BOSTON — Reviving cities like Pittsfield that once were the cornerstone of the state economy will take a collaborative effort to reverse the trend of job growth and development centered around Boston, according to state and local officials.

Mayors of the 11 so-called “Gateway Cities” gathered at the old Statehouse yesterday to sign a pact uniting those once-thriving cities to push for a collective agenda that will benefit urban areas across the state.

“There is much work to do ahead of us, but these Gateway Cities have much to offer, and we ignore these cities at our peril,” said John Schneider, interim president of MassInc.

Pittsfield Mayor James M. Ruberto attended the signing.

The alliance comes on the heels of a report last year from MassInc. and from the Brookings Institute identifying 11 former industrial cities in Massachusetts that are struggling to rebuild after the decline of manufacturing in the state.

The report found that, since 1970, these 11 cities lost more than 3 percent of their job base, while Greater Boston experienced a 51 percent job growth buoyed by advances in the biomedical, education and finance industries.

Once a "gateway" for newcomers to this country, these 11 cities, including Lowell, Fitchburg and Pittsfield, also are now home to 30 percent of all Massachusetts residents living in poverty, despite accounting for only 15 percent of the state’s population.

The new alliance, according to officials, will help these once-thriving centers advocate for public policy that will help municipal officials put their cities back on track.

"Municipal officials don't work for the Patrick-Murray administration and the Legislature. You are partners in government, and we take that very seriously," Lt. Gov. Timothy Murray said. "We want to promote gateway cities as smart places for economic growth."

Murray also announced a new initiative that will
give cities access to state resources, technical planning and engineering expertise to clean contaminated brownfields so that the land can be redeveloped.

Ruberto said the designation of downtown Pittsfield as a state "growth district" targeted for speedy permitting and increased marketing should go a long way toward attracting new business, jobs and residents to the region.

Gov. Deval L. Patrick visited Pittsfield on Friday to announce the downtown growth district a day after Murray toured portions of the city.

"What we need is support in Boston so that we can move smoothly through projects from the start," Ruberto said.

Murray, in his remarks, said that the state and local partnership was not only about providing more money but also more tools to help city leaders address problems in their specific cities.

Ruberto said Pittsfield could benefit significantly from lifting the state cap on historic tax credits, enhancing the incremental tax financing program, marketing and the expansion of other state-funded housing programs that help cities attract new business and residents.

Although the city has a lot of affordable housing, the mayor said the challenge is replenishing the stock of "quality affordable housing" in former working-class neighborhoods that have deteriorated over the years.

He said Patrick and Murray have both have made an effort to reach out to cities, particularly those in the western part of the state, to start a dialogue about how state and local government can work together.