

Appendices

Community Master Plan, Volume II

Town of Great Barrington, MA

Approved by the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen

October 10, 2013



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APPENDIX ONE: DATA AND DETAILS

About our Town

Our town's population is changing in three significant ways. First, our year-round population is declining. Second, we are getting older, overall. Third, we are growing more diverse. Understanding the nuances of our population characteristics and how they are changing will help us determine their impact on existing and future housing, economic development, land use patterns, natural resources and open space, recreational needs, and other town services. Additionally, our citizens are all in different stages of life and circumstances. Some are new families seeking employment. Some are older and living alone on fixed incomes. An increasing number cannot find adequate housing within their budget, or within reasonable distance of where they work, shop, or go to school. The following provides an overview of demographic and socioeconomic trends.

Population Data and Trends

With 7,104 people, according to the 2010 Census, Great Barrington is the largest town in southern Berkshire County as well as within the 20-mile tri-state region (including southern Berkshire, northwestern Connecticut, and eastern Columbia County in New York). Since 1990, however, Great Barrington's population has been declining, and the rate of decline has been faster than either South County or Berkshire County as a whole. In the decade between 1990 and 2000, Great Barrington's population dropped by 210, or a decline of 2.7 percent. This was during a time when other South County towns like Egremont, Monterey, and Sheffield, were growing.

Great Barrington's population decline was even faster between 2000 and 2010—there were 409 fewer people, a decline of 5.5 percent during that decade. Most other towns in South County lost population during the last decade, but only two at a rate faster than Great Barrington.

This decline is a distinct difference from the previous Master Plan published in 1997 that projected that Great Barrington's population would grow steadily to around 8,000 people by 2020. Instead, trends computed by the Census show the town's population declining to approximately 6,900 by the year 2020.

Great Barrington's population is not only declining, it is also hollowing out. Population used to be more concentrated in the developed cores of town, where water, sewer, and infrastructure tend to be located. However, data for the last decade show the population of both downtown and Housatonic are declining, and at faster rates than the town as a whole. The population of the Housatonic Census Designated Place (CDP) fell from 1,335 to 1,109 people, a drop of 16.9 percent, between 2000 and 2010. The Great Barrington CDP fell from 2,459 to 2,231 people, a loss of 9.3 percent. These data are showing in Table 2. Figure 1 on the following page illustrates the location of the CDP areas.

The same trends of population decline and hollowing out are also occurring in Berkshire County as a whole. In decades past, the employment centers of Pittsfield and North Adams drove new growth in Berkshire County. Today, the towns that are experiencing any growth at all tend to be in South County, and they tend to be rural.

Table 1 compares Great Barrington's population growth since 1800 to the population of southern Berkshire, the County as a whole, and the State. Among South County towns, Great Barrington has lost population faster than any other towns except Egremont and Stockbridge, as shown in Table 2. Table 3 shows the recent population changes within Great Barrington, including downtown and Housatonic.

Table 1: Population Change since 1800, Great Barrington and Selected Places

	Great Barrington		South County*		Berkshire County		Massachusetts	
Year	Total	% change	Total	% change	Total	% change	Total	% change
1800	1,754	--	14,230	--	33,633	--	422,845	--
1850	3,264	86.1%	17,755	24.8%	50,118	49.0%	994,514	135.2%
1900	5,854	79.4%	15,309	-13.8%	95,667	90.9%	2,805,346	182.1%
1950	6,712	14.7%	15,702	2.6%	132,966	39.0%	4,690,514	67.2%
1960	6,624	-1.3%	16,121	2.7%	142,135	6.9%	5,148,578	9.8%
1970	7,537	13.8%	18,301	13.5%	149,402	5.1%	5,689,170	10.5%
1980	7,405	-1.8%	19,559	6.9%	145,110	-2.9%	5,737,093	0.8%
1990	7,725	4.3%	20,462	4.6%	139,352	-4.0%	6,166,425	7.5%
2000	7,527	-2.6%	21,395	4.6%	134,953	-3.2%	6,349,097	3.0%
2010	7,104	-5.6%	20,824	-2.7%	131,219	-2.8%	6,547,629	3.1%

* South County includes the 12 towns of Alford, Egremont, Great Barrington, Monterey, Mount Washington, New Marlborough, Otis, Sandisfield, Sheffield, Stockbridge, Tyringham, and West Stockbridge

Source: US Census

Table 2: Population Trends of Selected Places, 1980 – 2010

	1980	1990	% change 1980-90	2000	% change 1990-2000	2010	% change 2000-10
Alford	394	418	6%	399	-4.5%	494	23.8%
Egremont	1,311	1,229	-6%	1,345	9.4%	1,225	-8.9%
Great Barrington	7,405	7,725	4%	7,515	-2.7%	7,104	-5.5%
Lee	6,247	5,849	-6%	5,985	2.3%	5,943	-0.7%
Monterey	818	805	-2%	936	16.3%	961	2.7%
New Marlboro	1,160	1,240	7%	1,494	20.5%	1,509	1.0%
Sheffield	2,743	2,910	6%	3,335	14.6%	3,257	-2.3%
Stockbridge	2,328	2,408	3%	2,276	-5.5%	1,947	-14.5%
Tyringham	344	369	7%	346	-6.2%	327	-5.5%
Total South County	22,750	22,953	1%	23,631	3.0%	22,767	-3.7%
Berkshire County	145,110	139,352	-4%	134,953	-3.2%	131,219	-2.8%
Barnstable County (Cape Cod)	147,925	186,605	26%	222,230	19.1%	215,888	-2.9%
Massachusetts	5,737,000	6,016,000	5%	6,349,097	5.5%	6,547,629	3.1%

Source: US Census

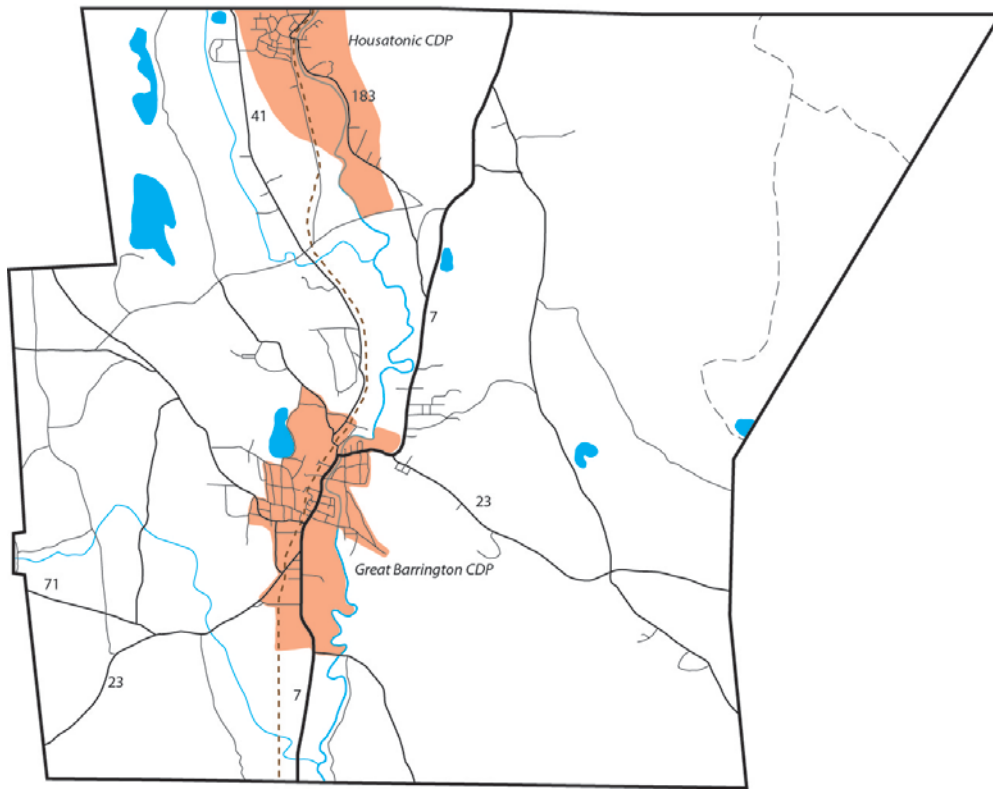
Table 3: Population Change within Great Barrington, 2000-2010

Year	Town of Great Barrington		Housatonic CDP		Great Barrington CDP	
	Total	% change	Total	% change	Total	% change
2000	7,527	--	1,335	--	2,459	--
2010	7,104	- 5.6%	1,109	-16.9%	2,231	-9.3%

Source: US Census

Figure 1: Census Designated Places

Map of Census Designated Places, Town of Great Barrington, 2010



Source: US Census

Great Barrington is comparatively old, and getting older. While this is also true of the nation as a whole and also of Massachusetts, what is remarkable is the rate of age increase in our town. Between 1980 and 2010, Great Barrington's median age increased from 34.8 to 45.5, an increase of 30.7 percent. During the same period Massachusetts's median age increased from 31.1 to 39.1, an increase of 25.7 percent. On the other hand, Berkshire County is older, and aging faster, than Great Barrington.

The tables below illustrate several characteristics of the age and age structure of Great Barrington. Over the previous decade, both the Great Barrington and Housatonic CDPs were aging faster than the town as a whole. In Table 4, note the increase in the percent of the population in the 45-64 year old age group. This is an across the board trend, mirroring the aging of the baby boomer generation nation-wide. As these individuals age, with fewer young people aging behind them, the percentage of the population over 65 and 75 years of age will also continue to increase in the coming decades.

At the same time, there are fewer young people in Great Barrington. This is reflected in Table 4 and also in enrollment data compiled for the Berkshire Hills Regional School District, which includes Great Barrington as well as Stockbridge and West Stockbridge. The number of school age children has been decreasing over the last decade. The decline is projected to level off in the next decade, but enrollment is not projected to increase.

These shifts, coupled with the aging discussed above, have pushed the median age higher over the past decade. Figure 2 illustrates the median ages of Great Barrington and selected places. In 2010, our median age was 45.5, Berkshire County's was 44.7, and the State's was 39.1. Note that Great Barrington's median age is older than nearly every other place except Cape Cod.

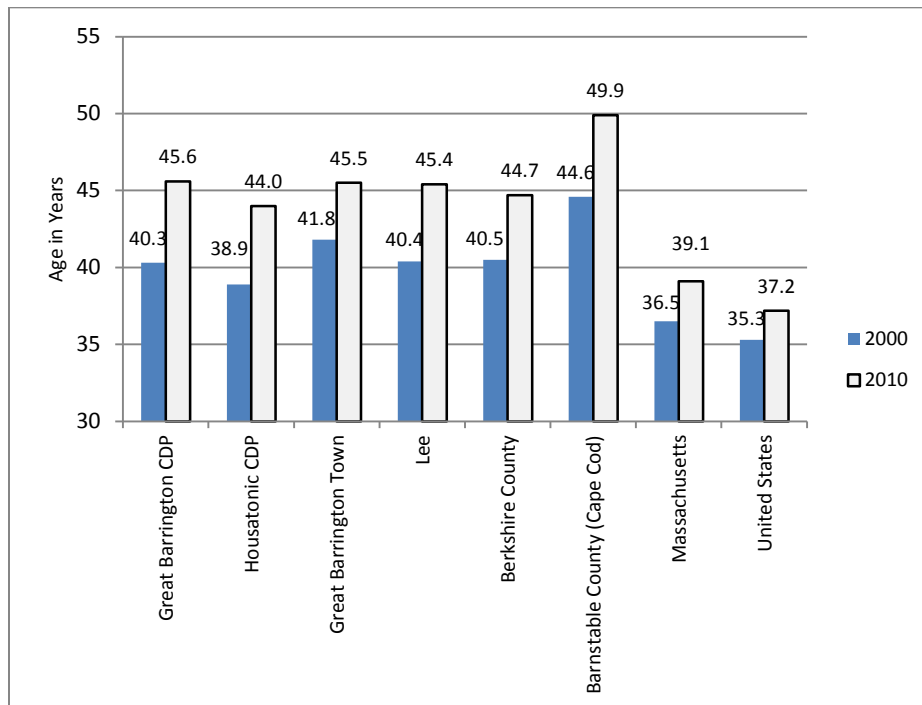
Table 4: Percent of Population per Age Group, Great Barrington and Selected Places, 2000 and 2010

Age Group	Great Barrington CDP		Housatonic CDP		Town of Great Barrington		Town of Lee		Berkshire County		Cape Cod		Massachusetts		United States	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
0-4	5.2%	4.4%	5.8%	4.8%	4.4%	3.7%	5.0%	4.8%	5.2%	4.7%	4.8%	4.1%	6.3%	5.6%	6.8%	6.5%
5-14	12.3%	9.8%	14.1%	10.0%	12.0%	9.9%	12.4%	10.2%	13.0%	10.7%	12.2%	9.7%	13.6%	12.1%	14.6%	13.3%
15-24	12.6%	10.2%	13.2%	11.8%	15.3%	15.8%	11.6%	11.7%	12.7%	13.5%	8.8%	10.0%	12.9%	14.4%	13.9%	14.1%
25-44	27.6%	24.6%	27.7%	24.7%	23.4%	19.9%	28.4%	22.9%	26.3%	15.1%	25.0%	12.8%	31.3%	19.3%	30.2%	19.8%
45-64	25.9%	33.9%	23.1%	33.4%	26.2%	32.4%	25.7%	31.2%	25.0%	37.3%	26.3%	38.5%	22.4%	35.0%	22.0%	33.2%
65-74	7.0%	7.5%	6.7%	6.9%	8.1%	8.6%	8.8%	9.8%	8.6%	9.1%	11.9%	12.4%	6.7%	6.9%	6.5%	7.0%
75+	9.3%	9.6%	9.2%	8.2%	10.8%	9.5%	8.0%	9.6%	9.3%	9.5%	11.2%	12.6%	6.8%	6.8%	5.9%	6.1%

Source: US Census, 2000 and 2010

Notwithstanding the increase in the median age, changes in the age distribution in Great Barrington have been more modest when compared to other places. For example, while the age 25-44 age group is declining in Great Barrington, it is not dropping as fast as in other places like Lee, the County overall, or even the state or nation. This suggests that there Great Barrington has been able to either retain more of this age group, or attract more, than other places. This age group, in which young professionals begin careers and couples begin settling down and raising families, is an important indicator of the future capacity of our workforce and the need to maintain services across the board (i.e., not just focusing on seniors or young children).

Figure 2: Median Age, Great Barrington and Selected Places, 2000 and 2010



Source: US Census, 2000 and 2010

Diversity

Great Barrington is growing more diverse than other places in the southern Berkshire region. In 2010, the percent of Great Barrington's population that was Hispanic or Latino was six percent, greater than the County as a whole, and greater than most towns within the County. Anecdotal reports point to even higher percentages, however. Local service provider Multicultural BRIDGE, based in Housatonic and serving the region, estimates the local Hispanic or Latino population at about 12 percent.

The Hispanic or Latino population in the Great Barrington CDP was even greater, at nearly eight percent of the population. Table 5 lists this data.

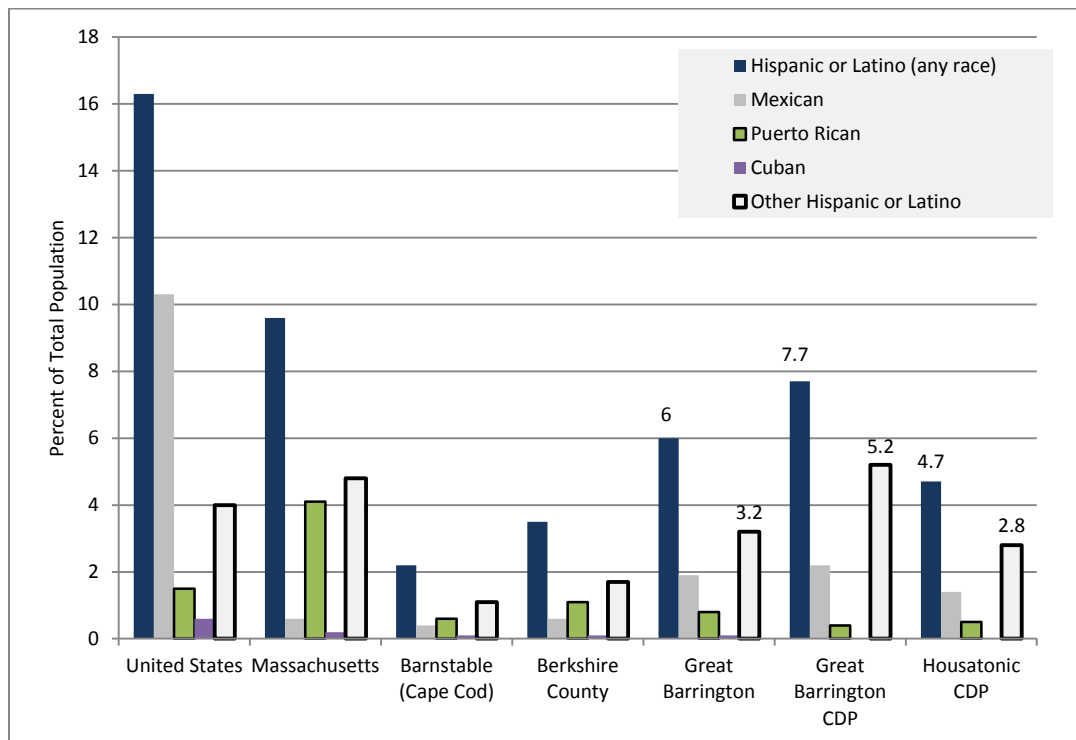
Table 5: Percent of Population of Selected Races, Great Barrington and Selected Places, 2010

	White alone	Black or African American alone	Hispanic or Latino (any race)
Town of Great Barrington	90.8%	2.7%	6.0%
Great Barrington CDP	89.6%	2.6%	7.7%
Housatonic CDP	93.3%	1.2%	4.7%
Southern Berkshire County	94.6%	1.5%	3.3%
Berkshire County	92.5%	2.7%	3.5%

Source: US Census, 2010

Figure 3 provides more detail on the Hispanic and Latino ethnic grouping. Within this group, the largest subset, "Other Hispanic or Latino," includes people whose origins are from the Dominican Republic, Spain, and Spanish-speaking Central or South American countries.

Figure 3: Hispanic or Latino Composition of the Population, Great Barrington and Selected Places, 2010



Source: US Census, 2010

Households and Families

An area's demand for housing is directly influenced by the area's number, type, and incomes of households. Recent household trends nationwide include declining household sizes, increasing numbers of people living alone, a decline in real wages and purchasing power, and the aging of the Baby Boomer generation. These are reflected locally in Great Barrington and Berkshire County.

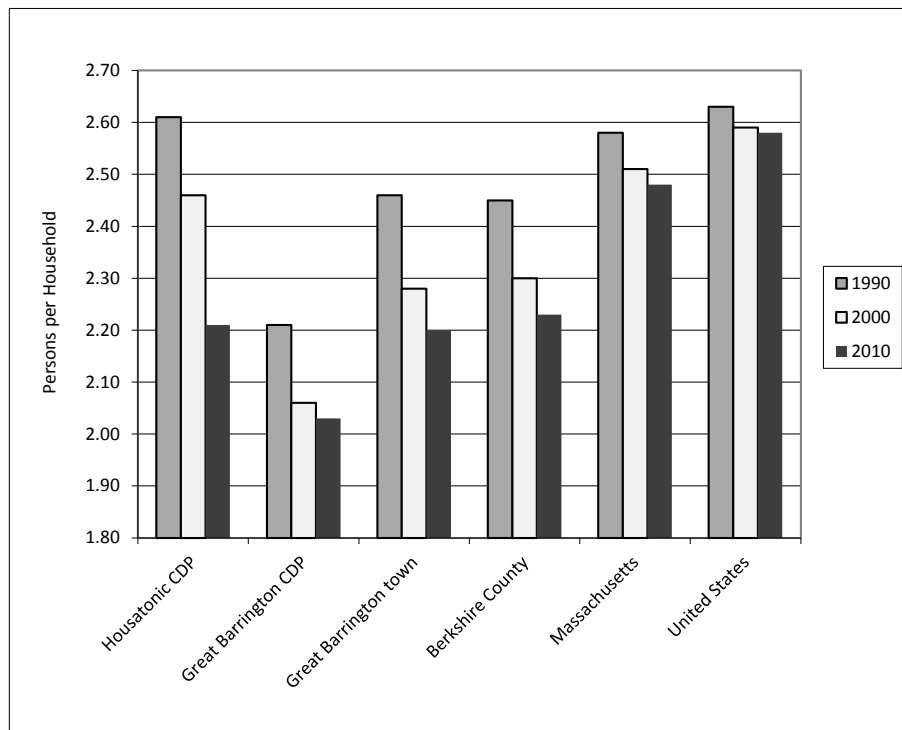
In Great Barrington, according to the 2010 Census, there were 2,879 households, containing 89 percent of Great Barrington's total population.¹ The other 11 percent of the total population (766 people) is housed in group quarters of various types (including skilled nursing and residential care facilities, college dormitories, and other group homes).

A relatively low percentage of Great Barrington households have children. Despite 57 percent of the 2,879 households being classified as family households, meaning there were at least two people (not necessarily related) living together in the housing unit, only 24 percent of all households contained children under 18 years of age. That percentage is slightly higher in the Housatonic CDP (26 percent), and slightly lower in the Great Barrington CDP (22 percent). The percentage is lower than Berkshire County, Massachusetts or the nation (26, 31 percent and 33 percent, respectively).

A relatively high percentage of Great Barrington households are single-person households and senior citizen households. Non-family households (43 percent) are relatively prevalent in Great Barrington, particularly those nonfamily households with householders living alone (35 percent of all households). This percentage is higher than the County, State, or nation (33, 29, and 27 percent, respectively).

A relatively high percentage of Great Barrington households are senior citizen households. Over 13 percent of all Great Barrington households are non-family households with a person age 65 years or over living alone. Overall, 30 percent of households contained individuals age 65 years and over. This is not as high as the County or Cape Cod 31 and 39 percent, respectively), but it is markedly higher than the state or nation (26 and 25 percent, respectively).

Figure 4: Average Household Size, 1990-2000



Source: US Census

¹ 1,087 households in the Great Barrington CDP, 500 in the Housatonic CDP, and 1,292 in areas outside of the two CDPs, for a total of 2,879 in the Town of Great Barrington as a whole.

Great Barrington households are smaller, on average, than other households. In 1990 in Great Barrington there were, on average, 2.46 people per household. Today that number is 2.20, a rate of decline of 10.6 percent, a faster rate of decline than the county, state, or country. The average household size in the Housatonic CDP has declined the most, from 2.61 in 1990 to 2.21 in 2010, a rate of decline of 15.3 percent.

A very large proportion of Great Barrington's population is housed in group quarters. Eleven percent of the town's population is in group quarters. These include special needs housing like nursing homes and group homes for learning disabled, but also college dormitories. Table 6 presents some of these household characteristics.

Table 6: Household Characteristics, 2010

	Housatonic CDP		Great Barrington CDP		Great Barrington town		Berkshire County		Barnstable County (Cape Cod)		Massachusetts		United States	
Subject	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
RELATIONSHIP														
Total population	1,109	100.0%	2,231	100.0%	7,104	100.0%	131,219	100.0%	215,888	100.0%	6,547,629	100.0%	308,745,538	100.0%
- In households	1,105	99.6%	2,210	99.1%	6,338	89.2%	125,060	95.3%	211,927	98.2%	6,308,747	96.4%	300,758,215	97.4%
Householder	500	45.2%	1,087	49.2%	2,879	40.5%	56,091	42.7%	95,755	44.4%	2,547,075	38.9%	116,716,292	37.8%
Spouse	189	17.1%	340	15.4%	1,185	16.7%	24,607	18.7%	46,263	21.4%	1,178,690	18.0%	56,510,377	18.3%
Child	280	25.3%	481	21.8%	1,518	21.4%	32,029	24.4%	49,194	22.8%	1,823,575	27.8%	88,820,256	28.8%
Own child under 18 years	198	17.9%	333	15.1%	1,061	14.9%	22,994	17.5%	33,765	15.6%	1,290,794	19.7%	64,778,147	21.1%
Other relatives	51	4.6%	121	5.5%	264	3.7%	4,529	3.5%	8,314	3.9%	339,156	5.2%	20,411,239	6.6%
Under 18 years	14	1.3%	41	1.9%	80	1.1%	1,616	1.2%	2,664	1.2%	102,103	1.6%	7,779,796	2.5%
65 years and over	13	1.2%	19	0.9%	59	0.8%	970	0.7%	2,069	1.0%	70,508	1.1%	2,941,638	1.0%
Nonrelatives	85	7.7%	181	8.2%	492	6.9%	7,804	6.0%	12,401	5.7%	420,251	6.4%	18,300,051	5.9%
Under 18 years	7	0.6%	6	0.3%	29	0.4%	576	0.4%	648	0.3%	18,773	0.3%	1,325,848	0.4%
65 years and over	5	0.5%	10	0.5%	31	0.4%	451	0.3%	1,231	0.6%	18,044	0.3%	794,726	0.3%
Unmarried partner	36	3.3%	84	3.8%	214	3.0%	4,556	3.5%	6,115	2.8%	177,702	2.7%	7,744,711	2.5%
- In group quarters	4	0.4%	21	0.9%	766	10.8%	6,159	4.7%	3,961	1.8%	238,882	3.6%	7,987,323	2.6%
HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE														
Total households	500	100%	1,087	100%	2,879	100%	56,091	100%	95,755	100%	2,547,075	100%	116,716,292	100%
Family households (families)	287	57.4%	511	47.0%	1,638	56.9%	33,618	59.9%	58,724	61.3%	1,603,591	63.0%	77,538,296	66.4%
With own children under 18 years	117	23.4%	207	19.0%	624	21.7%	13,271	23.7%	19,317	20.2%	720,640	28.3%	34,743,604	29.8%
Nonfamily households	213	42.6%	576	53.0%	1,241	43.1%	22,473	40.1%	37,031	38.7%	943,484	37.0%	39,177,996	33.6%
Householder living alone	172	34.4%	480	44.2%	1,013	35.2%	18,534	33.0%	30,444	31.8%	732,263	28.7%	31,204,909	26.7%
Male	63	12.6%	204	18.8%	398	13.8%	7,904	14.1%	11,462	12.0%	307,384	12.1%	13,906,294	11.9%
65 years and over	16	3.2%	44	4.0%	99	3.4%	2,268	4.0%	4,039	4.2%	75,359	3.0%	3,171,724	2.7%
Female	109	21.8%	276	25.4%	615	21.4%	10,630	19.0%	18,982	19.8%	424,879	16.7%	17,298,615	14.8%
65 years and over	50	10.0%	112	10.3%	281	9.8%	5,626	10.0%	11,248	11.7%	195,625	7.7%	7,823,965	6.7%
Households with individuals under 18	130	26.0%	239	22.0%	696	24.2%	14,507	25.9%	21,285	22.2%	784,853	30.8%	38,996,219	33.4%
Households with individuals 65 years	133	26.6%	301	27.7%	872	30.3%	17,424	31.1%	37,697	39.4%	653,103	25.6%	29,091,122	24.9%
Average household size	2.21	(X)	2.03	(X)	2.20	(X)	2.23	(X)	2.21	(X)	2.48	(X)	2.58	(X)
Average family size	2.81	(X)	2.84	(X)	2.81	(X)	2.82	(X)	2.77	(X)	3.08	(X)	3.14	(X)

Source: US Census

Economic Characteristics

A majority of Great Barrington residents are service, sales, or office workers. The US Census classifies employment in two ways: by type of occupation (the kind of work the employee does) and by industry (the kind of work their employer or business does). In terms of occupation, a majority of Great Barrington residents, 52%, are employed in service, sales, and office occupations. Another 37% are employed in management, business, science and arts occupations. In terms of industry, most Great Barrington residents (21%) are employed in the educational services, health care, and social assistance sectors. Other prominent sectors are the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service sectors (17%), and retail trade (15%). Only seven percent are employed in the manufacturing sector, and only six percent in the construction sector.² This data is summarized in Table 7.

