	16.71%
Auto Repair, Services and Parking	117	8.07%	2.03%	91.80%	30.00%	49.61%	9.26%
Amusement and Recreation Services	86	5.93%	1.49%	8.86%	6.17%	29.18%	10.46%
Health Services	320	22.07%	5.54%	153.97%	21.67%	29.20%	8.72%
Social Services	211	14.55%	3.66%	163.75%	113.13%	62.03%	15.32%
Membership Organizations	152	10.48%	2.63%	24.59%	14.29%	23.16%	
Engineering and Management Services	129	8.90%	2.24%	38.71%	43.33%	77.75%	21.29%
Other Services	107	7.38%	1.85%	42.67%			
<b>Services Total</b>	<b>1450</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>25.13%</b>	<b>47.21%</b>	<b>15.81%</b>	<b>39.83%</b>	<b>11.74%</b>

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- **Health Services and Social Services** make up 9.2% of Hartford's total employment. These sub-sectors have been growing rapidly in the past ten years and are a growing part of Hartford's economy. Health and Social services is growing more rapidly in Hartford than Vermont as a whole, and is emerging as a specialization in the town. These sectors tend to provide jobs in a wide range of skill and salary levels, and therefore bring much-needed diversity to Hartford's job market.
- **Hotels and Lodging Places** comprise 13.52% of Services employment in Hartford and 3.4% of total employment. Despite the Quechee State Park and Quechee Gorge, this sector has declined in Hartford even though it is expanding in Vermont as a whole. The prime location along two interstate highways and proximity to Dartmouth College should make Hartford an attractive tourist destination and competitive with other attractions in New Hampshire and Vermont. White River Junction is a major transfer point for train, bus and automobile traffic and should enjoy an advantage over more remote tourist attraction in northern New England.
- **Membership Organizations and Engineering and Management Services** are two healthy sub-sectors that have been growing steadily in Hartford. More research into how to nurture and preserve these sectors should be undertaken.
- **Business Services** makes up only 2.29% of total employment in Hartford, but has been on the decline, while Vermont as a whole has seen a considerable increase in this sub-sector. With an educated population and good transportation access, this may be a sector that Hartford should try to attract and support.

## **V. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

Hartford, Vermont is economically successful, with many strengths on which to build based on its resident population and location. Its economic outlook is strong but there are several areas of opportunity for Hartford to expand and diversify its economic base to guard against economic downturn or political shifts.

### **Strengths:**

- Good transportation access: two interstate highways, a hub for bus and train service
- Proximity to Dartmouth College
- Low unemployment
- Good mix of industries

### **Weaknesses:**

- Emphasis on Federal Government employment leaves Hartford very vulnerable to budget cutbacks on a national level
- Tourism is in decline relative to Vermont as a whole
- Retail industry suffers due to proximity with New Hampshire where there is no sales tax

## **VI. STRATEGY AND CONCLUSION**

- **Do not attempt to compete with New Hampshire for retail businesses**

Do not attempt to develop the Retail Industry; Hartford will not be able to compete with New Hampshire no-sales tax policy for most retail sub-sectors.

- **Plan for cutbacks in federal government jobs**

Lay political groundwork wherever possible to retain federal government employment in Hartford, and strategize for alternative sources of employment in the event of federal government cutbacks in the coming. This is a likely scenario in the current political climate. Hartford would suffer disproportionately from such cutbacks, because of its reliance on federal government jobs as well as Senator Jefford's leaving the Republican Party. Hartford should not be caught unaware.

- **Develop and Support Tourism**

Quechee State Park is a 15-minute drive from Dartmouth College, and along two interstate highways and a major transportation hub. While there is a lot of competition for state parks, campsites, and nature-oriented tourism, Hartford's easy access should give it an advantage over more remote tourist locations. Vermont's tourism industry is booming while Hartford lags behind. This situation should be examined and reversed to the greatest extent possible. Dartmouth students, parents and visitors should be made aware of this natural resource nearby; easy access to the wilderness should be highlighted for potential tourists in nearby urban centers such as Boston, New York, and Montreal.

- **Improve and Retain Health and Social Services Jobs**

Health and Social Services is one of Hartford's healthiest, fastest-growing job sectors. This industry should be maintained and closer linkages created with the Dartmouth medical center to capitalize on the proximity to this center of health research and teaching.

- **Examine the Possibility of Expanding Business Services, Management, and Engineering, and Other Service Sector Industries**

Hartford has a highly educated workforce and needs to diversity to guard against cutbacks in federal government jobs. Business Services and Management and Engineering Services are sectors that are growing in the State of Vermont but Business Services have not expanded in Hartford and Management and Engineering still makes up only a small portion of Hartford's jobs. This needs further investigation and is one possibility for new expansion of the Services sector.

- **Examine the Possibility of Expanding Transportation and Warehousing**

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Hartford is located at a major transportation Hub, and this location should attract many types of businesses. While retail would not be competitive, warehousing and trucking could be a successful industry and Hartford seems a natural location for such activities to locate. However, these sectors do not always provide high-quality jobs and can have environmental consequences, so such analysis should factor in the mitigating factors in attracting these industries to Hartford.

These six recommendations will allow Hartford to maintain its favorable economic position while planning for the possibility of both expansion and downturn.