Great Barrington relies more on the retail sector and the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service sector than the County, State, or Nation. This data is shown in Table 8. As detailed in the 2011 Berkshire County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, prepared by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, there is a clear county-wide decline in manufacturing, which now accounts for seven percent of employment in Great Barrington (10% in the county). At the county level, the sectors where employment is growing fastest are arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food service, which are relatively low-paid, and professional, scientific and management positions, as well as construction and public administration, which are relatively high-paid. Shrinking fastest are (moderately-paid) agriculture and (high-paid) manufacturing.

² US Census 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP-03

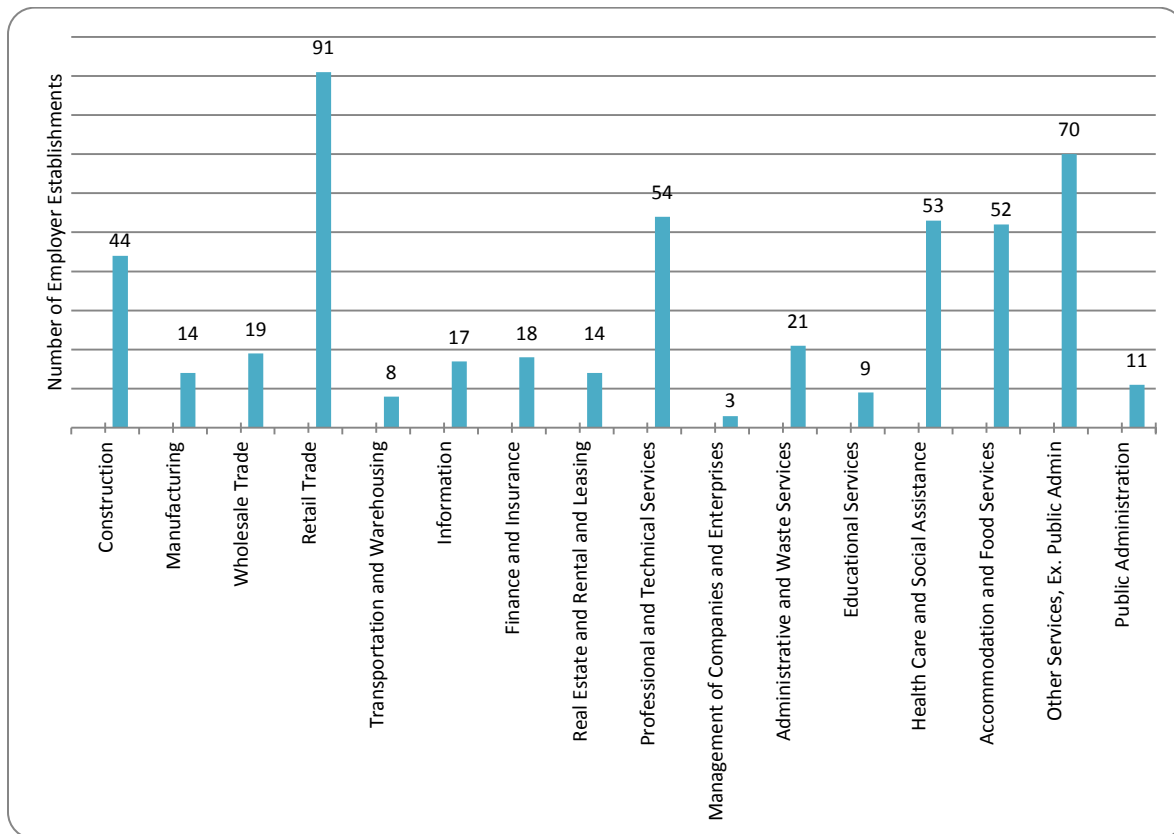
Table 7: Estimated Employment by Occupation and Industry Sector

Subject	Housatonic CDP		Great Barrington CDP		Great Barrington		Berkshire County		Massachusetts		United States	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
OCCUPATION												
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	235	32.8%	447	31.3%	1,378	36.7%	22,922	36.1%	1,400,638	42.8%	50,034,578	35.3%
Service occupations	288	40.2%	318	22.3%	1,022	27.2%	13,751	21.7%	541,505	16.6%	24,281,015	17.1%
Sales and office occupations	173	24.1%	439	30.7%	936	24.9%	14,875	23.5%	790,915	24.2%	36,000,118	25.4%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	21	2.9%	206	14.4%	255	6.8%	5,571	8.8%	241,318	7.4%	13,940,273	9.8%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	0	0.0%	19	1.3%	164	4.4%	6,297	9.9%	297,159	9.1%	17,577,347	12.4%
INDUSTRY												
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	8	1.1%	0	0.0%	45	1.2%	639	1.0%	12,821	0.4%	2,634,188	1.9%
Construction	0	0.0%	193	13.5%	242	6.4%	4,594	7.2%	191,971	5.9%	10,115,885	7.1%
Manufacturing	73	10.2%	105	7.3%	269	7.2%	5,990	9.4%	323,351	9.9%	15,581,149	11.0%
Wholesale trade	0	0.0%	45	3.1%	88	2.3%	1,286	2.0%	87,944	2.7%	4,344,743	3.1%
Retail trade	76	10.6%	244	17.1%	554	14.8%	8,007	12.6%	350,202	10.7%	16,293,522	11.5%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	91	2.4%	1,843	2.9%	123,187	3.8%	7,183,907	5.1%
Information	34	4.7%	50	3.5%	150	4.0%	1,437	2.3%	88,659	2.7%	3,368,676	2.4%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	51	7.1%	81	5.7%	175	4.7%	3,364	5.3%	264,145	8.1%	9,931,900	7.0%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste	103	14.4%	133	9.3%	496	13.2%	5,301	8.4%	416,530	12.7%	14,772,322	10.4%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	152	21.2%	284	19.9%	773	20.6%	18,596	29.3%	872,032	26.7%	31,277,542	22.1%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	182	25.4%	238	16.7%	650	17.3%	6,982	11.0%	261,420	8.0%	12,566,228	8.9%
Other services, except public administration	38	5.3%	30	2.1%	134	3.6%	2,714	4.3%	146,731	4.5%	6,899,223	4.9%
Public administration	0	0.0%	26	1.8%	88	2.3%	2,663	4.2%	132,542	4.1%	6,864,046	4.8%

US Census 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP-03

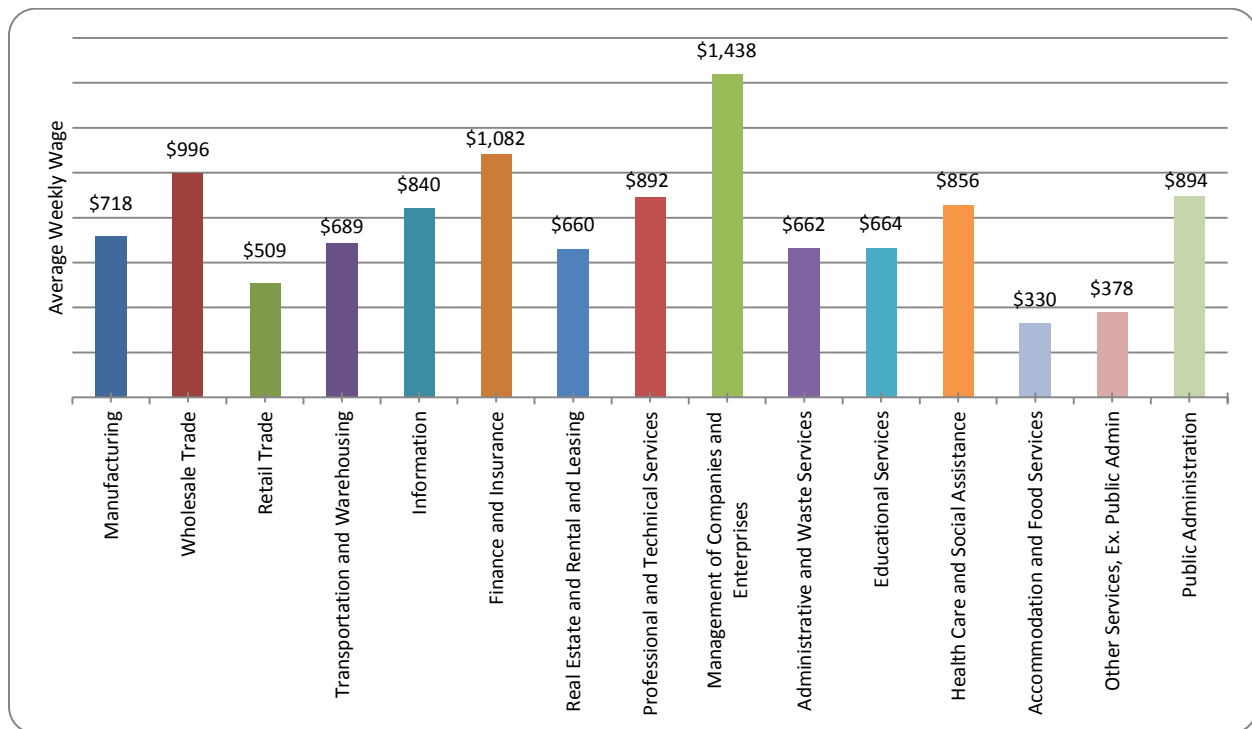
Retail trade has the highest number of employment establishments in Great Barrington, followed by other services, professional and technical, accommodation and food services, and health care and social services. This data is presented in Figure 5. While sectors like retail trade and accommodation and food services employ the most people, they pay some of the lowest wages. As illustrated in Figure 6, the average reported weekly wage in these sectors was \$509 and \$330, respectively.

Figure 5: Number of Employment Establishments, Great Barrington, 2011



Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, November 2012

Figure 6: Average Weekly Wage by Employment Sector, Great Barrington. 2011



Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, November 2012

The dozen largest employers in Great Barrington account for about one-third of total employment. Not counting seasonal ski resort and summer camp jobs, the biggest employers are health care and educational institutions and large retailers. At the county level, the top three employers are Berkshire Health Systems (3089 positions), Pittsfield public schools (1543) and General Dynamics Advanced Information Systems (1067). Only one of the county's top employers is represented in Great Barrington, through Fairview Hospital.

Agriculture is a significant component of the regional economy, and its impacts are widespread throughout other sectors. Berkshire County has the third largest agricultural sector in the state, with many county farms operated as a primary source of income, despite having a relatively smaller amount of acreage dedicated to farming than other areas of the state. The value of products sold per acre is less in Berkshire County than in adjacent economic regions, which may reflect more production for direct consumption, rather than for value-added profit. More detail on agriculture, including size of farms, products, and future needs, is reported in the Agriculture Chapter.

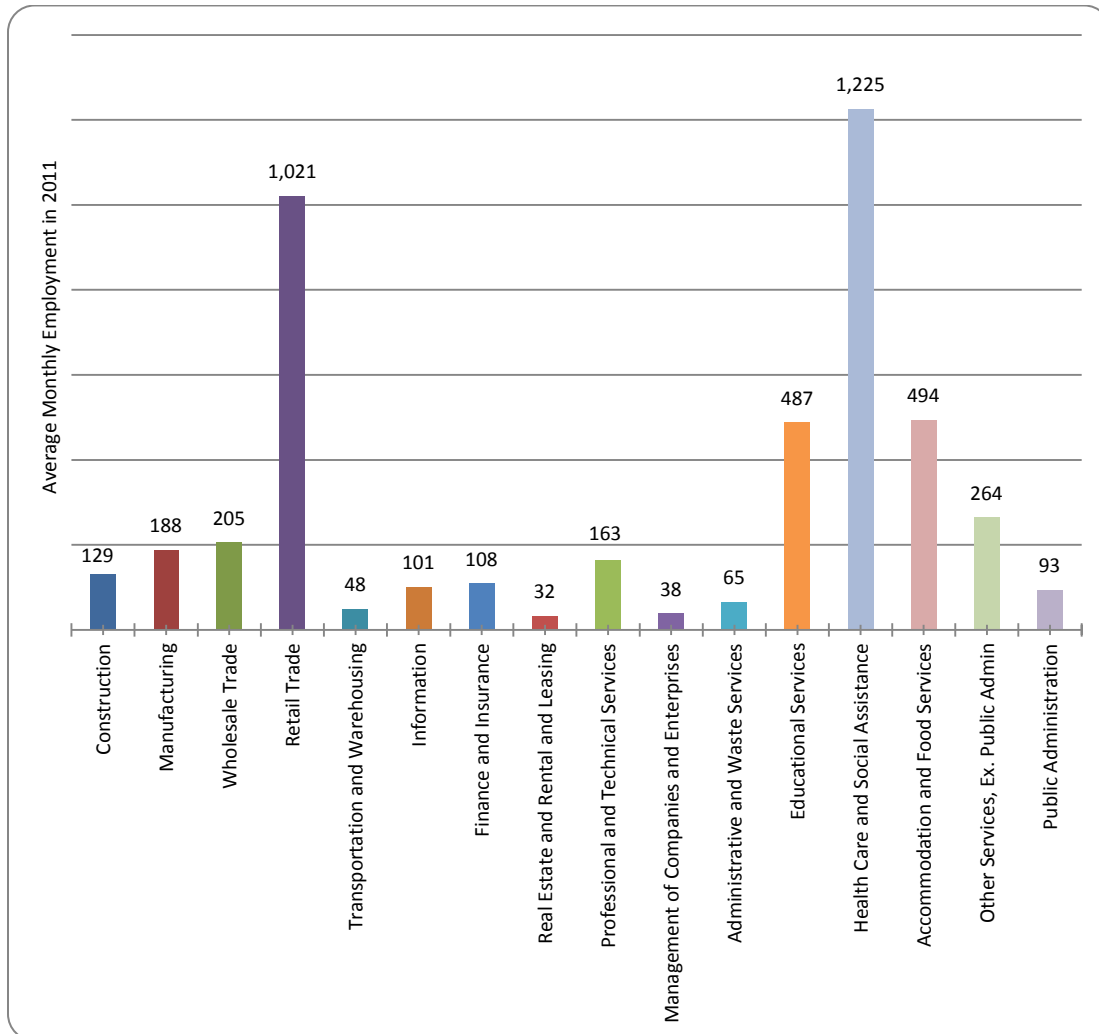
Great Barrington is a regional employment center. Great Barrington's population expands each day as workers commute into town to work in various businesses. Additionally, tourists from around the country visit Great Barrington at all times of the year. This level of activity supports much more business and employment than our declining population otherwise would, and this is surely a key component of our town's relative economic stability.

For example, **Businesses within Great Barrington employ almost 10,000 employees per month, or more than twice the number of workers that reside in our town.** Recognizing that these are not necessarily unique employees (an employee who works two jobs would be double counted in this data), and they are not necessarily full time jobs, this is still an impressive level of an employment for our small town. Most of these jobs are in the retail trade and health care/social assistance sectors. Other strong employment sectors include educational services and accommodation and food services. This data is presented in Figure 7.

For our aging population, non-wage income is important, and is likely a significant component of Great Barrington's economic health. Many full- or part-time residents are retirees or investors, some of them returning home after careers elsewhere and some of them newcomers, who are attracted by the town's geography, atmosphere and culture. The importance of this phenomenon to the local economy might be measured, imperfectly, by developments in the market for "higher-end"

residential properties. This factor is probably even more important in the neighboring towns where the proportion of seasonal or second homes is much higher; here Great Barrington profits indirectly when patrons from those towns visit Great Barrington's shops, restaurants, professionals and other service providers.

Figure 7: Average Monthly Employment by Sector, Great Barrington, 2011



Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, November 2012

Self-Employment

Self-employment is unusually important in our town and region. In Great Barrington, 10.8% of workers are self-employed (estimates for the Great Barrington CDP are even higher, at 12%). In the county, 8.4% of workers are self-employed. This percentage is one-third higher than for the state (6.2%) and the nation (6.3%). It is much higher than in the neighboring regions, around Albany-Saratoga (5.5%) and the Connecticut Valley “knowledge corridor” of Hartford-Springfield-Northampton (5.7%).³

³ Data from the 2010 Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey. The self-employment data reflects only those who are self-employed and unincorporated. If a person pays their own wages through an incorporated business they own, that is included in general employment data. For example, although Great Barrington has a large number of independent locally-owned businesses, these are not included in the self-employment data.

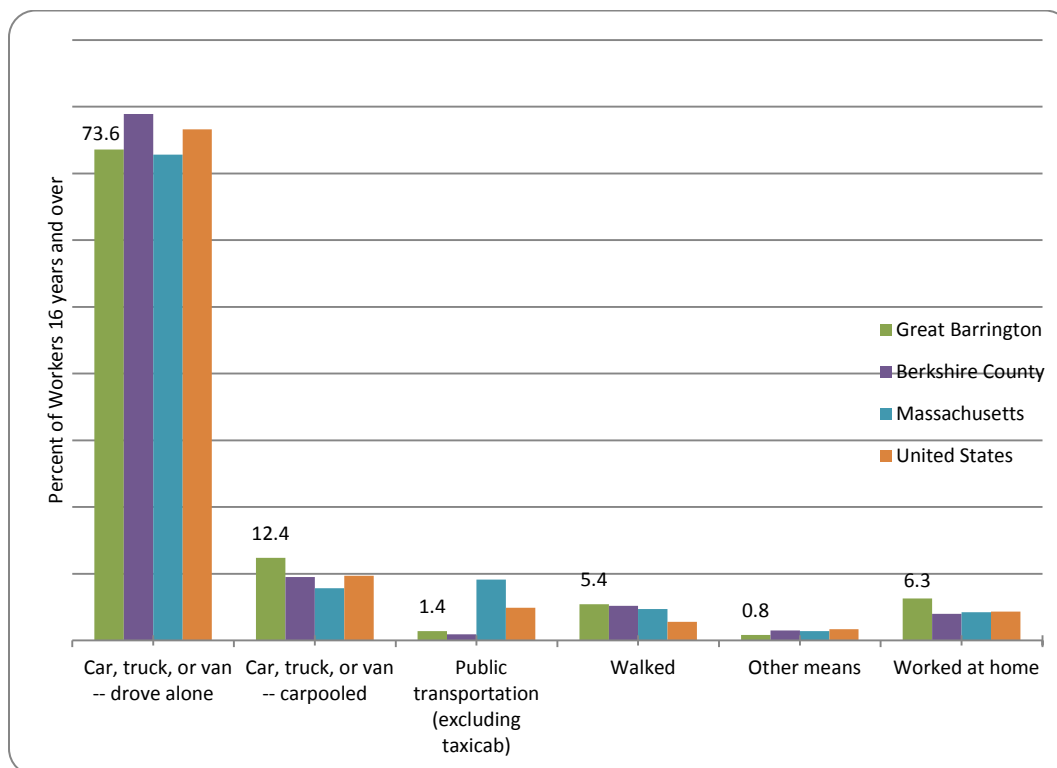
A 2013 survey of town residents revealed even more striking self-employment statistics. These surveys, mailed to town addresses along with annual Town Clerk's census, garnered a 17 percent response rate to the 4,300 surveys that were mailed. **Forty-six percent of respondents indicated they were self-employed, and more than 50 percent of those self-employed people indicated that their self-employment accounts for more than half of their household income.** Respondents indicated a variety of professions, including construction, manufacturing, and real estate. The categories with the highest percent of respondents were arts and entertainment (actors, artists, editors, media production, and writers, for example), education and health care (educators, massage therapy, nursing, and psychotherapy, for example), and professional services (architects, computing, landscape design, and programming, for example).

This high percentage of self-employed is likely a reflection of recent economic hard times, and also of the fact that many self-employed earn only modest livings in locally-prominent jobs like childcare, house cleaning, and construction. It may also be because in today's economy firms are less willing to hire full time employees to which they must provide benefits.

It may also reflect our region's highly educated and older workforce, groups which are both entrepreneurial and wealthy enough to afford creative new ventures on their own. Studies have shown that highly-educated workers are more likely to be self-employed than less well educated workers. Older workers, particularly those 55 and older and those 65 and older, are more likely to be self-employed than younger workers. And self-employed workers generally report more job satisfaction than other workers. In any case, since our town has the demographic characteristics and cultural and scenic magnets that attract these types of workers, and since even surrounding towns will soon have broadband internet access, self-employment can be expected to increase locally. Town government should ensure that local regulations allow, and if possible encourage, home-based businesses and self-employment.

Great Barrington's workers are more likely to work closer to home, or at home, than workers in other areas. We have shorter commutes (18.4 minutes, on average) than the County (19.5 minutes), state (27.6 minutes) or nation (25.3 minutes). The US Census estimates that 6.3% of Great Barrington workers work at home (versus 4% for the County, and 4.3% for the state and nation). Other commute to work data is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Means of Commute to Work, 2010



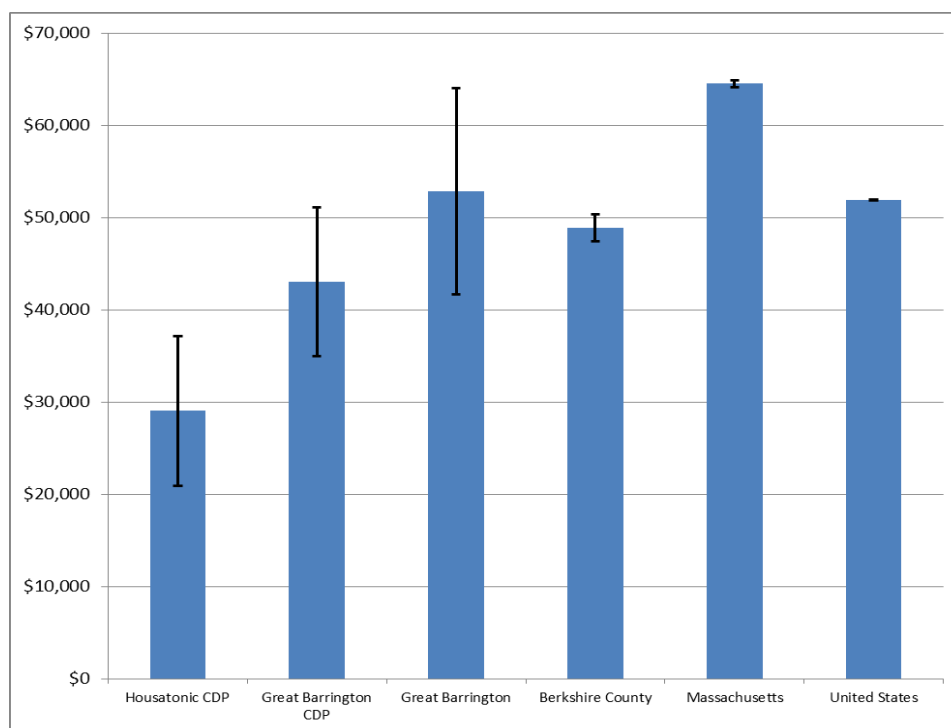
US Census 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP-03

Wealth and Incomes

The median household income of the Town of Great Barrington is higher than the County and comparable to the State, but not all Great Barrington households are well off. According to Census estimates, the median household income of Great Barrington is \$52,800. This is higher than Berkshire County's median household income of \$48,900. The estimated median household income in the Great Barrington CDP is \$43,000, or 19 percent lower than the town as a whole. In Housatonic CDP household median income is estimated at \$29,000, 41 percent lower than the town estimate.

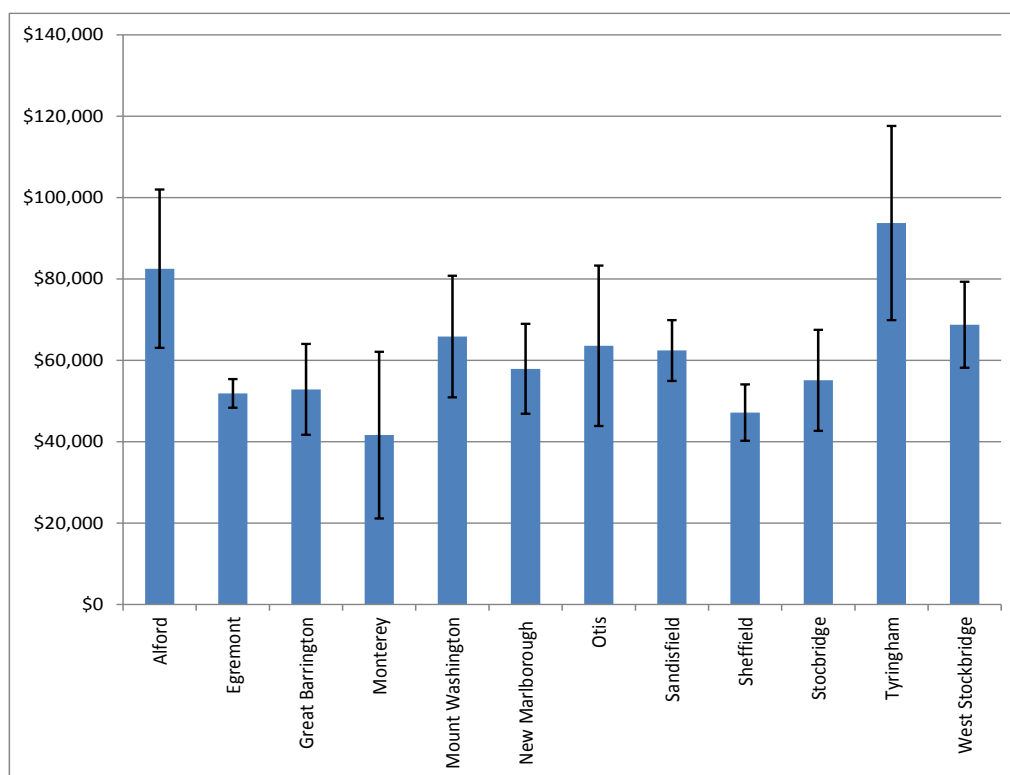
Figure 9 below shows median household incomes for each area. Figure 10 shows the median household incomes of the towns of southern Berkshire County. Great Barrington's median is slightly lower than the South County median of \$60,160. Alford, Tyringham, and West Stockbridge appear to have the highest median household incomes in South County. The black bars in both figures represent the estimated margin of error for each calculation.

Figure 9: Median Household Incomes



Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. All figures in 2010 dollars.

Figure 10: Median Household Incomes, South County Towns



Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. All figures in 2010 dollars.

Housing programs from the Federal, State, or local governments that subsidize the costs of housing in order to make it “affordable” utilize income limits to determine what populations they will serve. “Low and moderate income” households are defined as those that earn 80 percent or less of the area median income (AMI) for the area in which they live. These programs include state and federal programs; any town program would likely use the same limits. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds activities that benefit low and moderate income families, for example. For the purposes of housing subsidy programs, the FY 2013 area median income for Great Barrington is \$72,900.⁴ In other words, today, a four-person family in Great Barrington with an income of \$58,320 qualifies as a low income household for the purposes of affordable housing programs.⁵

Figure 11: Estimated Median Income and Low Income Housing Limits, FY 2013

		Household Size							
Category		1 person	2 person	3 person	4 person	5 person	6 person	7 person	8 person
FY 2013 Area Median Income = \$72,900	Extremely low income (30% AMI)	\$15,309	\$17,496	\$19,638	\$21,870	\$23,620	\$25,369	\$27,119	\$28,868
	Very low income (50% AMI)	\$25,515	\$29,160	\$32,805	\$36,450	\$39,366	\$42,282	\$45,198	\$48,114
	Low income (80% AMI)	\$40,824	\$46,656	\$52,488	\$58,320	\$62,986	\$67,651	\$72,317	\$76,982

Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development

⁴ For federal housing program purposes, the area that includes Great Barrington is called the “Berkshire County, MA (part) HUD Metro FMR” and includes Alford, Becket, Clarksburg, Egremont, Florida, Great Barrington, Hancock, Monterey, Mount Washington, New Ashford, New Marlborough, North Adams, Otis, Peru, Sandisfield, Savoy, Sheffield, Tyringham, Washington, West Stockbridge, Williamstown, and Windsor. The municipalities, of Adams, Cheshire, Dalton, Hinsdale, Lanesborough, Lee, Lenox, Pittsfield, Richmond, and Stockbridge are included in the “Pittsfield, MA HUD Metro FMR Area.”

⁵ The Census median income figure uses town-specific median income data, but the housing subsidy programs use data for an entire area as the median income benchmark. That area-wide figure is higher than the town specific Census figure. Because of this, housing subsidy programs that might be affordable to people based on the area-wide calculation, might not actually be affordable to people in town, whose median income per the Census is \$52,800.

Land Use

This Land Use chapter provides background information and policy recommendations to succeed in that balance. First, an overview of how different types of land uses—residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, open land, natural resources, roads, and transportation networks—are arranged, and why, is provided. This includes a discussion how land use impacts the property tax base. Appropriate areas for conservation, development and redevelopment are identified. Finally, this section contains a list of recommendations to ensure our local laws, regulations, and investments help us achieve our desired land use pattern.

Land Use Patterns and Trends

The arrangement and intensity of different types of land is determined by the interaction of many factors. The presence of some factors and the absence of others can render a site suitable for intense development, or not. Factors include but are not limited to:

- Natural Features:
 - Natural resources and topography, including the presence and type of vegetation and water or wetlands, as well as slopes;
 - Drinking water;
 - Bedrock, ledges, and soil type;
 - Soils suitable for septic systems;
- Infrastructure:
 - Access, including roads, driveways, and railroads;
 - Public water and sewer systems;
 - Electric, gas, and other utilities;
 - Lot size and configuration;
 - Existing buildings, including shape, size, and condition;
- Legal and Financial:
 - Ownership;
 - Development incentives or restrictions;
- Regulations:
 - Zoning;
 - Environmental and health regulations including Wetlands Protection and Title V;

Some sites may remain undeveloped because of natural features constraints, infrastructure access or costs, ownership status, regulatory constraints, or a lack of sufficient market pressure or economic incentive to development. Some sites may be likely to be developed because many of these factors are favorable to development.

This land use plan reviews existing land use and development patterns, giving a background of what has been developed and what has not, and why. It also highlights areas that are likely to be developed, and areas that are priorities for conservation, taking into account the interrelationship of the capacity of natural resources, infrastructure and economic trends, and population change.

Historical Land Use Pattern

Great Barrington's 46 square miles are characterized by a historic downtown business district, compact neighborhoods, a legacy of industrial buildings, and vast tracts of forested mountains. Historically, since the late 18th century, the first areas to be developed included those areas most suitable for farming, and later, in the late 19th century, manufacturing. The commercial core of town developed near the manufacturing centers, first near the "Great Bridge," now known as the "brown bridge" on Route 7 over the Housatonic River, then along what was to become Main Street. Housatonic developed similarly as

mills were established along the River. The coming of the railroad, constructed along the relatively flat river valley, reinforced the existing mills and brought other industrial uses to the railroad corridor.

Beginning in the 1930s zoning regulations were crafted to fit the existing land use pattern. These early regulations essentially encoded the existing land use pattern into a zoning document and a zoning map. Use regulations and intensity regulations took their cue from existing development patterns. These regulations cemented the location of commercial land uses near natural resource and transportation networks, and began a more strict segregation of residential and commercial uses. Thus, development in post-World War Two era, shaped by zoning and made possible through the ever increasing use of automobiles, brought the commercial strip along Stockbridge Road, and the development of residential lots in more rural areas of town. Tourism began to increase as a major component of the town's economy, just as manufacturing was beginning its long decline.

Existing Land Use

Approximately 69 percent of our town is covered by forest, according to 2005 aerial imagery data, and only about 10 percent is cropland or pasture. One hundred years ago, the opposite was true—what is forest today was pasture or agricultural land 100 years ago. Current data reveal that wetlands and open water cover nine percent of Great Barrington's area, residential development covers 1,880 acres, only six percent of the total land area, and commercial and industrial uses cover a scant 310 acres, or 1 percent of total land area. The land coverage statistics are detailed in Table 8.

Table 8: Land Coverage in Great Barrington, 2005

	Acres	%
Forest	20,333	69%
Cropland	2,073	7%
Non-Forested Wetland	1,061	4%
Forested Wetland	978	3%
Very Low Density Residential	804	3%
Pasture	794	3%
Water	562	2%
Low Density Residential	493	2%
Open Land	396	1%
Medium Density Residential	372	1%
Commercial	255	1%
Participation Recreation	230	1%
Urban Public/Institutional	185	1%
Golf Course	163	1%
High Density Residential	149	1%
Transportation	78	0.3%
Multi-Family Residential	65	0.2%
Cemetery	64	0.2%
Industrial	55	0.2%
Total Land Area	29,280	100%

Source: Massachusetts GIS and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 2005

Figures 12-15 illustrate the data presented in Table 8. Figure 12 shows the land coverage of Great Barrington. The following series, Figures 13-15, show more detailed views of land coverage for Great Barrington downtown, Housatonic, and Stockbridge Road. The green areas are large tracts of forest, present not only in the northeast and southeast of town, but also along ridge lines and hills of Tom Ball Mountain, Three Mile Hill, and Berkshire Heights.

Great Barrington has a very compact commercial core, bounded closely by residential neighborhoods and surrounded by open space. The detailed maps clearly show the historical pattern of commercial and industrial uses along the Housatonic River and major transportation routes, like Route 7 (Main Street) and the railroad. All three of the detailed maps illustrate how close commercial and industrial areas are to residential neighborhoods. The commercial spine of downtown Main Street, colored in red, is surrounded by residential neighborhoods, shown in orange and light tan. In Figure 14, the purple colored

industrial area shows the mills clustered along the Housatonic River, surrounded by residential neighborhoods. A similar commercial spine is apparent on Stockbridge Road.

This pattern of compact development is an efficient and productive pattern, and for that reason should be reinforced, but the potential for conflicts between different land uses is ever present. Continuing this pattern but attending to the conflicts was a regular refrain of participants in meetings during the development of this master plan.

Residential Growth: Patterns and Trends

This Master Plan, just the third in Great Barrington's history, faces different land use dynamics than did previous plans. The 1973 and 1997 Master Plans were written after years of significant and relatively rapid growth. The case is much different today—residential growth is slow, and commercial growth is almost nonexistent.

Residential growth in the two decades prior to the 1973 Town Plan established a pattern of settlement at greater distances and lower densities. Growth at this time averaged about 20 new dwellings per year and given that much of Downtown and Housatonic had, by then, already been developed, most of these new units were built in outlying areas. In 1973, the Town Plan characterized the following areas as likely future residential development areas:

<u>Area</u>	<u>Likely Density</u>
Berkshire Heights	low to moderate
Christian Hill	moderate
North Plain	moderate to dense
Risingdale	hamlet
So. Monument Valley	moderate
Van Deusenville plain	moderate to dense
West Plain	low

The 1973 Town Plan also called for upper Monument Valley, Long Pond Valley, and the Seekonk watershed to be protected from dense development, and proposed the new two-acre zoning (the R4 district) to implement those protections. For the most part, these predictions proved accurate, as subdivisions and new lots were carved out along Christian Hill and North Plain Road, as well as along Brush Hill Road, upper Castle Hill Avenue, portions of Monument Valley Road, and State Road.

The same low density residential development pattern continued into the 1980s and the 1990s, and Great Barrington continued to spread out, not fill in. During this time, 25 new dwellings were added, an average, each year. Statistics compiled by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) estimate that the average acreage of new parcels in 1985 was 4.8 acres. By 2005, it had increased to 5.5 acres. BRPC estimates that over 650 new buildings (not necessarily housing units) were added in Great Barrington during those 20 years, and the lots on which they were built averaged seven acres. Figure 5 shows new buildings constructed, outside of the developed downtown and village areas, between 1985 and 2005. Each red dot represents a new building.

As the real estate market continued to climb through the 1990s, building began to take place in previously difficult to develop areas. As buyers were willing to pay premiums for secluded lots and for views, regardless of how difficult it might be to access the building site, development these lots became more economically feasible. The last three decades saw most of the most easily developed areas of town be developed. Residential subdivisions were built on the mountain side off of Route 23 (State Road), and from fields along North Plain Road, Christian Hill Road, and Division Street. New developments were proposed, and eventually approved, at Burning Tree Road off of Christian Hill Road and at Blue Hill Commons off of Commonwealth Avenue. Remote sites on picturesque but steep slopes along Long Pond Road continue to be developed sporadically.

The development pattern Great Barrington has been experiencing is a microcosm of a larger regional trend, a pattern that Berkshire Regional Planning Commission refers to as the Berkshire County version of sprawl. Rather than commercial strip malls and vast subdivisions common to suburbs within commuting distance of Boston, Hartford, and New York City, the Berkshires sees large lot residential development in previously inaccessible areas. Increasingly, easily-built land is developed, and as the profits from the sale of scenic land continue to climb, difficult-to-develop areas are targeted for development.

Generally, we are using more land, for fewer people, than we have in the last few decades. Since a community's housing supply generally as population grows, sprawling residential growth might be expected if the population were getting larger. This was in fact true in Great Barrington between the 1960s and about 1990, when the population grew by 1,000 people and housing units also increased. Today, the town's population is declining, but residential development continues. The size of households is also declining, so there are fewer and fewer people in these homes. Nationwide trends are the same—according to the US Census, people per household has declined from 3.57 to 2.62 over last 50 years, but amount of land consumed by each home has increased by 60 percent.

Over the last two decades, the number of new housing units—residential growth—has been fairly constant. The US Census counted 3,168, 3,352, and 3,466 total housing units in 1990, 2000, and 2010, respectively. This is a 20-year increase of 298 units, or a 20-year annual average of about 15 units per year. Data from the Building Inspector is consistent with the Census figures.

Housing growth has slowed recently, but it is not known whether this is indicative of a longer term slowdown. It could be a reflection of the depressed national housing market, or lack of easily developed land, or both. For example, the town added on average only 14 dwellings annually between 2000 and 2010, despite a strong national market for most of that period. In 2008, when the housing market crash began nationwide, Great Barrington issued on only five permits for new dwellings. Since that time, the number of building permits for new dwellings has been just under nine new dwellings per year, well below the previous 20-year trend. Table 9 shows building permit totals for the last five fiscal years (July 1 – June 30).

Table 9: Five-Year Building Permit Trends, 2008-2012

	FY 2008		FY 2009		FY 2010		FY 2011		FY 2012	
	#	Construction Cost	#	Construction Cost	#	Construction Cost	#	Construction Cost	#	Construction Cost
New Dwellings	5	\$ 1,507,000	10	\$3,271,665	6	\$2,076,000	11	\$1,648,600	11	\$4,114,774
Additions/ Alterations/ Accessory	94	\$3,410,404	117	\$2,526,245	111	\$4,055,877	154	\$3,406,025	141	\$4,177,558
Commercial	61	\$6,781,372	87	\$10,664,362*	45	\$4,240,090	43	\$2,269,711	40	\$8,380,793
Misc. permits, signs, etc.	174	\$1,102,503	209	\$1,057,070	296	\$1,491,440	250	\$1,296,101	286	\$1,642,611
Demo/foundations/ Pools/Sheds	39	\$393,445	21	\$167,880	24	\$269,210	28	\$159,500	37	\$801,004
Totals	373	\$11,687,724	444	\$17,687,222	482	\$12,132,617	486	\$8,779,937	515	\$19,116,740

* Includes \$4.7 million for Fire Station

Source: Great Barrington Building Inspector, 2013

Given recent trends, it reasonable to assume that new residential growth will most likely happen on the fringes of town, but it will be relatively slow.

Nonresidential Growth: Patterns and Trends

Great Barrington has seen relatively little new commercial development over the past 20 years; the most significant growth has been in hospitality related businesses. New hotels (the Comfort Inn and Holiday Inn) and restaurants were built on Stockbridge Road (White House Square and Jenifer House Commons). In addition, the Kmart and Big Y shopping plazas, first developed in the 1960s, were both improved and expanded in the 1990s, and again in the late 2000s. Cultural uses like the TriPlex Cinema and Mahaiwe Theater were built or renovated during the last decade. And Bard College at Simon's Rock added a science building, an athletic center, and a performing arts center. In the next few years, a newly renovated St. James Church on Main Street will add to the cultural development in downtown.

Consistent with local employment trends, there was also some growth in the health care field and in community services. The Berkshire South Regional Community Center was built on Crissey Road in 2001. Medical offices were expanded on Route 7

south of town, at East Mountain Medical, and the Community Health Program filled out its campus on Stockbridge Road, at the northern end of the Business district, in 2010. Fairview Hospital acquired the shuttered Condor Chevrolet building and located its growing rehabilitation services center there. The success and expansion of Iredale Mineral Cosmetics in the old Bryant school is another example of commercial growth, and may represent an important emerging growth sector for Great Barrington.

Unfortunately, the drastic contraction of industrial and commercial uses throughout town, along with related job losses in the manufacturing sector, has been perhaps more noticeable than growth in other sectors. NuCom (Nuclear Components) left town in the early 1990s. New England Log Homes closed in 1995. After being decimated by the 1995 tornado, the Fairgrounds limped along but closed for good in the early 2000s. Rising Mill closed at this time as well, though it did reopen under new ownership and with a much reduced workforce. Two massive fires in 2001 destroyed the shuttered Barbieri Lumber building in Housatonic and the New England Log Homes plant on Bridge Street. Also closed during this time were the downtown schools—Searles, Bryant, and Housatonic—as the regional school system consolidated operations at the campus across from Monument Mountain.

Mixed-use redevelopment is planned for some of these former industrial and school sites, including the Log Homes and Searles-Bryant School. Developers hope the mix of uses helps diversify the redevelopment financing, but it should be noted that it is often the residential component that drive the economic feasibility of redevelopment projects. The risk, of course, is that current growth trends continue with residences being built in outlying areas at the expense of these underutilized sites in the core. It is worth noting that both projects benefit from the serendipity that local businesses were looking to expand—the Berkshire Co-Op Market at the Log Homes site, and Iredale Mineral Cosmetics at Bryant School.

Protected Land and Priority Conservation Areas

Over 10,000 acres of Great Barrington are permanently protected and cannot be developed. This includes not only state forest and parks, but also certain town lands and private land where development rights have been extinguished via a conservation restriction. Figure 6 shows protected land in Great Barrington.

Significant additions have been made to the list of permanently protected land over the past 20 years, particularly in the Route 7/Stockbridge Road corridor. Fountain Pond State Park was expanded by 125 acres in 1997. Berkshire Natural Resources Council acquired over 100 acres of land along the ridge of Three Mile Hill and 25 acres of floodplain west of the road. Berkshire South Community Center conserved 35 acres of upland as well. In 2009, more than 300 acres of land along Monument Valley Road was conserved through conservation restriction and 36 acres of agricultural land was permanently preserved through agricultural preservation restriction. And, this year, Berkshire Natural Resources Council completed acquisition of 22 acres behind the WSBS radio tower. The parcel is open to the public and has river frontage.

Over 7,100 acres are provisionally protected by the Chapter 61, 61A or 61B programs, as much land as is owned and protected by the State. So-called “Chapter lands” are those eligible properties that maintain their property in forest, agricultural, or recreational use for a period of years in return for a reduced assessed valuation. Many of these Chapter land properties are highly visible along Route 23 and Route 71 and contribute greatly to our town’s rural, bucolic scenery.

The Natural Resources, Open Space, and Recreation chapter of this plan provides information about protected land, and provides guidance and identifies land for future conservation priorities. Those areas include the Housatonic, Green, and Williams River valleys (including Neenah Paper, the Fairgrounds, and the Greenway / River Walk southern extension), the Alford, Long Pond, and Seekonk Brook valleys, and unprotected ridges and peaks like East Mountain Reservoir, Flag Rock, and Tom Ball Mountain. Priority Conservation areas include lands where development may be restricted by virtue of Chapter status, wetlands or environmental regulations, or Scenic Mountains Act, but which are not permanently protected. These areas are shown in Figure 7.

Designating these as priority conservation areas does not necessarily mean permanent protection against any development. Sensitive development could be permitted, particularly development that supports agriculture or public access and recreation. But development in this area should not negatively impact the biodiversity, habitat, ecosystem services, or scenic value of these

Buildable Land

Vast areas of town have no permanent development restrictions and could, theoretically, be developed, given sufficient market incentive. A recent analysis conducted by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Town Planner estimated almost 5,400 acres of land with no permanent development restriction which met existing zoning requirements, were theoretically buildable. Most of that land, 96 percent, is residentially zoned (and 97 percent of that is either R2 or R4 zone).

This “base build out” analyzed Great Barrington’s land use data according to the following methodology:

1. All roads, railroads, and water were removed and not considered buildable;
2. All protected land was removed and not considered buildable;
3. All water resource areas (not including floodplains) were removed and not considered buildable;
4. All steep slopes (land > 15%) are removed and not considered buildable;
5. All currently developed areas are removed and not considered buildable;
6. All parcels that do not meet zoning requirements are removed and not considered buildable.

The land that remains, 5,400 unrestricted acres, is shown in red in Figure 19.

Additional “build out” scenarios removed floodplains from consideration. This reduced the “base build out” by approximately 340 acres (for example, areas like the Fairgrounds and other parcels along Route 7 are removed under this scenario). A different scenario removed Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B land from consideration since it is technically, though only provisionally, protected. In Great Barrington, there are 7,109 acres of land in the Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B programs. If these lands are removed from consideration, the build out is reduced by over 2,400 acres to 2,980 acres of buildable land. Figure 20 shows the resulting buildable land in red.

Finally, a scenario in which both floodplains and Chapter lands are removed from building consideration results in 2,805 acres of buildable land. This scenario is shown in Figure 21, where again the buildable land is in red.

The totals under each of these four scenarios are shown in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Acres of Buildable Land per Zone, Various Build-out Scenarios

Zoning District	Base build out	Remove only floodplain	Remove only Chapter land	Remove Floodplain and Chapter land
B-1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
B-2	92	24	85	24
B-3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
DBP	1	1	1	1
I	135	114	51	50
I-2	2	2	2	2
R-1-A	74	73	47	46
R-1-B	42	42	39	39
R-2	3,481	3,321	1,997	1,913
R-3	26	26	26	26
R-4	1,533	1,443	734	703
Total	5,386	5,047	2,982	2,805

Source: Massachusetts GIS and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 2005

Much of the “buildable” acreage in this analysis is never likely to be developed. Substantial portions of this acreage are in small pockets in inaccessible areas—not near an existing road, across a swamp or pond, and so on. Other building constraints include the availability of drinking water and soils suitable for septic systems. Significant feats of engineering would be necessary in order to create new frontage in these areas, and new roads and driveways would have to scale ridges and cross

wetlands. Regulatory constraints including the Scenic Mountains Act, the Water Quality Protection District, endangered species protections would further limit the likelihood, and amount, of development in many areas. However, views or other desirable features could lead certain parcels to be developed, given a determined or well-heeled buyer.

In any case, there is land available to accommodate even modest residential growth projections. Assuming 15 new dwellings are added per year (the 1990 to 2010 average), over the next 20 years approximately 300 new housing units would be built. If all of this new growth occurred in outlying areas, then using a very rough assumption that two acres of land would be developed per new dwelling unit, then 600 acres of land would be developed for new residential growth. At nine units per year (the 2008-2012 average) and 2 acres per unit, 360 acres would be developed.

Past master plans experienced relatively rapid growth, and they predicted significant new growth. This Master Plan does not predict significant new growth. With overall population declining, land and residential prices remaining high versus comparatively low incomes, and fewer easy to develop lots, growth over the next ten years will be sporadic at best. The most successful development will be infill development, and will be contrary to the trend towards sprawl. For example, the condominiums at Copper Beach Lane, the affordable housing at Flag Rock Village in Housatonic and on Hillside Avenue in Great Barrington, and infill sites within downtown have been very successful, with rapid sales or lease-up periods and long waiting lists.

Suitable Areas for Redevelopment and New Development

The redevelopment and reuse of existing buildings and infrastructure is the necessary corollary of conserving outlying natural resource, open space, and recreation areas. The many citizens who participated in developing this Master Plan expressed, time and again, that new development should occur, as much as is possible, as infill development in already developed areas served by existing infrastructure. Moreover this new development should be in keeping with the existing residential, commercial, and mixed use character and context of the core areas of Housatonic and Great Barrington.

With protected land (existing and envisioned), environmental constraints, market trends, and residential development patterns all limiting the available land and the demand for new commercial buildings, adding to our tax base, and reducing the burden on residential rate payers, will require the reuse of already developed land and buildings. Commercial and mixed use development and redevelopment are encouraged in the mills in Housatonic, the business strips of Stockbridge Road and State Road, downtown, particularly vacant and blighted buildings, and South Main Street.

New neighborhoods may be appropriate and possible where infrastructure exists, or where privately-funded extensions of infrastructure could occur, including, Burning Tree Road, Rogers and Blue Hill Road and Van Deusenville (a historic hamlet). It also includes Butternut Basin, which has adequate water supply and private sewer capacity to handle moderate development that would complement, or replace, the ski resort should climate change or other factors limit the resort's future ski seasons. These areas are highlighted in Figure 11. Development in any of these areas must be done only in a clustered fashion, respecting natural resources, public views of the site, and other issues including traffic. Development and redevelopment in these areas have the potential to reuse existing infrastructure, be sited and built in ways that respect natural resources, and generate tax revenue without significant fiscal costs.

Land Use: Tax Base and Revenues

Great Barrington's land coverage, dictated by topography and shaped by historical patterns, attracts tourism and second home owners. But it also presents challenges to collecting revenue. Diversifying the tax base, while maximizing revenue where possible, is a major challenge of this Master Plan.

Most (75 percent) of Great Barrington's local revenue is from the property tax, and most of that property tax revenue is from residential parcels. Residential land use is the single largest component of our tax base, providing over 80 percent of the town's property tax revenue and accounting for 35 percent of all assessed land (not counting rivers, water bodies, roads, and so forth).

The individual entities that pay the most taxes per year are commercial enterprises, however. These include, beginning with the largest, the Massachusetts Electric Company, the Price Chopper/Kmart shopping plaza, the John Dewey Academy (at Searles Castle), Verizon, Berkshire Bank, Butternut Basin, and the Big Y shopping plaza. Three private residences round out this list of the top ten property tax payers.

The majority of the 3,800 parcels of taxable real property in Great Barrington are *single family* residential.⁶ Table 11 lists the number of parcels per assessment class, according to 2011 data.

Table 11: Number of Parcels by Selected Assessment Class

Fiscal Year	Single Family	Multi Family	Condos	Commercial	Industrial	Total *
1990	1,874	287	70	225	37	3,532
1995	1,874	255	71	243	41	3,509
2000	1,956	243	81	253	44	3,574
2005	2,033	234	109	258	45	3,673
2010	2,096	229	163	277	45	3,811

* Includes assessment classes not listed in this table

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, 2011

The number of parcels has grown over the last thirty years, and most of the growth has been in the single family residential category. The fastest rate of increase is in the number of condominium parcels, and the largest decrease is in the number of multifamily parcels, pointing to a general long term trend of conversions. The numbers of commercial parcels and industrial parcels have increased only slightly, and certainly not on pace with residential growth.

In terms of acreage, single family residential use totals more than 4,800 acres, or nearly half of all residential land and 17 percent of the town's total assessed land. Agricultural use totals nearly 2,000 (about the same amount as reported in the 1997 Master Plan). Only three percent, or just over 1,000 acres, is commercial or industrial, despite there being a total of 1,700 acres of land zoned for commercial and industrial use. Table 12 provides a snapshot of land use categorized by assessment class.

Table 12: Acreage by Selected Assessment Class, 2011

Assessment Class	Acres	Percent of Total Land
Mixed-use	3,775	13%
Residential	9,809	35%
Agriculture	1,946	7%
Commercial	679	2%
Industrial	369	1%
All others	11,402	41%
Total assessed acreage	27,980	100%

Source: Great Barrington Assessor data, 2011

The maps in Figures 23-26 illustrate Assessor's land use data using detailed subcategories. Note that these categories do not necessarily represent whether or not the land is protected; they only represent how the land is assessed for valuation purposes. The various shades of blue represent government-owned land (e.g., state forest, town park), non-profit land (e.g., Eisner Camp, Bard College at Simon's Rock, the regional schools), and other charitable organization land (e.g. Project Native, Berkshire South Regional Community Center, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Madden Open Hearts Institute). The pale peach color represents single family residential use. The deep orange color represents mixed use, with the largest portions being mixed residential-agricultural (usually with a large portion of the parcel in the Chapter program). Smaller scale maps are provided in Figures 24-26 for downtown, Housatonic, and Stockbridge Road.

⁶ Not counting land in Chapter 61, 61A, 61B, or tax exempt land

Notable in Figure 24 are the linear business districts of downtown Main Street and State Road, as well as Fairview Hospital and the medical and professional offices around it

Figure 25, the map of Housatonic, illustrates how little of the land is assessed for retail use. This is despite the fact that B2 business zoning covers much of Front and Pleasant Streets in the village core. The most prominent aspects of the core of Housatonic are the mixed residential character (single family and multifamily uses), the town campus of the park, school, and community center, and the industrial area of the old mills.

In Figure 26, showing Stockbridge Road, the commercial uses begin to spread out into a less dense business district than along Main Street or State Road. Notable here are the large “charitable organization” lands in light blue, which include both Berkshire South Community Center and conservation land owned by Berkshire Natural Resources Council. Significant portions are undeveloped (gray). Also apparent are the proximity of the residential neighborhood surrounding Commonwealth Avenue and Fairview Terrace to the retail and hotel (“transient group quarters”) uses of Stockbridge Road.

As mentioned above, the residential use category makes up 35 percent of Great Barrington’s assessed land. Table 13 gives more detail about the 9,809 acres in the Residential category. Most of that total, over 4,800 acres, is single family residential.

Table 13: Residential Land Use by Category, 2011

Residential Category	Acres	Percent of Residential Land	Percent of Total Land
Single family	4,819	49%	17.2%
Condominium	67	1%	0.2%
Two-family	121	1%	0.4%
Three-family	34	0%	0.1%
Accessory land with improvement	160	2%	0.6%
Multiple houses on one parcel	977	10%	3.5%
Four to eight units	102	1%	0.4%
More than eight units	21	0%	0.1%
Residence halls or dormitories	2	0%	0.0%
Developable land	840	9%	3.0%
Potentially developable land	1,442	15%	5.2%
Undevelopable land	1,221	12%	4.4%

Source: Great Barrington Assessor data, 2011

A significant portion, over one-third, of our residential tax base is not developed. The total *developed* residential acreage is 6,306 acres, or about two-thirds of all residential land. The average residential value in 2012 was \$374,000. The total acreage of “Developable Land” and “Potentially Developable Land” is 2,282 acres. This total would be more than enough to accommodate the most aggressive of residential growth scenarios.

Figure 27 maps the residential land use by subcategory. Again, most of Great Barrington’s revenue is generated from these properties. Note that “mixed use” designation on this map includes those parcels that are partially residential and partially in Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B assessment status. These include farm businesses like Windy Hill Farm, which is in the Chapter 61A program but also has a residence.

A significant amount of land in Great Barrington is either not taxed, or taxed based on reduced values. But these properties are valuable to our town in other ways. They conserve land, educate our youth, grow food, house low income or special needs families, manage our forests, and provide cultural and religious enrichment.

Untaxed land includes state and other government land, non-profit land, and land with development restrictions such as agriculture preservation restrictions or conservation restrictions. Also, the 7,100 acres in the Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B programs, since they are “temporarily” protected as forest, farmland, or recreational space, are valued at a lower than market rate, so their tax revenue generation is much lower. In fact, the over 7,100 acres of Chapter land in Great Barrington will

receive a tax discount in Fiscal Year 2012 equivalent to \$51.2 million in assessed value (the market value of the land is \$67.5 million, while the assessed value is \$16.3 million). This equals over \$673,000 in forgone tax revenue in Fiscal Year 2013. Non-profit and untaxed lands are shown in Figure 28.

With this amount of untaxed, or reduced tax, land, it becomes more imperative to maintain, support, and reinvest in our existing tax base as must possible. If additional lands are to be taken off the tax rolls through conservation restrictions or other land protection, or put into the Chapter program, the tax base will shift to an even greater degree to existing residential property owners. If we are to maintain the balance we as a community seek, we must recognize that with conservation must come development. This includes reusing existing buildings, infilling within existing neighborhoods, and ensuring our commercial base remains strong and grows.

Zoning

Zoning regulations, which include the zoning text and the zoning map, are one of the ways a community's land use and density patterns are shaped. In an ideal scenario the zoning map would bear strong resemblance to the land use vision map.

Zoning: History in Great Barrington

Many states, though not Massachusetts, require a municipality's zoning to be consistent with the local master plan. Some even require local zoning and master plans to be consistent with regional plans. In Massachusetts, a master plan is not technically required of local governments. Thus many communities, Great Barrington included, crafted their first zoning ordinances to encode existing land use, not to shape future land use. Great Barrington, for example, first adopted zoning in 1932. These regulations called for two distinct and very small business districts, in downtown and in Housatonic. Existing industrial uses such as the Monument Mills, what is now the Log Homes site, as well as portions of River Street and Railroad Avenue downtown were encoded into an Industrial district. Some parts of downtown and Housatonic were zoned for 5,000 square foot lots. The rest of the town was zoned for quarter-acre (10,000 square foot) residential lots. Residential development filling out this scheme would have been overwhelming. There was no master plan or vision forming the basis of this early zoning. Following is a very brief history of zoning in Great Barrington.

Great Barrington revised its zoning in 1960, and the legacy of these revisions remains to this day. The 1960 rezoning added the R2 zone (one acre residential), the R1B zone (6,500 square foot residential) and the B2 zone (general business). The B2 zones were drawn where business was occurring—on automobile routes like Route 7. These are in Housatonic, along Stockbridge Road, in downtown, and on South Main Street. Future industrial activity was anticipated along the rail line on North Plain Road and Van Deusenville Road, and thus large tracts in this area were designated as I zones. While the actual use of these areas has evolved over time, the old B2 and I zones remain largely the same five decades later.

Aspects of the 1973 Town Plan were implemented by new zoning in 1974. The plan, calling for protection of land near water supplies and in the most rural areas, recommended two-acre residential zoning here instead of one-acre residential zoning. Thus was the R4 (two-acre) district drawn. This district remains the same today. Changes were made in the 1980s to the zoning text, as the Planned Unit Residential Development regulations were refined, the Flood Plain overlay district was approved, and revisions were made to special permit and multifamily residential regulations. The distance between fast food establishments was relaxed from 2,500 feet to 1,500 feet. The zoning map was amended in 1987 to include the new B2A district (transitional business), and again in 1989 converting Industrial land on Van Deusenville road into R2 zoning.

The downtown business district (B zone) was approved in 1992. In 1993 a special permit requirement was instituted for retail stores over 20,000 square feet. This was further amended in 1997 to prohibit retail stores in excess of 50,000 square feet. Regulations were adopted to protect public water supplies, allow certain home occupations and accessory uses, and better control use conflicts between commercial and residential zones. A new overlay district was approved in 1997 to govern the location of cell phone towers.

Following the approval of the 1997 Master Plan, the Planning Board began implementing its recommendations through new zoning regulations. For instance, parking requirements were revised; in the case of the B district, no parking would be required for permitted uses in existing buildings. And mixed uses were defined and regulated for the first time.

The 2000's saw a host of zoning text and map amendments. The Industrial zone was refined into the I and the I2 zones to allow for the possibility of multifamily housing in the I2 zones. A Downtown Business Parking district was added, assuming that a parking garage would be built at Bridge and Main Streets. Room limits were placed on hotels (35 in the B2A zone and 45 elsewhere). Accessory dwelling unit regulations were added, mixed-use was further defined, and new Water Quality Protection regulations were approved. A mixed-use district (the B3 zone) was added downtown to encourage mixed-use redevelopment of the Log Homes site and the Searles-Bryant school campus. The Village Center Overlay District (VCOD) and the Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) bylaws were adopted in 2009.

The zoning text was completely recodified, updated, and reorganized in 2010. Significant changes included allowing for the residential development of rear lots lacking sufficient frontage. Site Plan Review authority for the Planning Board was approved at this time. The next two years saw revisions to accessory dwelling unit regulations (allowing by-right in R2 and R4 zones), the creation of the new Housatonic Mills Revitalization Overlay District (HMRD), and the rezoning of residential land on Nolan Drive to Industrial. A proposal for large scale solar energy facility, exempt from zoning by state law, prompted much discussion about amending the zoning to control the location of this use. No changes were proposed; yet, town boards recognize the need for some guidance to encourage and control solar farms where it might be desirable.

Zoning: Current Conditions

There are 12 basic zoning districts in Great Barrington today. These are:

Residential Districts:

R1A	One-Family Medium-Density Residential
R1B	One-Family High-Density Residential
R2	Acreage Residential
R3	General Residential
R4	Large Acreage Residential

Business Districts.

B	Downtown Business
B1	Neighborhood Business
B2	General Business
B2A	Transitional Business
B3	Downtown Business Mixed Use

Industrial Districts.

I	Light Industry
I2	Industrial Manufacturing / Multi-family

There are also six overlay districts. These are

FPOD	Floodplain Overlay District
WQPOD	Water Quality Protection Overlay District
WTOD	Wireless Telecommunications Overlay District
VCOD	Village Center Overlay District
DBP	Downtown Business Parking District
HMRD	Housatonic Mills Revitalization Overlay District

Great Barrington's existing zoning map is shown in Figure 29.

The size of each zoning district is tabulated in Table 14.

Table 14: Size of Zoning Districts

District	Acres	% of total
B	13.55	0.0%
B-1	1.09	0.0%
B-2	782.38	2.7%
B-2A	128.68	0.4%
B-3	25.21	0.1%
I	776.94	2.7%
I2	24.25	0.1%
R-1-A	409.63	1.4%
R-1-B	627.84	2.1%
R-2	15,825.32	54.0%
R-3	148.42	0.5%
R-4	10,527.78	35.9%
	29,291.09	100.0%

Overlay District	Acres	% of total
Floodplain	2,993.91	10.2%
WQPOD	6,701.32	22.9%
Wireless	230.49	0.8%
VCOD	131.53	0.4%
HMROD	28.08	0.1%
DBP	7.08	0.0%

WQPOD = water quality protection overlay district

VCOD = village center overlay district

HMROD = housatonic mills revitalization overlay distric

DBP = downtown business parking district

Comparatively little land is reserved for business and commercial uses, and a good deal of that acreage is further reduced by wetlands, floodplains, and other building or regulatory constraints (for example, the Fairgrounds and Searles Castle). Most of Great Barrington, 94 percent, is zoned for residential use. Detailed land coverage analysis of these zones (again, based on the 2005 aerial survey) reveals just how much, or how little, of these districts are in use for their prescribed purpose. Table 15 presents a summary of land coverage statistics for selected zoning districts.

Table 15: Land Coverage of Selected Zoning Districts

Land Use	Acres by Zoning District					
	B2	I	R1A	R2	R4	WQPOD
Brushland/Successional	-	-	-	-	17.19	11.09
Cemetery	12.82	-	-	34.25	1.27	18.87
Commercial	134.06	54.80	1.37	18.91	9.27	111.57
Cropland	15.18	141.12	49.65	1,022.37	839.50	1,110.05
Forest	264.51	216.23	109.98	11,522.85	7,811.77	2,667.50
Forested Wetland	34.71	42.52	1.56	449.66	445.67	411.35
Golf Course	-	-	-	163.44	-	78.70
High Density Residential	29.43	1.11	-	0.18	-	48.16
Industrial	3.96	27.92	-	2.77	-	46.26
Junkyard	-	6.36	-	1.28	-	-
Low Density Residential	2.74	4.48	47.56	314.12	48.64	101.04
Medium Density Residential	21.49	3.06	150.20	39.20	-	38.19
Mining	-	0.33	-	12.45	10.10	-
Multi-Family Residential	22.51	1.68	7.70	3.21	-	35.61
Non-Forested Wetland	37.66	59.77	4.42	439.16	516.41	532.43
Nursery	2.75	7.65	-	8.35	19.93	23.84
Open Land	37.55	40.34	9.59	233.58	67.18	160.77
Orchard	-	-	-	30.60	8.26	22.06
Participation Recreation	76.99	0.01	-	122.21	28.89	110.98
Pasture	24.89	68.28	1.53	347.68	322.85	308.24
Pow erline/Utility	-	0.52	-	12.50	-	0.73
Transitional	-	3.88	-	5.67	-	0.03
Transportation	4.54	9.08	1.38	20.22	38.10	55.15
Urban Public/Institutional	8.92	7.33	-	116.58	48.29	46.15
Very Low Density Residential	17.47	-	13.52	529.94	217.20	235.52
Waste Disposal	-	3.32	-	2.90	7.21	6.38
Water	23.12	77.15	11.17	368.61	69.27	518.21
Water-Based Recreation	-	-	-	2.63	0.78	2.44
Total	775.30	776.94	409.63	15,825.32	10,527.78	6,701.32

Notwithstanding the low proportion of commercially zoned land, there is no apparent need or reason to increase the amount of land zoned for business or industrial uses. This is due to several factors. First, the nature of commercial and industrial uses in the Berkshires is changing. No longer are paper mills operating on three around the clock shifts, pumping pollutants into the air and rivers. Certainly business and industry have attendant noise, traffic, trash, and other concerns, but the days of segregating commercial and residential uses are over. Not only are they found in the same neighborhood, but also often in the same building. In many cases, mixing uses can help use land more efficiently, create more vibrant and safe areas, reuse existing vacant buildings, and make redevelopment more economically feasible.

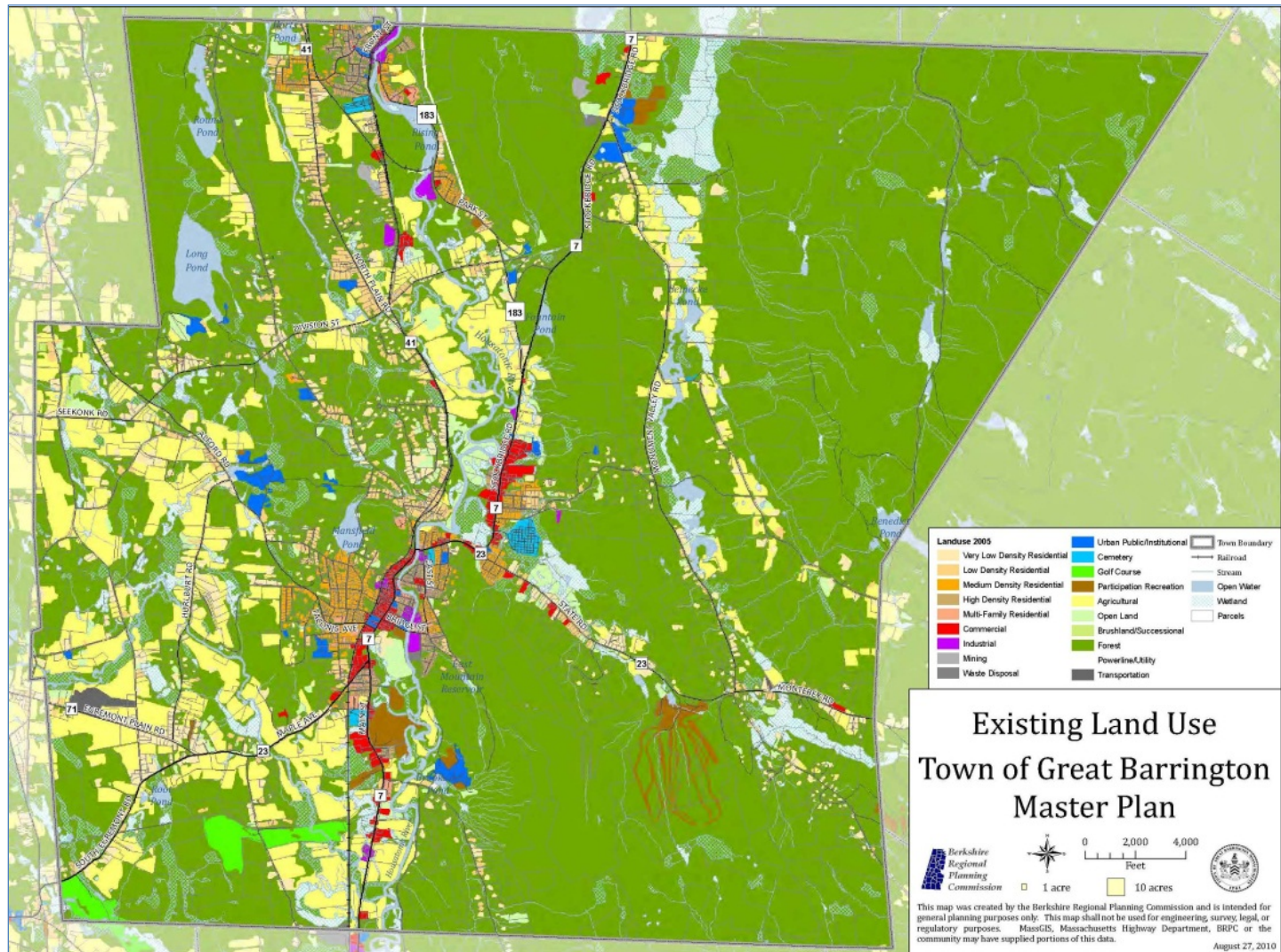
Second, there is little known demand to expand the commercial districts. The current demand is driven at least as much by residential and mixed use markets as by commercial markets. And while some commercial land will be used for purposes other than its primary zoning purpose (for example, there are farms, not factories, in the Industrial zones on North Plain Road), the remaining sites are sufficiently large and well located to accommodate demand. The economic development chapter

of this plan and the Berkshire County CEDS plan provide more insight into the commercial market dynamics and the future state of these sectors.

Third, there are vacant parcels and buildings in business and industrial districts that could accommodate any new demand. To be sure, each vacant commercial site has significant challenges to redevelopment, including contamination, floodplains, and, of course, market demand, but this justifies market intervention and funding more than rezoning of other land. In fact, given that the vacant sites are some of the most prominent, and most historic, of any structure in town, maintaining and reusing them, whatever the purpose may be, is paramount to maintaining the historic character of our community and reducing real estate pressure on our scenic and environmental resources.

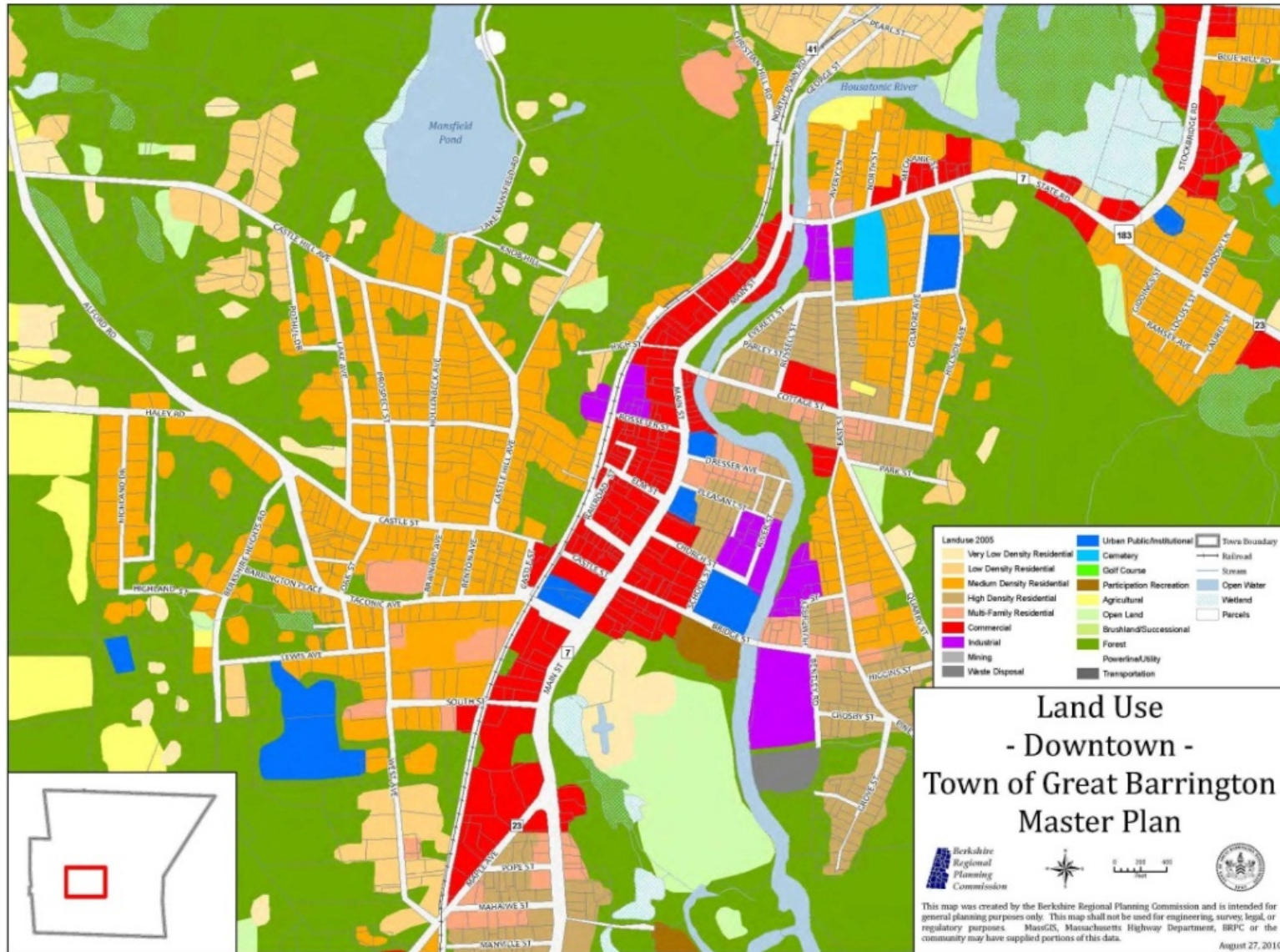
Land Use Maps

Figure 12: Land Coverage in Great Barrington, 2005



Source: Massachusetts GIS and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 2005

Figure 13: Land Coverage in Downtown, 2005



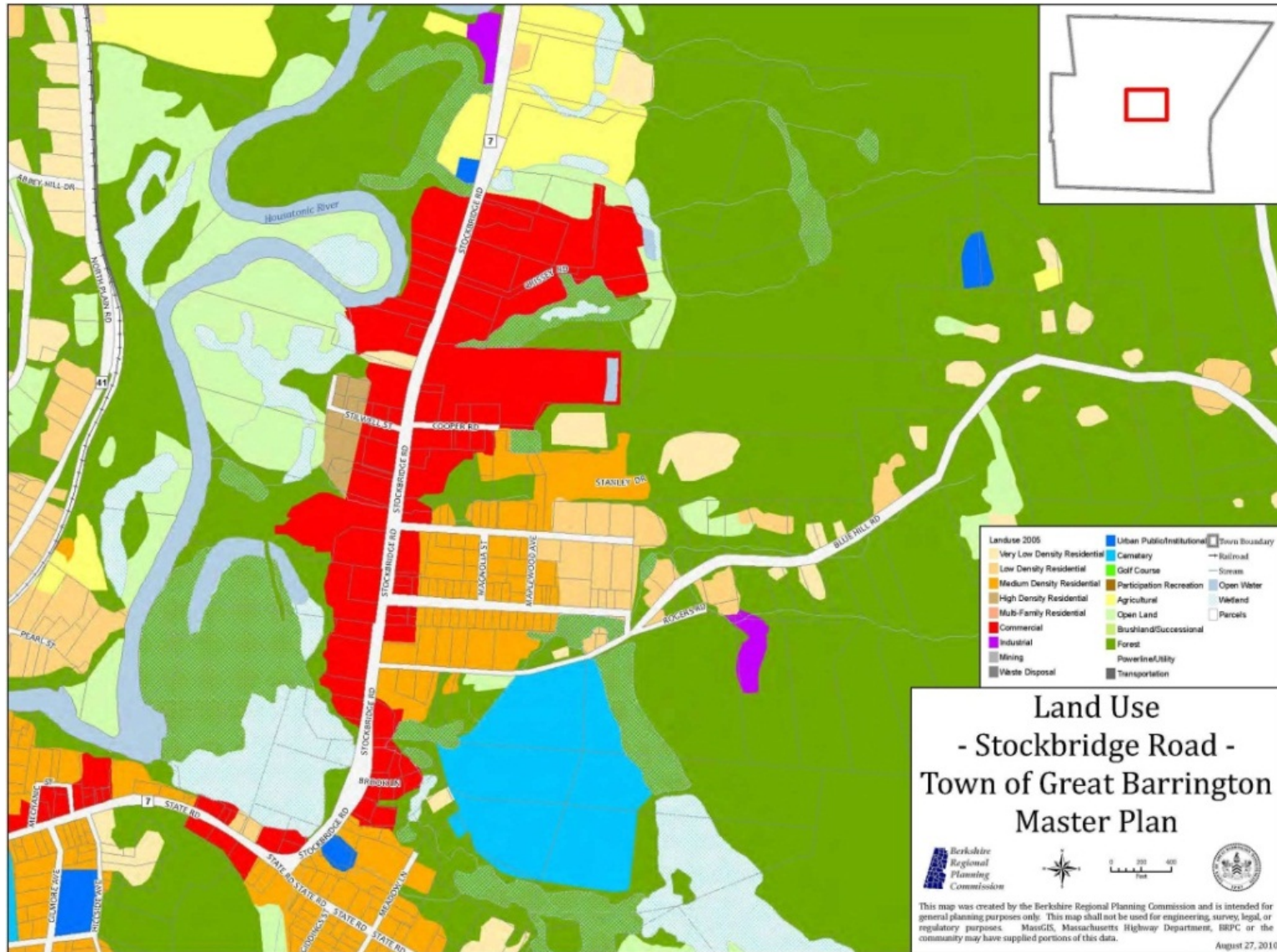
Source: Massachusetts GIS and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 2005

Figure 14: Land Coverage in Housatonic, 2005



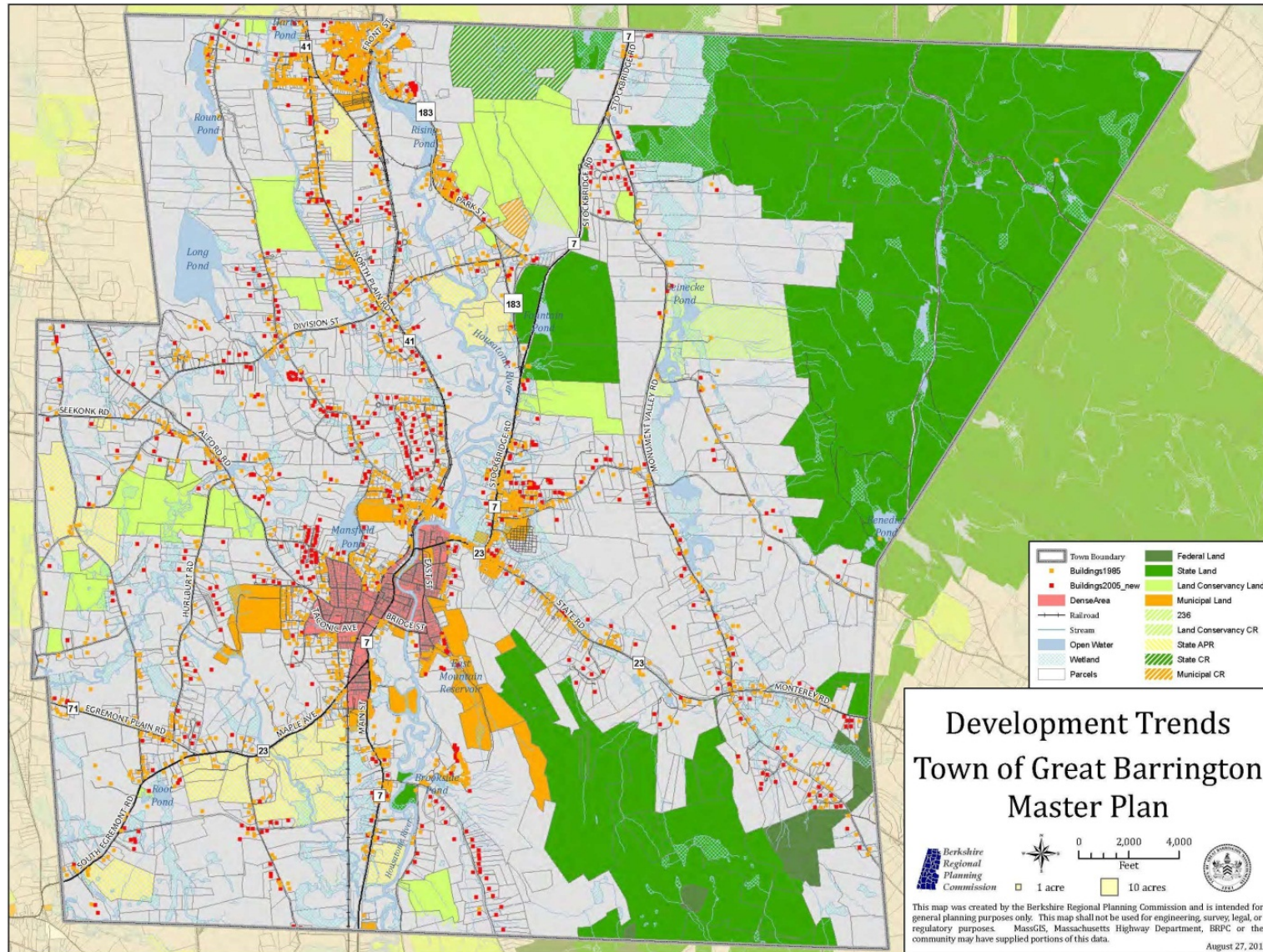
Source: Massachusetts GIS and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 2005

Figure 15: Land Coverage on Stockbridge Road, 2005



Source: Massachusetts GIS and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 2005

Figure 16: Development Trends, 1985-2005



Source: Massachusetts GIS and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 2009

Figure 17: Protected Land, 2012

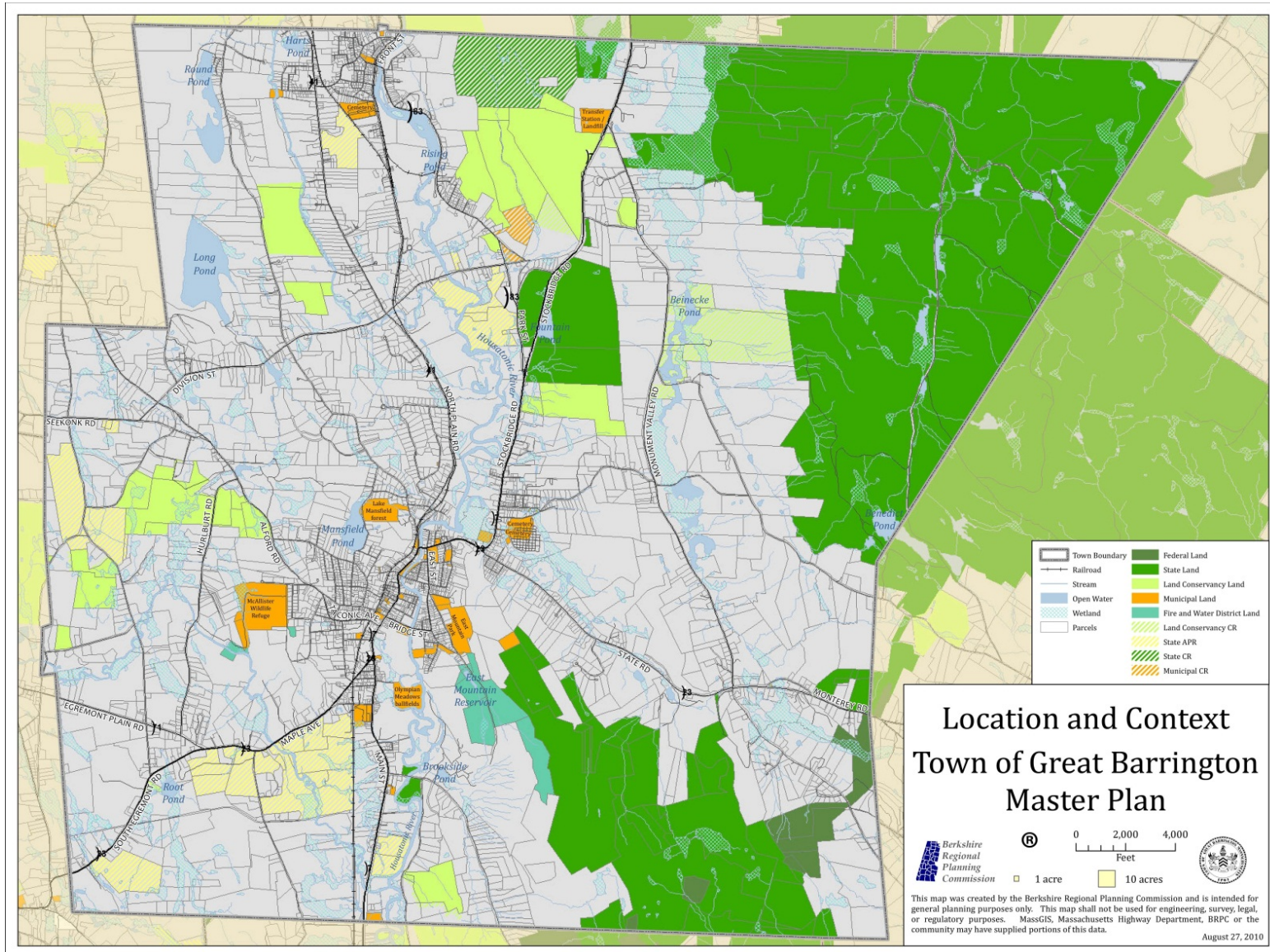


Figure 18: Priority Conservation Areas



Figure 19: Protected and Buildable Land

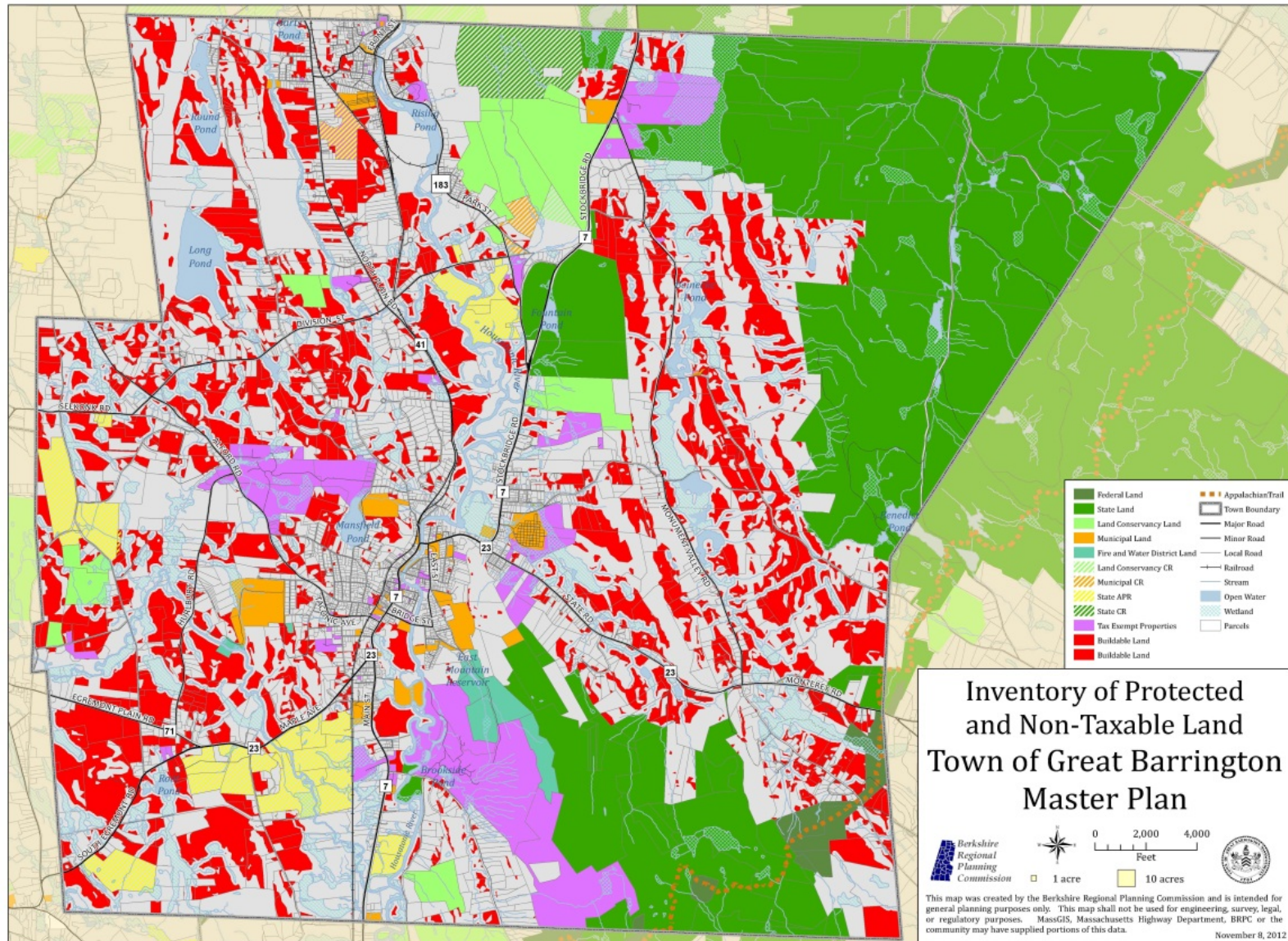


Figure 20: Protected Land, including Chapter Land, and Buildable Land

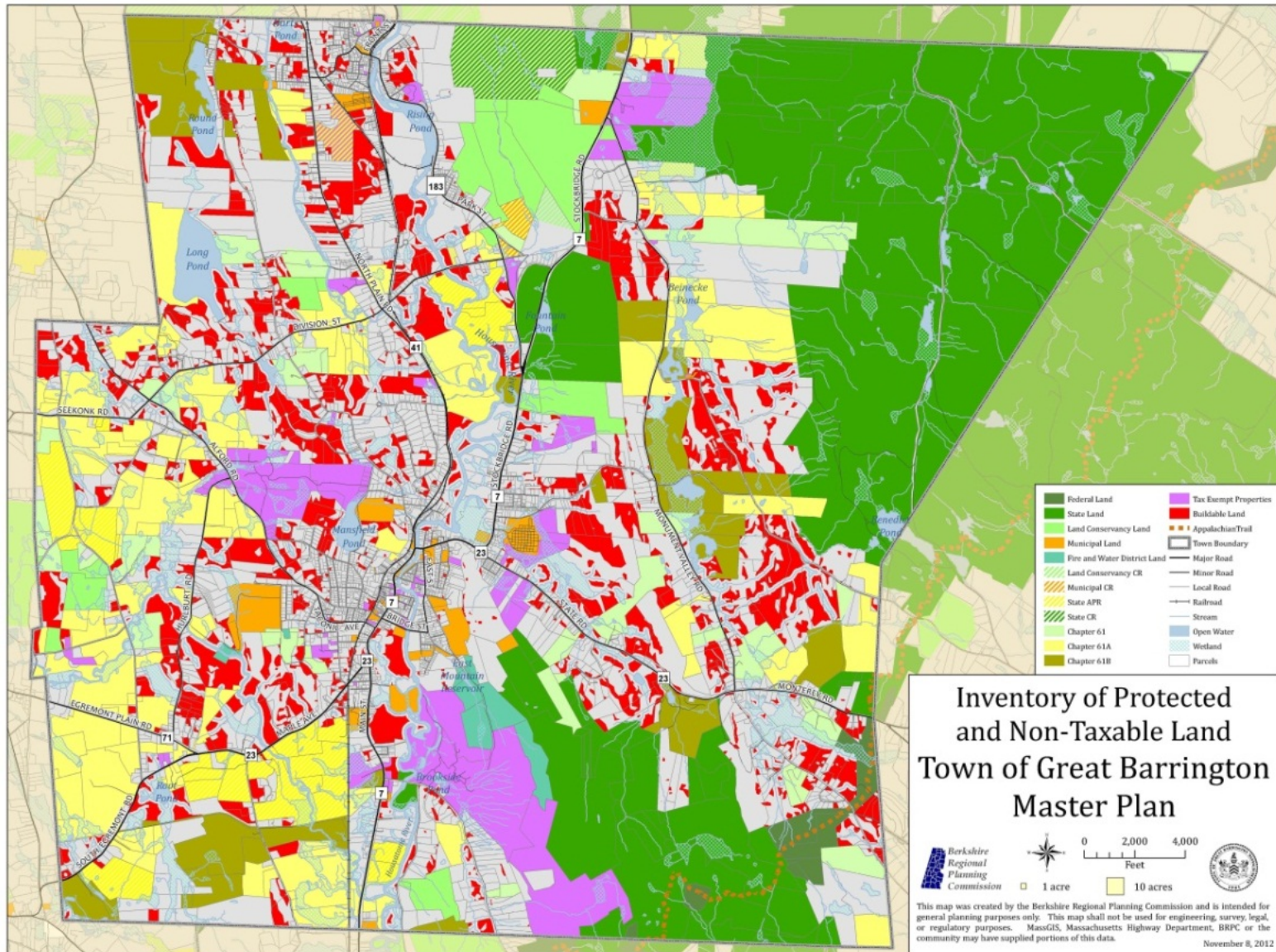


Figure 21: Protected Land, including Chapter Land and Floodplains, and Buildable Land

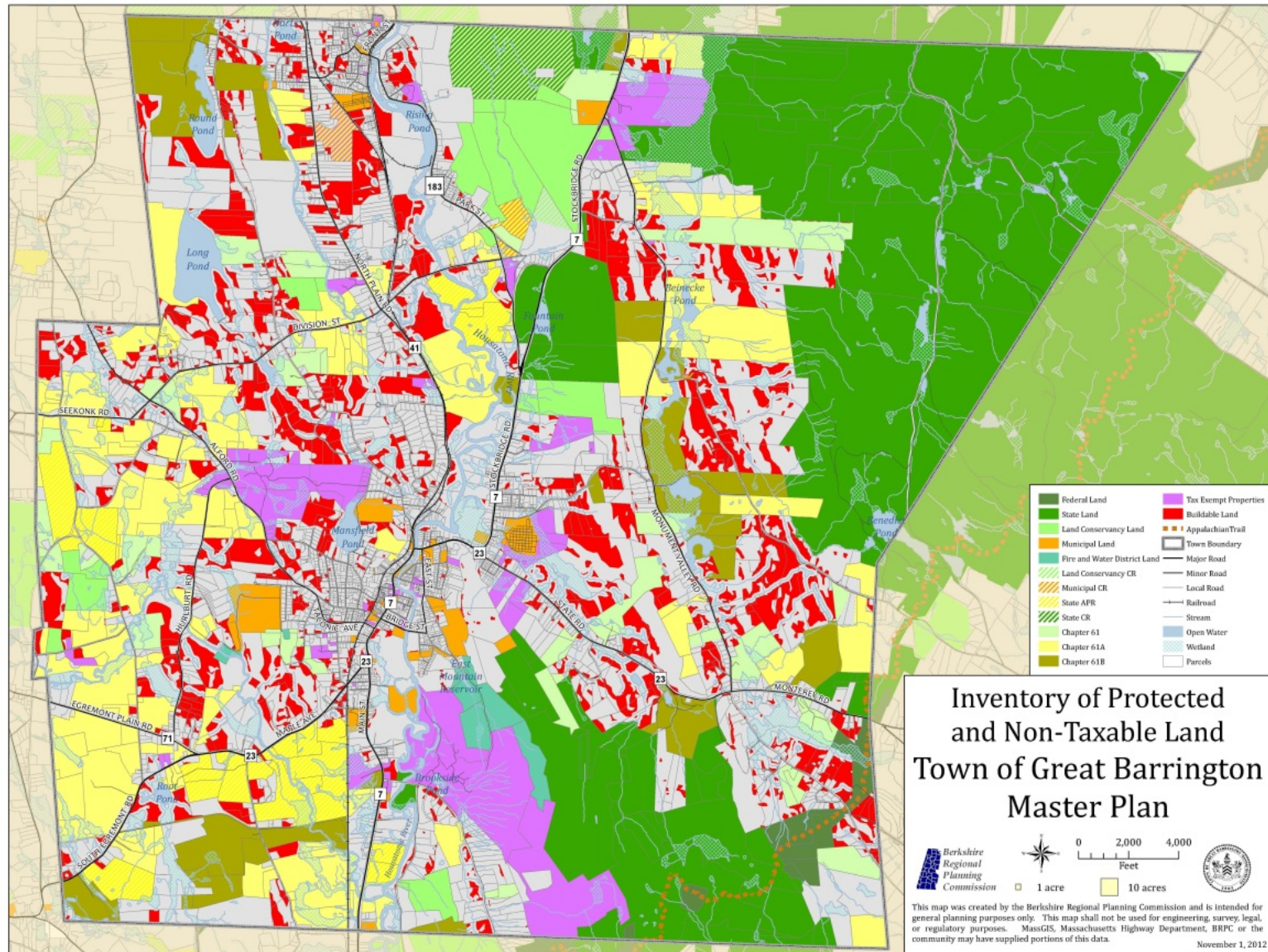


Figure 22: Suitable Areas for Commercial and Residential Development

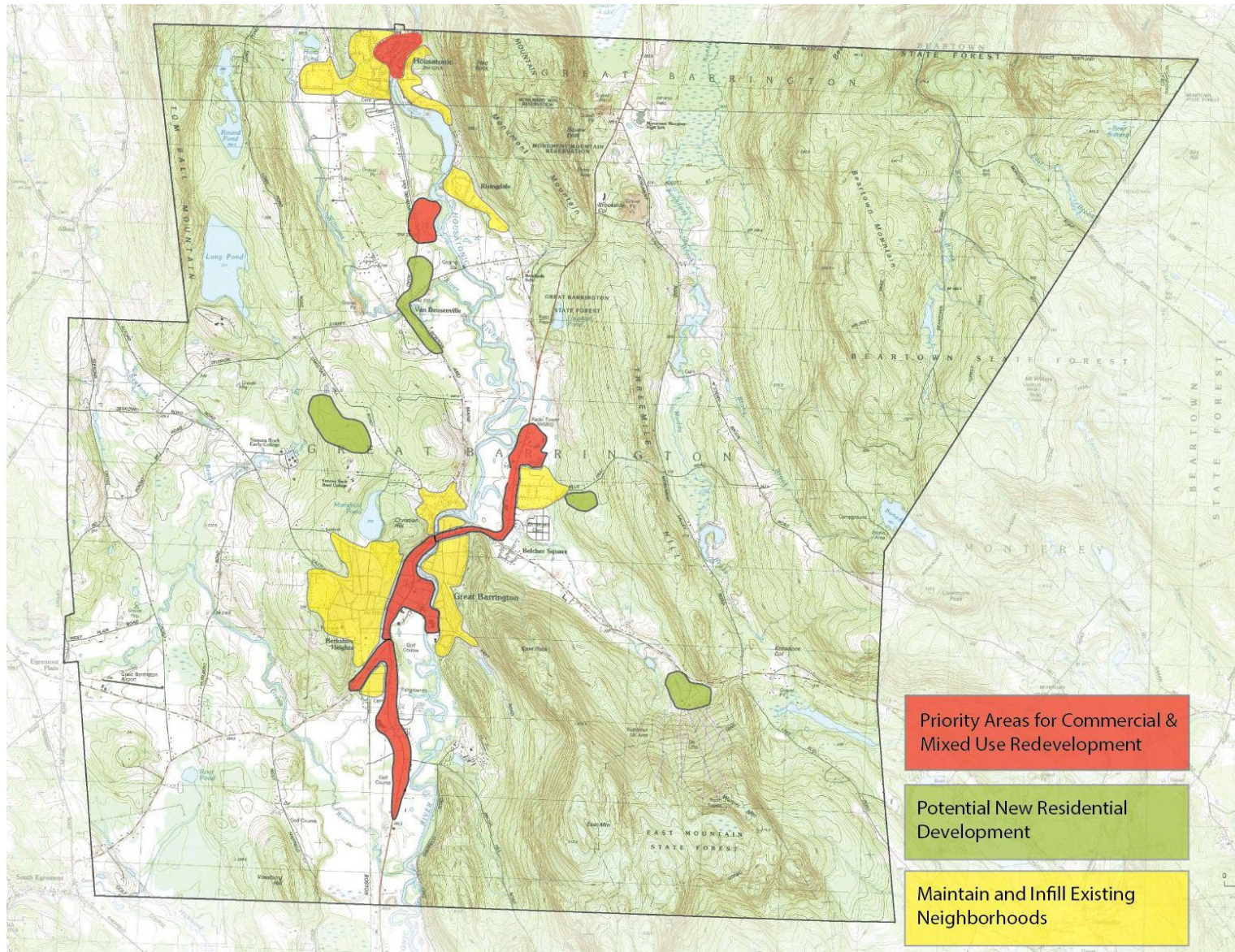


Figure 23: Land Use Map (Detailed Assessment Categories)

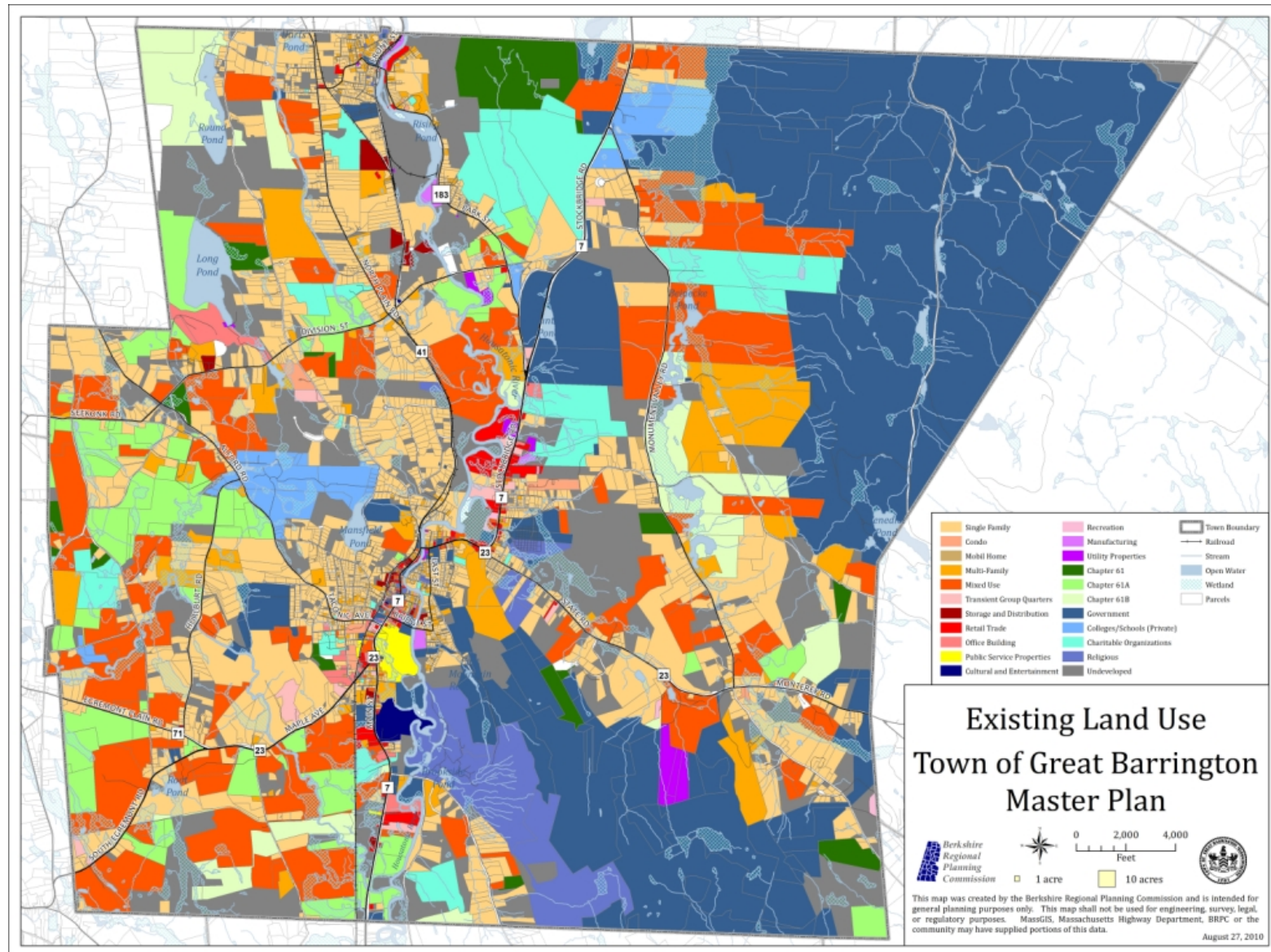


Figure 24: Land Use Map, Downtown

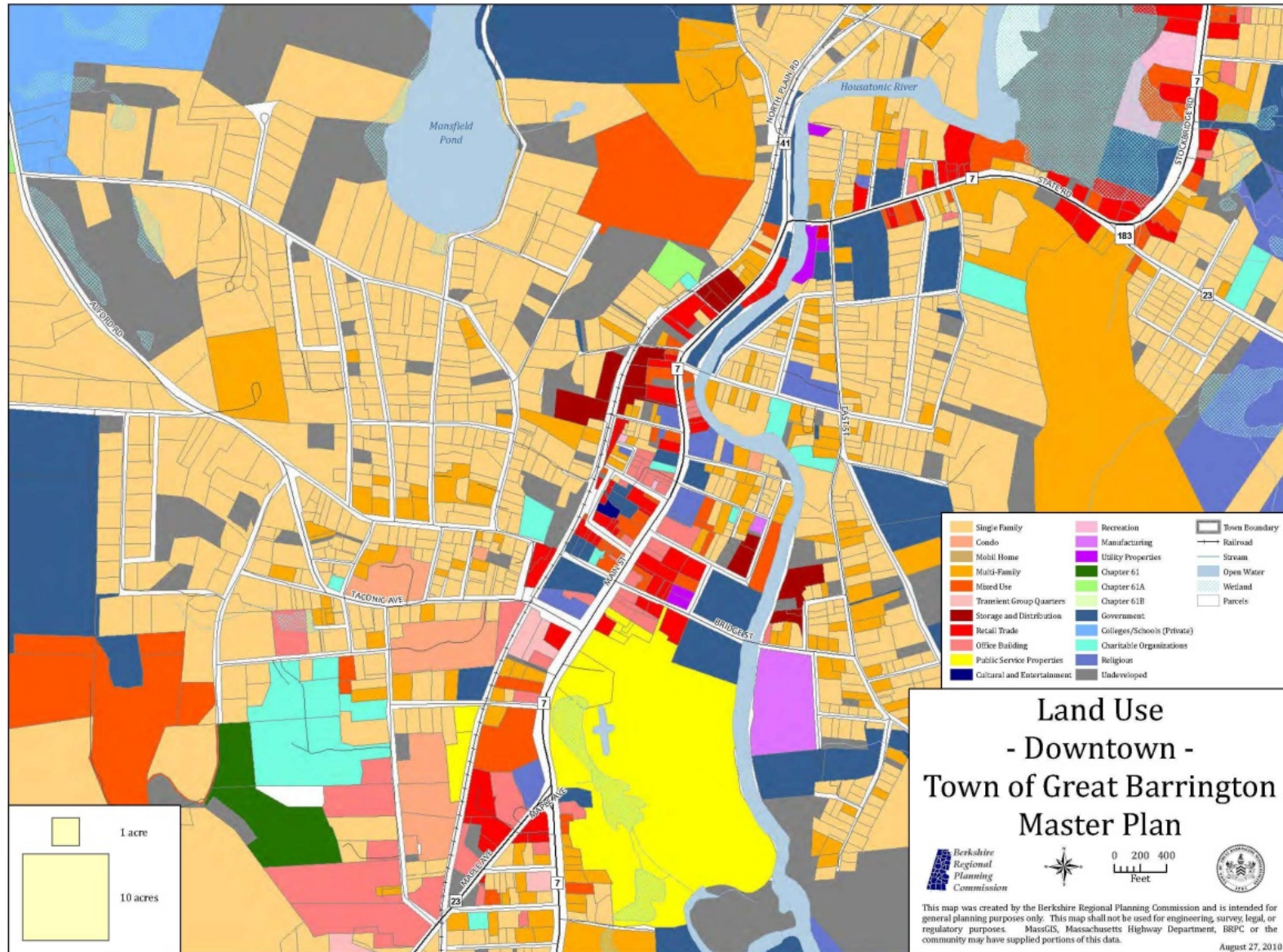


Figure 25: Land Use Map, Housatonic

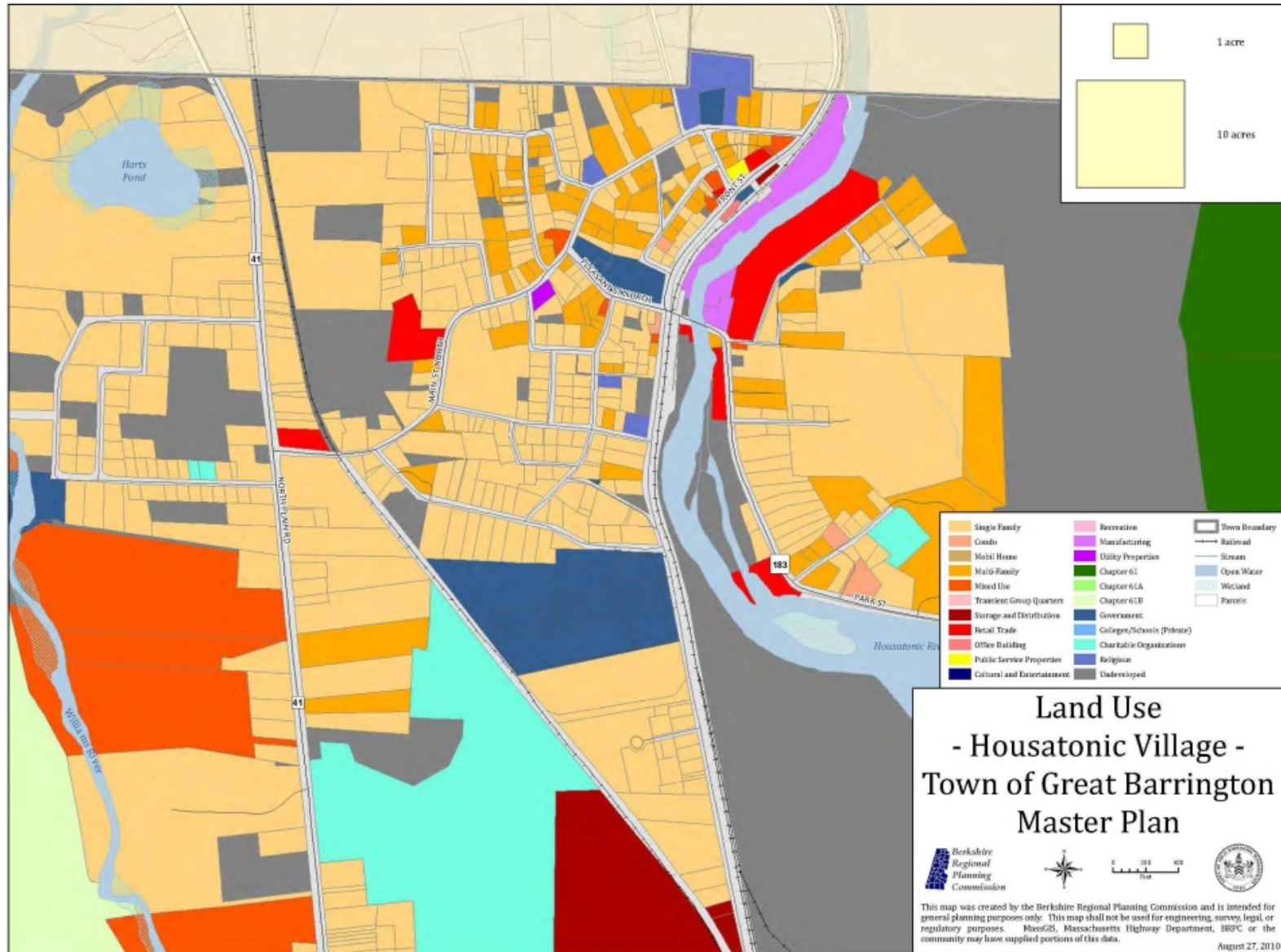


Figure 26: Land Use Map, Stockbridge Road

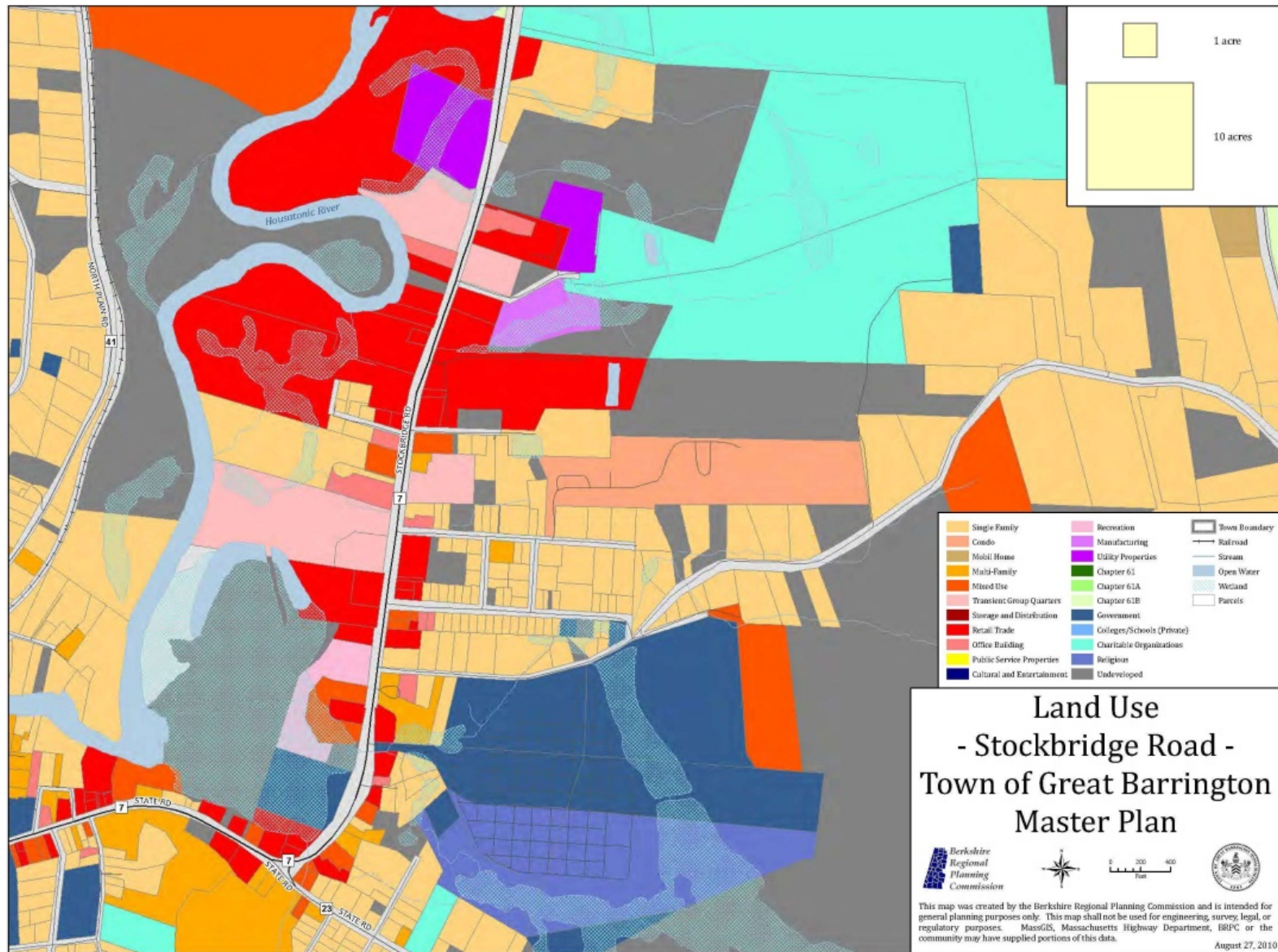
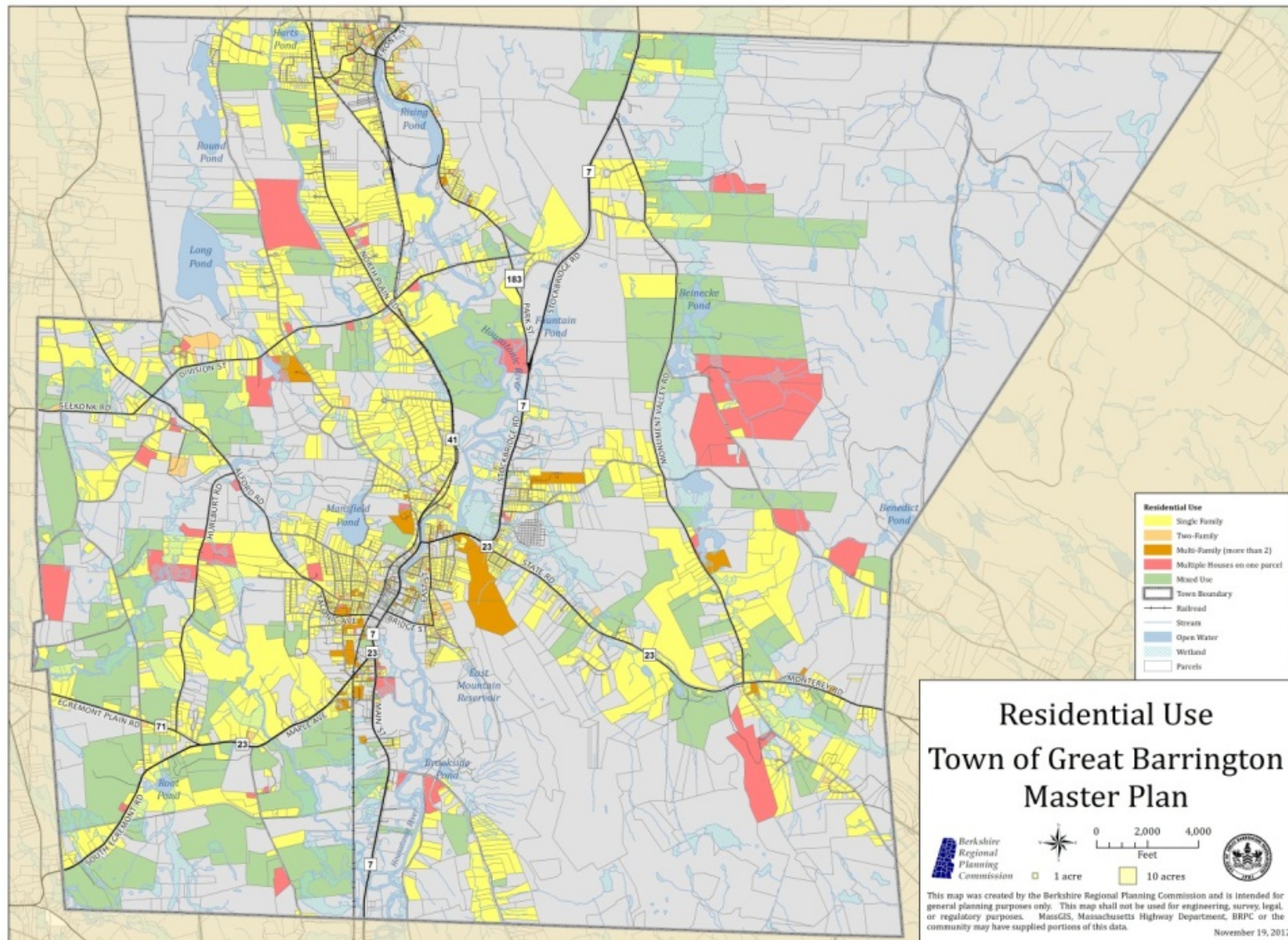


Figure 27: Residential Land Use



Source: Great Barrington Assessor data, 2012

Figure 28: Non-Profit Tax Exempt Properties, 2012 (does not include government-owned land)

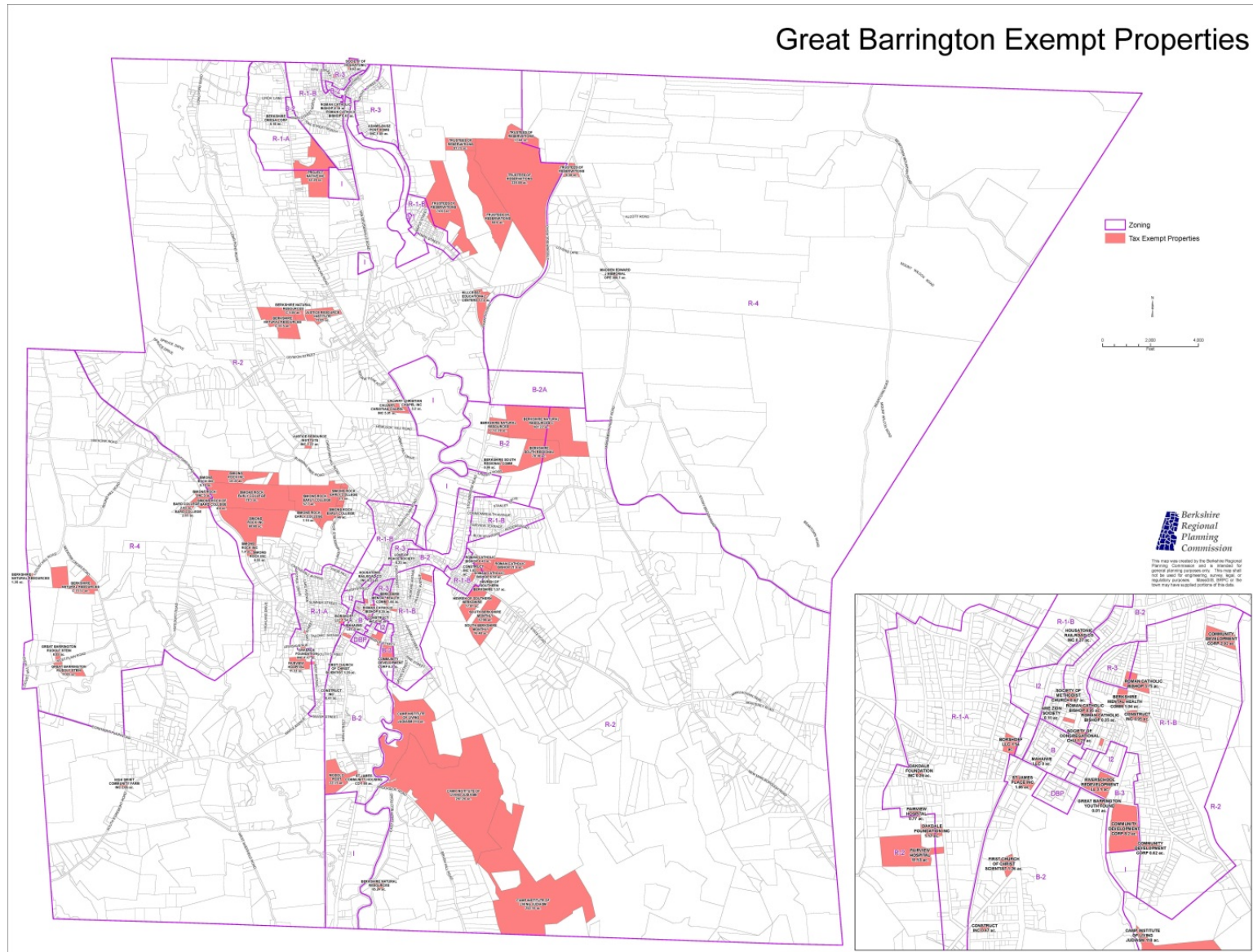


Figure 29: Existing Zoning, 2012

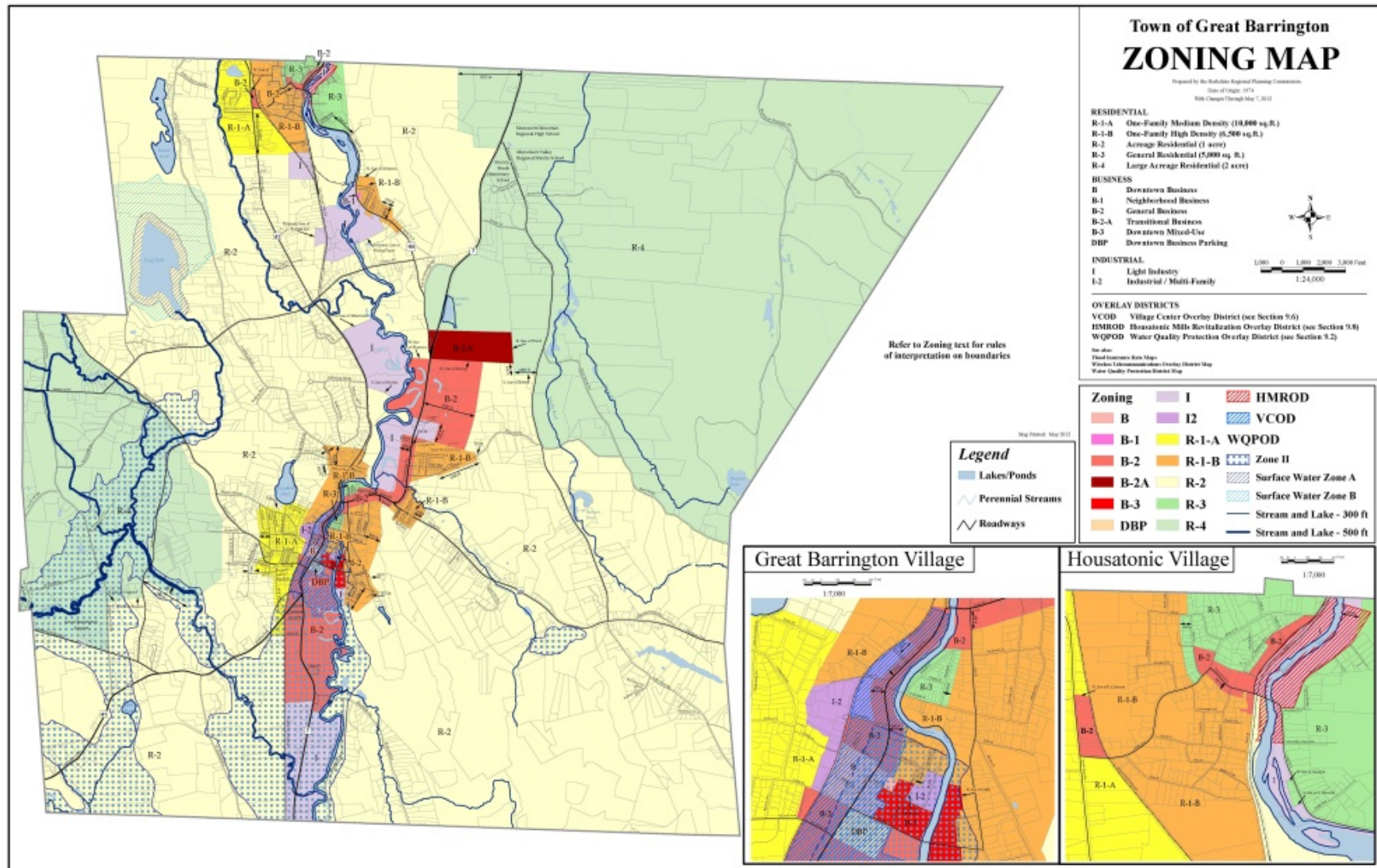
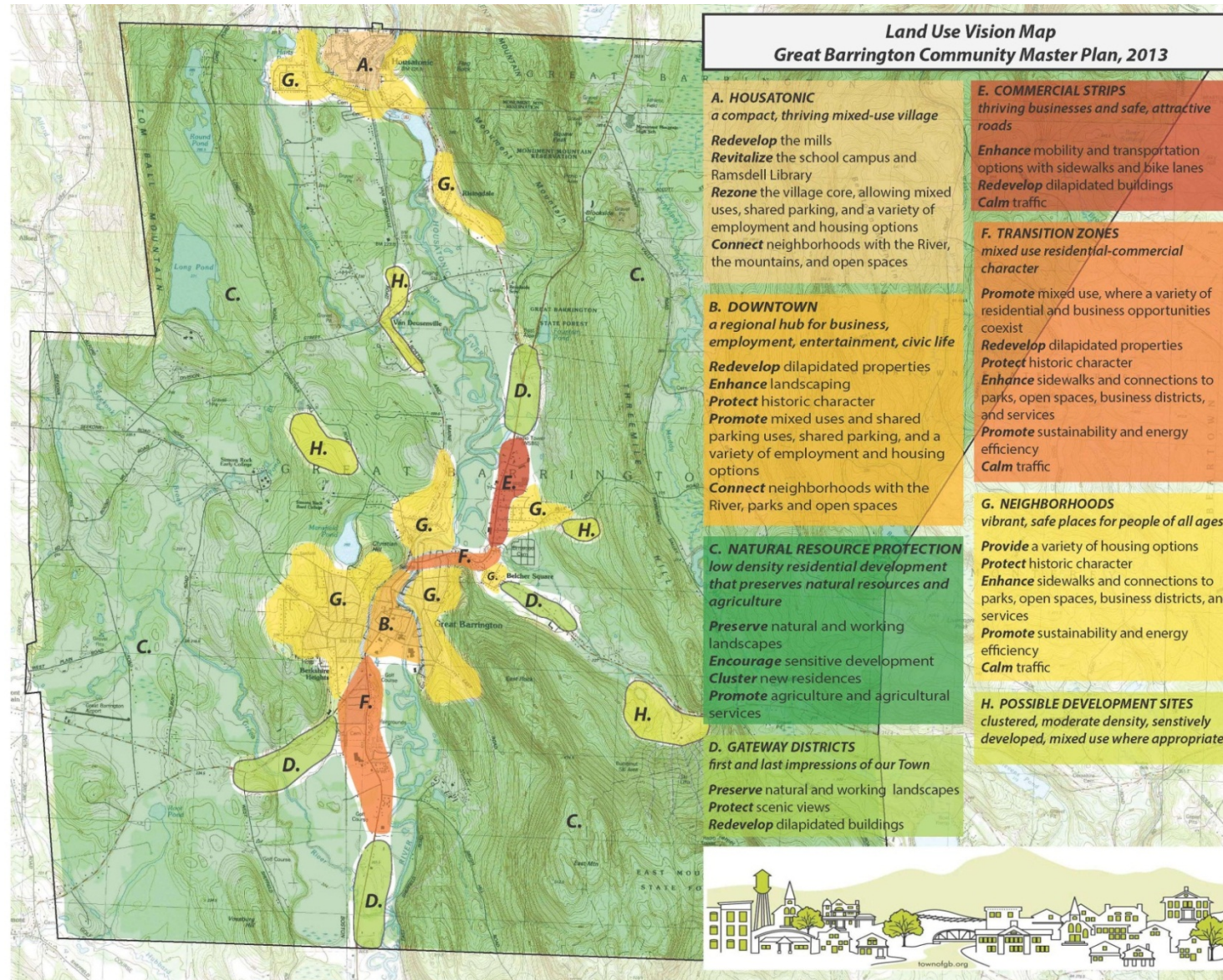


Figure 30: Land Use Vision



Natural Resources, Open Space, and Recreation

This Chapter of the Master Plan follows the format required by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs for Open Space and Recreation Plans. That plan was approved by the State in May 2013.

Regional Context

Housatonic River

The entirety of the Town of Great Barrington lies within the Housatonic River watershed (see Figure 31). The communities in the watershed have been growing every closer in recent years, due to collective efforts to clean up the polluted Housatonic River, and also thanks to regional organizations like the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission ("BRPC") and the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area ("Housatonic Heritage").

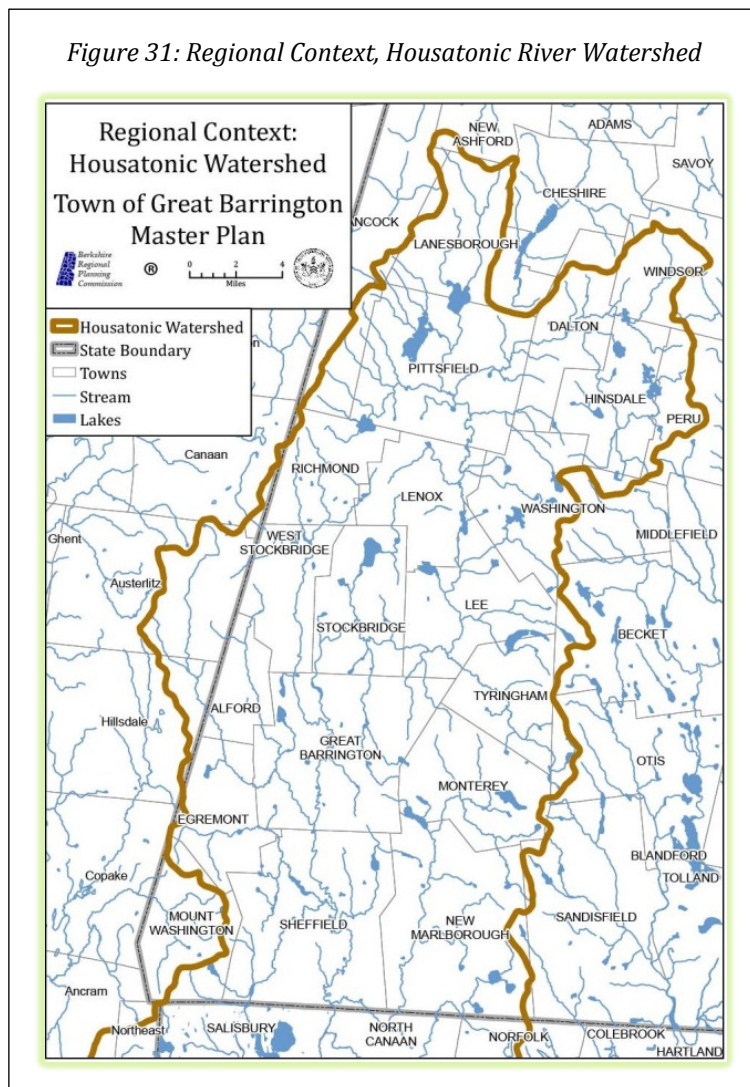
Persistent chemicals, especially polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from General Electric in Pittsfield, contaminate the Housatonic River from Pittsfield to Long Island Sound. As of today, in early 2013, PCB remediation scenarios being considered include the dredging of the river to remove much of the contaminated soil, restoration of the riverbanks, and potentially capping contaminated soils. In Great Barrington, remediation might include dredging the sediment in Rising Pond. Remediation methods, however, remain controversial, and some are untested, and thus the strategy has not been finalized.

The town has been working closely with the BRPC and neighboring watershed towns to comment on the cleanup planning process, which could take decades. The BRPC has advocated for consideration of recreational, economic, and social issues in the cleanup process, and has been a voice for a comprehensive cleanup of the river. The town is committed to having active and dedicated representation in this process.

Housatonic Heritage

Housatonic Heritage is a relatively new and important regional organization. Officially enacted in 2006 after years of planning and research, Housatonic Heritage is the organization charged by Congress to manage the national heritage area (see Figure 55), and operates with oversight from the National Park Service. Its mission is to illuminate the diverse, rich identity of the Upper Housatonic River Valley region and to preserve and promote its historical, cultural and natural resources. Since its beginning, Housatonic Heritage has supported, stimulated and advanced the region's economic vitality and quality of life, and has been an important facilitator for regional, including inter-state, collaboration. Locally, several initiatives including maps for promoting for bicycle, heritage, and walking tours, the creation new or management of existing trails, and the stewardship of water resources and open spaces have been made possible through grants and other support of Housatonic Heritage.

Figure 31: Regional Context, Housatonic River Watershed



Other Regional Initiatives

Three other initiatives through BRPC also deserve mention. First, BRPC's bicycle planning program, inspired by the vision of former Congressman John Olver, has been working with municipalities and nonprofit partners to create a comprehensive county-wide bicycle trail, stretching from Vermont to Connecticut. Great Barrington is a member of the consortium of towns that are committed to collaborative bike path planning. To that end, the town has developed a bike trail vision map, and has met with its neighbors to plan bike trail connections.

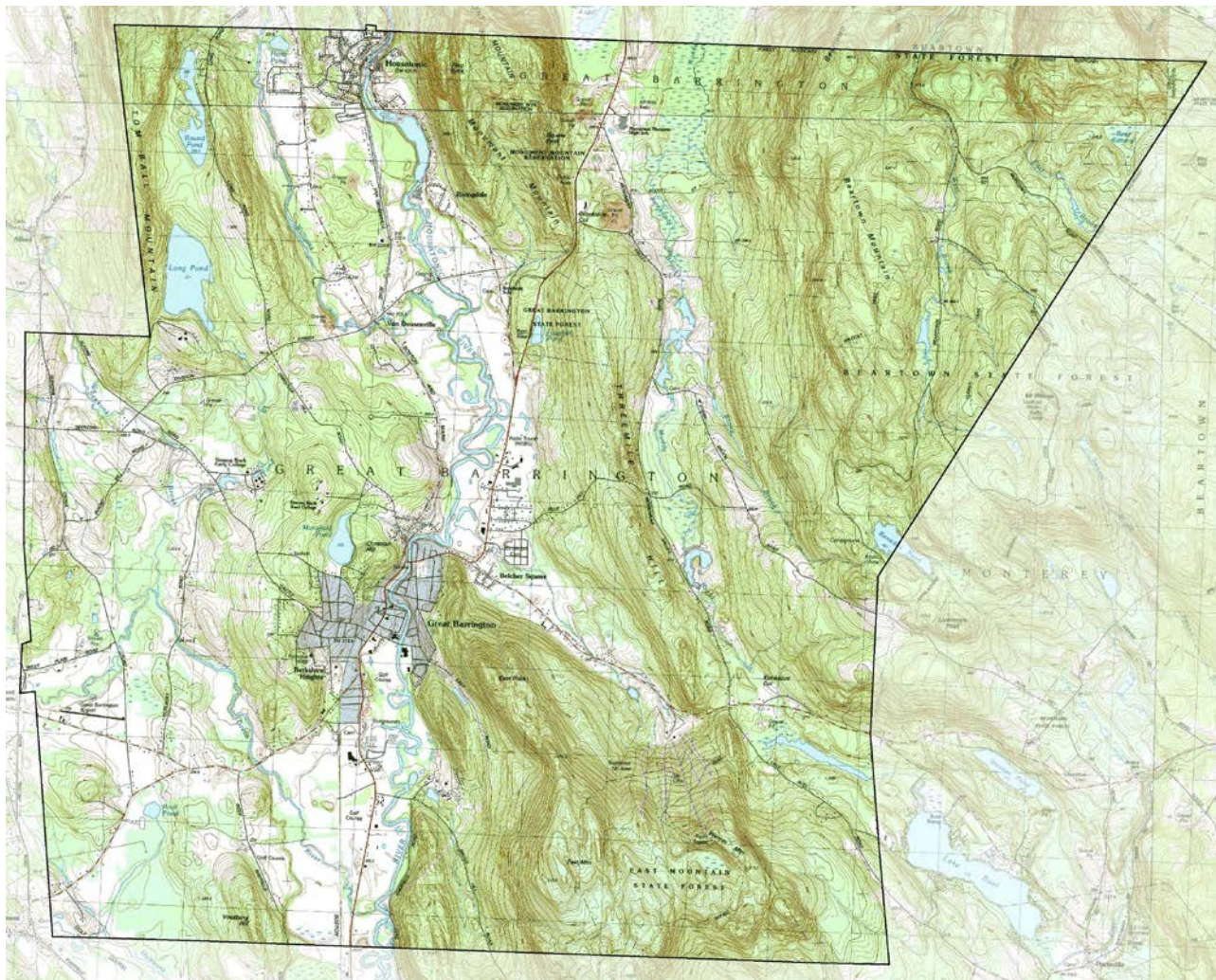
Second, BRPC's brownfields cleanup initiative has been assessing and remediating contaminated sites throughout the county, using funds from the US Environmental Protection Agency and Mass Development. These efforts are helping make smart growth possible, thereby limiting sprawl and preserving open space and water resources. In Great Barrington, funds have been used at Rising Mill and the site of the former New England Log Homes, for example.

Finally, BRPC is the midst of writing a comprehensive plan for Berkshire County. The "Regional Sustainability Plan," funded through a US Department of Housing and Urban Development grant, is a three year planning process due for completion at the end of 2013. The Regional Sustainability Plan, Great Barrington's own Master Plan and OSRP update have thus been coordinated every step of the way.

Geology, Topography, Soils and Landscape Character

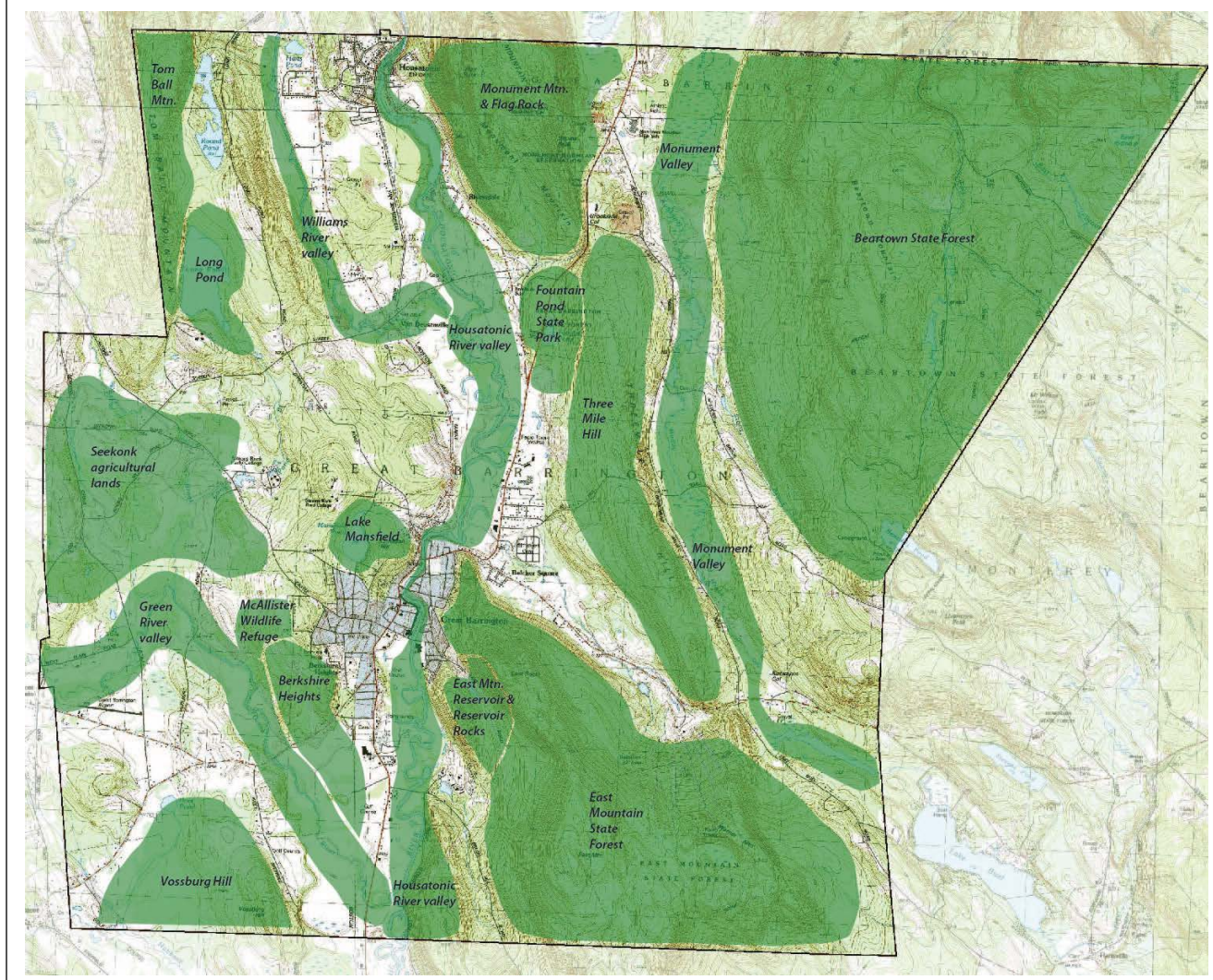
The US Geological Survey topographic map in Figure 32 shows Great Barrington's key geographic features, including mountains, ridges, river valleys, water bodies, roads, and developed areas.

Figure 32: Key Geographic Features



The next map, Figure 33, illustrates Unique and Scenic features of Great Barrington's landscape. These are areas of town that have been identified as unique and valuable places by participants in the Master Plan public participation process. Some of these areas are protected by virtue of ownership or deed restriction (e.g. state forest or a conservation restriction), or by regulation (e.g. wetlands regulations or scenic mountains act). Others are not protected.

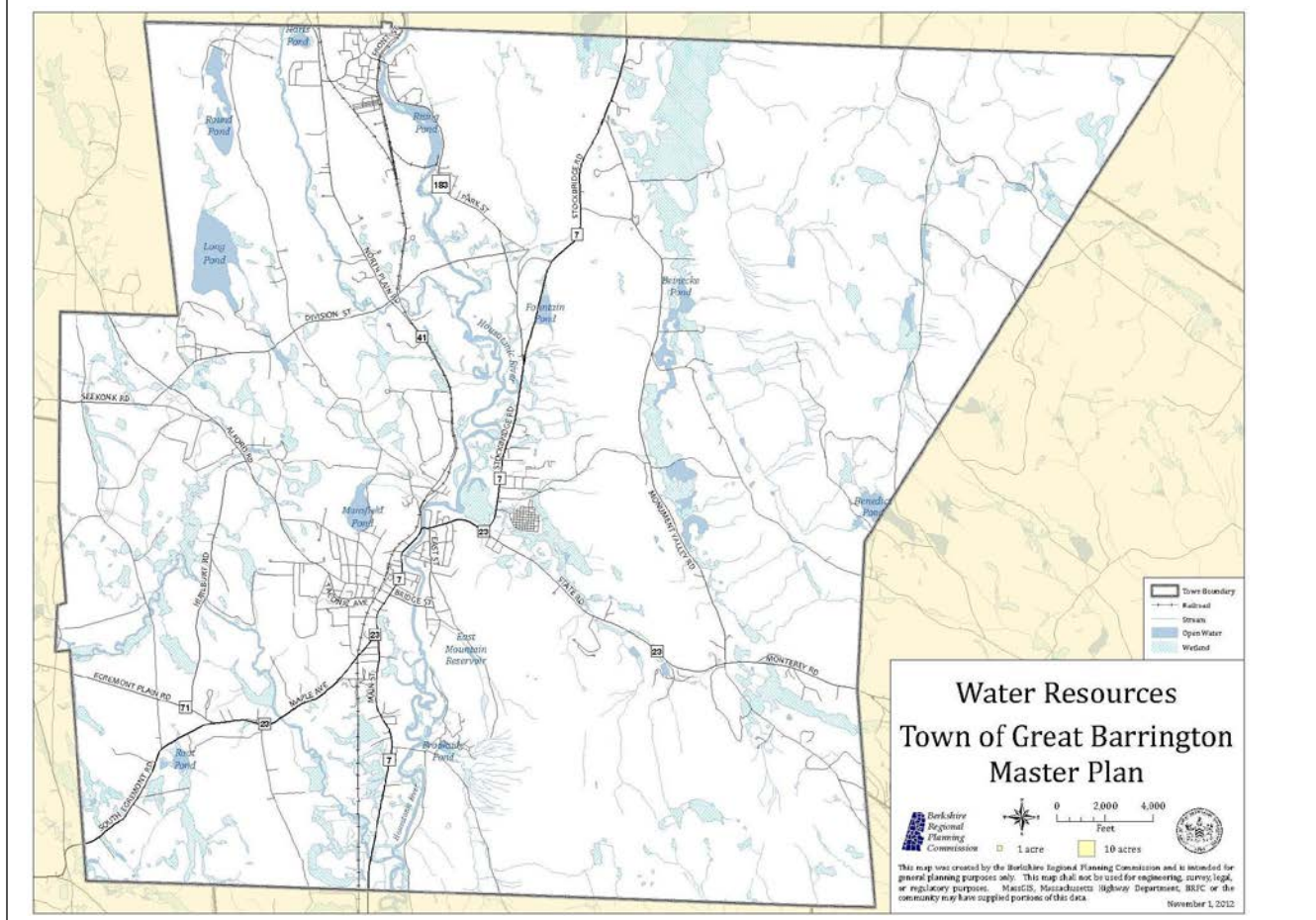
Figure 33: Unique and Scenic Features



Surface Water

Figure 34 illustrates surface water resources in Great Barrington. A summary of key surface water resources is included in this section.

Figure 34: Surface Water Resources and Wetlands



Surface waters within Great Barrington include the three main rivers, the Housatonic, Williams, and Green Rivers. Lakes and ponds include Beinecke Pond, Benedict Pond, Brookside Pond, East Mountain Reservoir, Fountain Pond, Harts Pond, Lake Mansfield, Long Pond, Rising Pond, Root Pond, and Round Pond. Some of the streams include the Alford, Stony, West, East, Roaring, Long Pond, Seekonk and Muddy Brooks.

Our surface water sources provide clean drinking water (Long Pond), and provide scenic and recreational resources to residents and tourists. Only a handful of these surface water resources, however, allow public access, and there are only three places to launch a boat or canoe. It is no wonder residents, including those who participated in this Master Plan process, routinely ask for more public access to water resources.

The health and quality of our surface waters is generally good, but these resources are highly vulnerable to “nonpoint” pollution. This type of pollution occurs as rain and snowmelt that flow into our lakes and streams carry diffuse amounts of pollutants. Oil, gasoline, salts and chemicals wash off of roadways and parking lots. Fertilizers, pesticides, and soil run off from improperly managed construction sites, crop lands, and forests. These pollutants alter the water chemistry, depth, and temperature, stressing native plants and animals and making it possible for invasive species to thrive. Over time, fishing becomes more difficult as weeds take over. As sediments fill the water body, flooding can occur and boating and swimming may no longer be possible. For example, sedimentation has restricted recreation use at Fountain Pond, and pollutants and sediments threaten Lake Mansfield (these two ponds are discussed below). Best practices, such as low impact development, aimed at minimizing impervious surfaces and guarding against runoff, should be adopted in Great Barrington’s subdivision and zoning regulations.

Several of the surface water resource areas are described in more detail below.

The Housatonic River has been the central spine and key player the town's prehistory and history. The town grew up in the fertile agricultural lowlands of this river valley. Mills, tanneries, and industry were first concentrated along the river in what is now downtown, and soon expanded to power industry in Housatonic Village. Lesser streams also supported industry—sawmills on the Green River, a plaster mill on the Lake Mansfield outlet, iron works on the Williams River in Van Deusenville, and the paper mill in Risingdale. The entirety of Great Barrington is within the Housatonic watershed—all of our surface water eventually flows to the river (and then to Long Island Sound). Figure 5 shows Great Barrington in the context of the Housatonic River watershed.

The Housatonic River recreational uses include walking trails, such as River Walk, and recreation including bird watching and paddling. Only one formal public access to the river in Great Barrington exists—a canoe launch owned by Massachusetts Division of Fish and Wildlife at Brookside Road. Other canoe access points, like the one at Division Street and the one at Bridge Street, near the former Searles School, are informal and require improvement.

While fishing in the Housatonic River is permitted, consumption of the fish is not recommended because of the polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination. Persistent chemicals, especially PCBs from General Electric in Pittsfield, contaminate the entire Housatonic River from Pittsfield to Long Island Sound. In Great Barrington, the largest concentrations occur in the sediments of Rising Pond, where the River is impounded by the Rising Dam.

In 1998, the US Environmental Protection Agency, General Electric, the states of Massachusetts and Connecticut, and the City of Pittsfield agreed on a PCB remediation concept known as the "Consent Decree." This document provided the basic framework on deciding where and how the PCBs would be removed from the river. To help with determining the details of this framework, in December 1999, Housatonic River Restoration, Inc. (HRR), a coalition of numerous Berkshire County organizations and individuals interested in protecting the River, issued its plan for a long term, comprehensive restoration of the Housatonic River. HRR compiled the input of over 1,000 local residents and called for a river clean of toxins, connecting the towns and villages along its path to a shared prosperous future made possible by a restored river. It recognized that a collective vision of embracing the River, turning attention to the River, would inspire the long term care of the river by generations of new river stewards.

As of today, in late 2012, PCB remediation scenarios being considered include the dredging of the river to remove much of the contaminated soil, restoration of the riverbanks, and potentially capping contaminated soils. In Great Barrington, remediation might include dredging the sediment in Rising Pond. Remediation methods, however, remain controversial, and some are untested, and thus the strategy has not been finalized.

The town has been working closely with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) and neighboring watershed towns to comment on the cleanup planning process, which could take decades. The BRPC has advocated for consideration of recreational, economic, and social issues in the cleanup process, and has been a strong voice for a comprehensive cleanup of the river. This process must continue, for the foreseeable future, until a remediation plan is agreed upon and implemented. The town must ensure it has active and dedicated representation in this process.

If dredging occurs, the access roads needed for equipment could later be converted into trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Access points could become canoe and boat launches, trail heads, and parking areas. Invasive species would be removed, and risk of contamination from a dam failure will be reduced. In addition, funding arising from settlement agreements with General Electric could be used to support recreation and preservation in this resource area. Thus, dredging, while disruptive, could have significant benefits for the town over the next one or two decades.

Throughout the development of this Master Plan, people have expressed the desire for increased public access, for paddling, fishing, and swimming, to our surface water resources. Access points given high priority include the Housatonic River in Housatonic near the mills, at Rising Pond (near the sewer pump station and/or on the west bank of the pond), below the dam nearer Division Street, in downtown near Bridge Street (at the former Searles School or redeveloped Log Homes site), and at the Senior Center.

All of these possible access sites are real opportunities, and can be accomplished in the short to medium term by virtue of planned redevelopment (at the Housatonic mills, at Searles School, or at the Log Homes sites), remediation activity (at Rising Pond), conservation (at Division Street), and programming goals (at the Senior Center). Open dialogue and cooperation with property owners, the Conservation Commission, and the State and Federal government (for permits) is, of course, required.

All of our rivers, particularly the Housatonic, also provide opportunities for quiet reflection and connections to history and culture. The legacies of W. E. B. Du Bois and William Stanley are celebrated along the stunning Great Barrington Housatonic River Walk in downtown, a project of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy. Here, thousands of hours of volunteer work over decades have resulted in a quiet natural oasis used by thousands of residents and tourists every year. The River Walk's embrace of nature, culture, and history is so exemplary that it was designated a National Recreation Trail by the US Park Service in 2009. Its success depends in large part on volunteers; for example, Greenagers was recently contracted to maintain the trail, and the town provides trash pickup and other in-kind services. Continued town support, and the development of the next generation of River Walk stewards, is critical to the success of River Walk (and, of course, any possible extension of the River Walk).

The Williams River and the Green River are also used for paddling, fishing, and swimming, but access is limited. The access to the Williams River is at Old Maid's Park in Housatonic. The old dam at this site had provided a pleasant swimming hole, but it has been breached and its safety is in question. Restoring this area and the access to full recreational potential could be accomplished with some investment in the old dam. The informal access to the Williams River at the Division Street Bridge is limited, and it has been closed to all but fishermen in recent years by the land owner at the request of the town due to traffic safety issues.

On the Green River, there are no formal public access sites; technically the lawn area at the foot of McAllister Wildlife Refuge is owned by the Great Barrington Fire District Water Department. It is used rather freely by those willing and able to make the long walk from Haley Road at the top of the hill. Informal access areas at Seekonk Cross Road and Route 23/Maple Avenue are popular swimming holes, thanks to the tacit permission of landowners for the public to cross their land. Given that these informal points are our only opportunities to access these rivers, the town must continue to cooperate as a good neighbor with the land owners.

Lake Mansfield is a 28.5-acre lake and is a favorite year-round spot for families living in the neighborhood. Increasingly, however, it draws people from surrounding towns, to canoe, ice skate, hike, fish, and swim. Only non-fuel boats are permitted. Because of its location so close to the center of town, residents and tourists alike frequent the lake, especially the beach, during the summer months. There are playground facilities for younger children as well as picnic benches and cooking grills for family outings during the warmer season. The Lake is now managed by the Great Barrington Conservation Commission, as is the forest east of the beach parking area. (See the Trails and Greenways section later in this Chapter for more information about the trails in the Lake Mansfield Forest.)

Lake Mansfield is a Massachusetts Great Pond—a designation that applies to water bodies greater than 10 acres in their natural state and which protects public rights of access to the resource.⁷ It is owned by the town, and managed by the Conservation Commission. To this day, though it is no longer a water supply, docks are prohibited and development of the shoreline is restricted. The result of these protections is that Lake Mansfield (along with Benedict Pond) is one of the few surface water lakes in Berkshire County that is publicly accessible but does not have docks, boat houses, and other structures on the lake shore. Over the last several years, the town, through its Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force (LMITF) and working with the Lake Mansfield Alliance, has been working to promote and protect this valuable recreational resource.

One of the issues LMITF is addressing is nonpoint source pollution. Past studies have shown that the Castle Hill Avenue drainage system and runoff from the boat launch, Knob Hill Road, Lake Mansfield Road, and the beach parking lot area contribute significant amounts of sediment and pollutants into the Lake. These sediments harm the water quality, chemistry, and temperature. Shallower waters are havens for invasive weeds like Eurasian milfoil and Curlyleaf pondweed. Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) lists Lake Mansfield as an "impaired" water body due to these invasive plants.⁸ In past decades, the plants have grown to dominate the lake and impede opportunities for summer recreation, including swimming, boating, and fishing. This occurred routinely throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Biological controls (weevils) and bottom barriers (at the beach) have mitigated the weeds.

With the implementation of a section 319 grant from the Massachusetts DEP and federal Clean Water Act, LMITF will correct the Castle Hill Avenue drainage system. Improved drainage structures will filter sediments and pollutants before they enter

⁷ See MGL Ch. 91

⁸ Listed as Category 4C, "impairment not caused by a pollutant," on the Massachusetts Year 2102 List of Integrated Waters, Department of Environmental Protection. The impairment is due to Eurasian water milfoil and non-native aquatic plants.

the lake. Future grants may be used for the other significant stormwater runoff areas. To monitor its work, LMITF is developing productive partnerships with Bard College at Simon's Rock, whose campus abuts the lake on the west, to conduct water quality sampling, testing, and education.

LMITF is also working with the State's Office of Fishing and Boating Access (a division of the Department of Fish and Game) to improve the boat launch at the southern end of the lake. The launch, designed for carry-in access of canoes, kayaks, and small craft without fuel engines, is another problem area for nonpoint source pollution at the lake. And, there is little space for vehicle parking. In 2012 LMITF completed a preliminary design for drainage improvements for the boat launch and Knob Hill Road. The State will assist in improving the drainage and parking issues at the launch. As grant or local funds become available, the coordinated improvements at the boat launch will be a great benefit to the lake and all those who use it.

Another concern at Lake Mansfield is the road that follows the eastern edge of the lake. The road is deteriorating into the lake, and the vegetated buffer that once captured nonpoint source pollution is eroding rapidly. The buffer must be stabilized, or, preferably, restored. Additionally, speeding cars, increased pedestrian activity, and a narrowing paved roadway is an increasingly dangerous situation. This hazard must be addressed, whether through traffic calming or other creative measures. LMITF has proposed a one-way road concept, as part of a comprehensive recreation area management plan, and which would include improvements at the beach parking lot. It has received a mixed reception—in 2008 the Selectboard agreed to test it on a short trial basis, but decided not to do so until parking and circulation improvements could be made at the beach area. The DPW began in 2013 to investigate options for improving the roadway. These options will consider all users, including emergency vehicles, walkers, cyclists, vehicles, the disabled, and fishermen on the shoreline, as well as the buffer zone that protect the water quality and connects aquatic with terrestrial habitats.

Benedict Pond, in Beartown State Forest, straddles the Great Barrington-Monterey town boundary. It is an impounded reservoir of about 35 acres. Its maximum depth is only about eight feet. There is a boat launch with parking area, swimming, fishing, and camping. Ice skating and ice fishing are common in the winter. Only electric and human-powered boats are allowed. A 1.5 mile loop trail winds around the pond, and links to an extensive trail and woods road network in the 12,000-acre forest, including the Appalachian Trail.

Fountain Pond was at one time another attractive and popular swimming area, but silting has made it unusable for swimming. There is a parking area off of Route 7 north, where a trailhead marks a hiking trail that traverses Three Mile Hill south to the Berkshire South Community Center at Crissey Road. Fountain Pond is a State Park managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Long Pond is a reservoir of over 100 acres and the main source of water for Housatonic. Like Lake Mansfield, it is a Massachusetts Great Pond. As a surface water supply, however, no public access or recreational uses are permitted. Its catchment area, Zone B under the town's Water Quality Protection zoning overlay district, is protected from potentially contaminating activities within one-half mile of the reservoir.

East Mountain Reservoir, at the end of Pine Street in Great Barrington, is an emergency water supply reservoir owned by the Great Barrington Fire District Water Department.⁹ The reservoir is not regulated as a water supply by Massachusetts DEP nor is it within the Water Quality Protection zoning overlay district, but the Fire District restricts access in this area. The supply pipes are still intact and can be reconnected to the town system should the need arise. Because of this, despite public interest in increased access, the Fire District remains unwilling to open the area to recreational use.

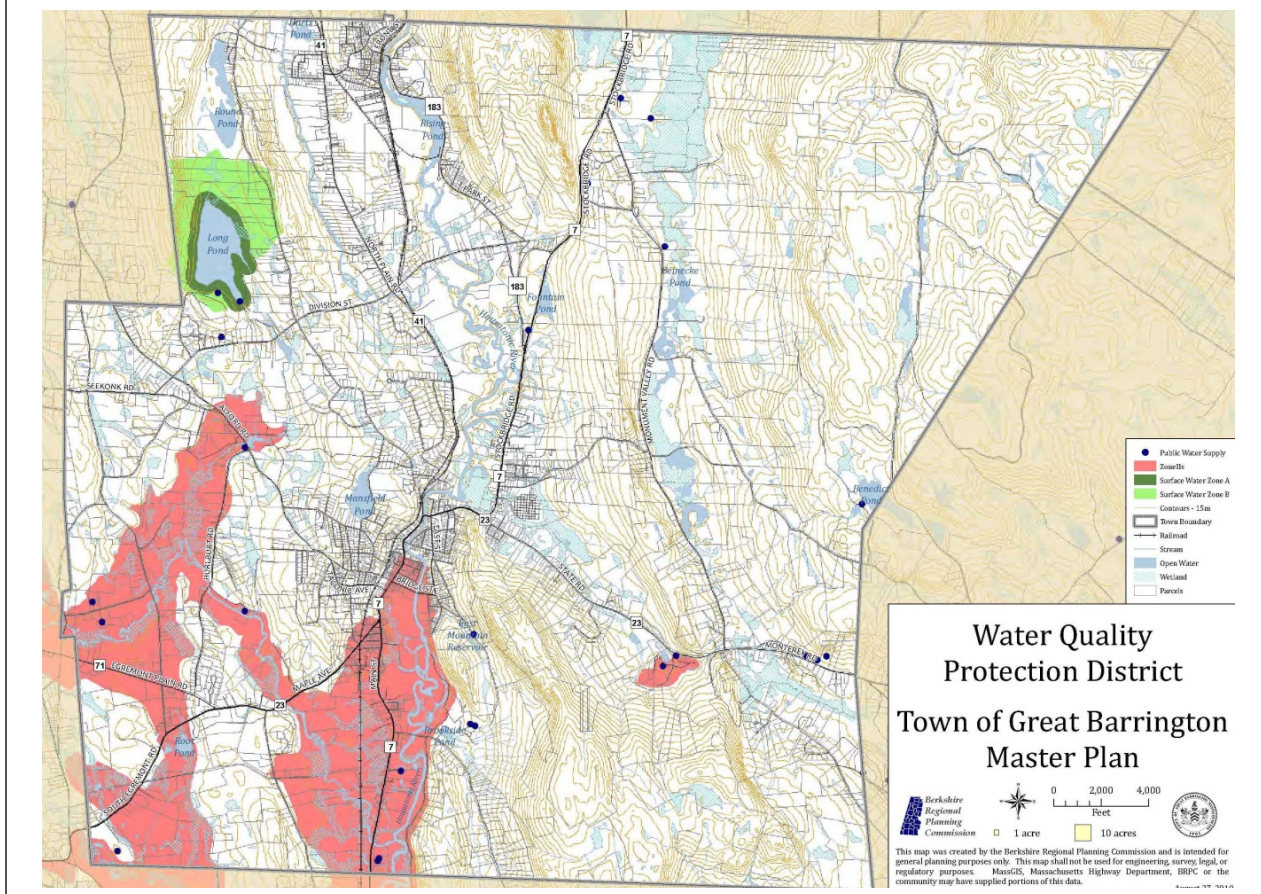
Additional surface water bodies that are not accessible to the public are Beinecke Pond, Brookside Pond, Harts Pond, Root Pond, and Round Pond.

Aquifers and Drinking Water Supply

Figure 35 illustrates water supply zones and aquifer recharge areas. A summary of water supply resources is included below.

⁹ The Fire District Water Department is not a Town Department; however, it operates as a public body, similar to a municipality. It is governed by its own board, the Prudential Committee, and has its own staff. See the Services and Facilities section for more information.

Figure 35: Water Supply Areas



While Housatonic village gets its drinking water from Long Pond, Great Barrington and neighboring towns—not to mention most of South County’s largest employers, health, and educational institutions—depend on subsurface aquifers and wells. With local and regional population declining and no increase projected, Great Barrington is unlikely to face a water shortage. The concern is making sure that water sources remain protected and unpolluted, and that back-up supplies are available if needed.

The aquifer beneath the Green River is the primary source of drinking water for much of Great Barrington. The Great Barrington Fire District Water Department maintains a pump station adjacent to the Green River and associated storage tanks and distribution lines in order to provide water to downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. Great Barrington depends on cooperation from other municipalities, including those in New York State, to protect its water resources, as it, in return, is responsible to its southern neighbor, Sheffield, whose water supply aquifer lies largely in southeastern Great Barrington. Other wellheads, for schools and institutions, are located throughout town. Current back-up water sources for Great Barrington are the East Mountain Reservoir and the availability of an emergency connection with the Housatonic Water Company supply at Long Pond. Both back-up sources are inadequate for long-term use in terms of quality and quantity of water they could provide.

The Fire District Water Department continues to search for a reliable long term back-up source, most recently exploring the high volume, high quality subsurface drinking water resource in an ancient north-south glacial valley in the central portion of town. Commercial-scale supplies could be accessed on property owned by Taft Farms, near the junction of the Williams and Housatonic Rivers, but the land is held in the Agricultural Preservation Program (APR), and the source cannot be used for commercial or public purposes. Just south of Taft’s, the Fire District in 2011 did not have success tapping the source. Back-up water sources are not only essential to our long-term water supply and to increasing local resilience to climate change impacts, but also as an economic opportunity for land owners.

Finally, when a new back-up source is found, the Fire District may be able to divest itself of East Mountain Reservoir. To raise the capital necessary to tap and distribute water from the new source, the Fire District may in fact sell the East Mountain Reservoir property. With some degree of cooperation and perhaps financial participation, the town, State, and conservation partners hope to one day open these lands to public use.

The quality and health of our vital water resources is protected with by infrastructure, regulations, and conservation initiatives. A public sewage system collects and treats effluent from residences, businesses, and institutions. Regulations including the Water Quality Protection Overlay District zoning bylaw and the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) and Rivers Protection Act (RPA) help to ensure that land use and development around water sources and wetlands is effectively regulated.

Zoning regulations provide for relatively low density zoning in areas not served by public water and sewer. The R4 zoning district requires a minimum of two acre lots in the Zone II aquifer recharge area upstream of the water supply galleries. These regulations lessen the demands and impacts that concentrated development could have on fragile resources.

Wetlands

Wetlands play a crucial role in maintaining the quality of our water resources. They help recharge groundwater and temper the damaging effects of storms by absorbing and detaining runoff that would otherwise contribute to flooding. Wetlands also prevent pollution by a combination of physical, chemical and biological functions. They are nurseries for aquatic, terrestrial, and avian wildlife. Bogs, marshes, and swamps function as habitats for plants, insects, and amphibians, mammals, and birds. Wetlands are havens for plants and animals because they are inherently buffered from human interference. There are about 2,000 acres of wetlands in Great Barrington.

Wetlands are protected by the regulations of the WPA¹⁰, administered locally by the Great Barrington Conservation Commission. The WPA gives Conservation Commissions the authority to review and impose conditions on activities in or within 100 feet of wetlands adjacent to lakes and ponds, rivers, streams or coastal waters, or land under water bodies, waterways, coastal wetlands and the 100-year floodplain, as well as isolated areas subject to flooding and certified vernal pools. In 1996, the RPA added riverfront areas to the list of resources protected by the WPA. A riverfront area is a 200-foot wide corridor on each side of a perennial river or stream. The Conservation Commission reviews proposed projects in a riverfront area for consistency with statutory requirements and Massachusetts DEP regulations. While the WPA and the RPA do not prohibit development in these areas and some projects are exempt, applicants must demonstrate that their plans have no practical alternatives and will have no significant adverse impacts on riverfront resources.

As with many regulations, land owners not aware of their existence or their purpose might pursue projects not sanctioned by or not in keeping with the regulations. The Conservation Commission, working with Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and Department of Agricultural Resources, should undertake a concerted effort to broaden its outreach efforts to all landowners—farmers, residential owners, and businesses.

Vegetation and Agriculture

Great Barrington's agricultural lands are located in the flatter, more fertile river valleys and floodplains, taking advantage of rich bottomland soils. Farms represent the town's agricultural and market heritage, and, increasingly, play an important role in our local economy. Unfortunately, the same attributes that make these lands desirable for farming—relatively flat, accessible, little clearing required, and often limited environmental constraints—also make them the target of other land uses. Residential development, and, increasingly, renewable energy installations, are attracted to the same lands on which we depend for local food and aesthetically pleasing open space.

The Chapter 61A program data provides a proxy of how much land is farmed. According to the 2011 data from the Great Barrington Assessor, there are approximately 4,060 acres in Chapter 61A. Ten farms, totaling 982 acres, are in the Agricultural

¹⁰ Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 131, Section 40

Preservation Restriction (APR) program.¹¹ In other words, approximately one-quarter of our farmland is permanently protected. (There are another 1,670 acres in Chapter 61 (forest) and 1,380 acres in Chapter 61B (recreation). Adding the 4,060 acres of agricultural land, the total amount of land in Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B programs in Great Barrington is 7,110.)

In Great Barrington the overall amount of farmland in production has dropped by over 30 percent since the middle of the twentieth century when there were about 6,000 acres in production. While a large portion of former farm land remains undeveloped, land trends reveal that much of that land has probably been divided and sold off as single family lots—unlikely to be used again for large scale production. Much of the land that is not in farm production and not developed has been overgrown. Indeed, according to estimates based on 2005 aerial imagery data, approximately 69 percent of our town is covered by forest, and only about 10 percent is cropland or pasture. A century ago, the opposite was true—what is forest today was pasture and agricultural land 100 years ago.

Great Barrington has the natural resources to be even more productive. Our town has over 4,500 acres of soils that are suitable for agriculture, but only 32 percent, or 1,460 acres, are actually farmed. In other words, only approximately half of Great Barrington's 3,000 acres of farming actually occurs on prime agricultural soils. Agricultural soils are illustrated in the map in Figure 36.

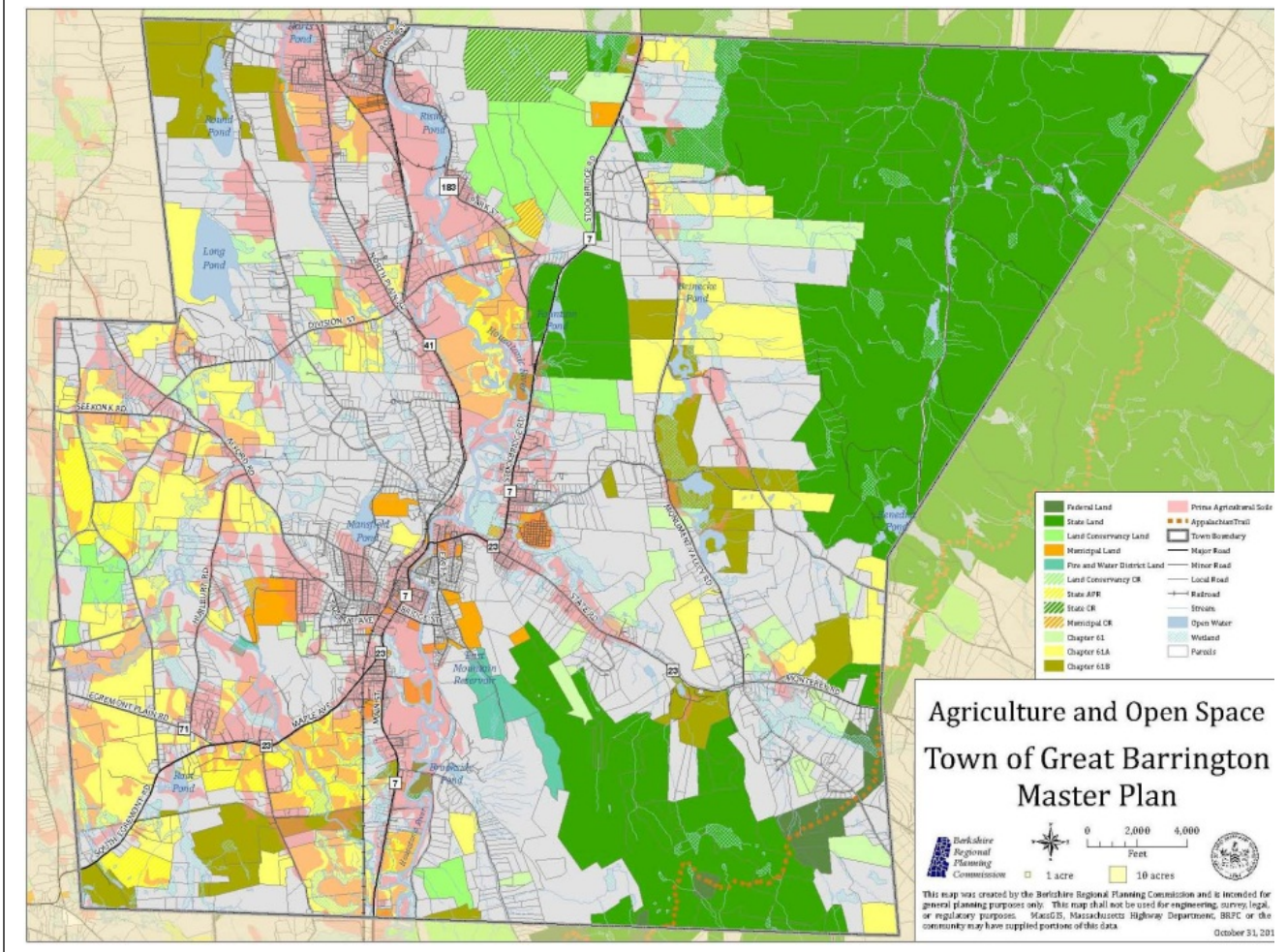
Unfortunately, nearly 25 percent, or 1,125 acres, of Great Barrington's prime agricultural soils are developed. This is because traditional settlement patterns have favored development in river valleys, like downtown Great Barrington and Housatonic village. The same attributes that makes land desirable for farming—relatively flat, accessible, little clearing required, and often limited environmental constraints—also makes land the target of development. Today, due to our unique topography and history of development, some of our best agricultural lands face competition from commercial development. This is because areas zoned for commercial and industrial development, along key transportation routes like Route 7 and the Railroad also have productive agricultural soils.

Throughout the country, as the economics of small scale agriculture become more and more precarious, residential land uses outcompete and supplant agriculture. In Great Barrington, these pressures are greatest in the Egremont Plain and Seekonk areas, as well as along North Plain Road. In addition, due to our town's topography and history of development, many of our best agricultural lands face competition from commercial development. This is because areas zoned for commercial and industrial development, along key transportation routes like Route 7 and the Railroad, also have productive agricultural soils.

But in Berkshire County and in Great Barrington in particular, there is an increased awareness of the importance of local agriculture and locally grown food. Consequently, they are beginning to play a larger role in our local economy. They provide fresh food to our markets, our restaurants and hotels, as well as employing workers, many of whose families have lived in the area for generations. Local food supplies can also help mitigate the impacts of energy price shocks, reduce costs and pollution emissions needed to grow food on an industrial scale and ship it around the country. Our community is beginning to recognize that through responsible land use planning, agriculture can co-exist with, and add value to, new development. Mixed use redevelopment schemes involving agriculture, housing, recreation, and renewable energy generation are currently being considered for the Fairgrounds.

¹¹ APR is a voluntary program, in which the Commonwealth pays landowners the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability. Great Barrington farms in APR include lands farmed by Beebe along Route 23 and Egremont Plain Road, lands of Taft Farms on Division Street and Route 183, lands of Lila Berle's sheep farm on Seekonk Cross Road, and Project Native on North Plain Road, for example.

Figure 36: Agricultural Soils and Open Space



Heritage Trees

In 2013 Great Barrington received the Arbor Day Foundation designation as a Tree City USA. The Tree Committee, which led the effort for this designation, has compiled a short list of heritage trees in Great Barrington. These trees, which must have a diameter of 32 inches or more, or be historically significant to the community, include a number of species and impressive specimens. The following is just a short list. The Committee is beginning to compile a more complete tree inventory as part of its Tree City USA work program.

- American elm at Town Hall (51" dbh¹²)
- American elm at 54 State Road (at Gilmore Avenue) (56" dbh, the largest in Great Barrington)
- American elm at 952 South Main Street (46" dbh)
- American elm and black cherry at intersection of Seekonk and Alford Road (east side)
- American elm at 36 Church Street (46" dbh)
- American elms, one on each side of Route 23 (39" dbh each), the "gateway elms"
- American elm at Maplewood Ave and Fairview Terrace
- American sycamore at Barrington Brewery
- American sycamore at McDonald's / Price Chopper plaza

¹² Diameter measured at a person's breast height, or approximately 4.5 feet above the ground.

- Copper beech tree on Copper Beech Lane
- Copper beech tree at 578 South Main Street
- Katsura tree at the Memorial Field skate park
- Tulip tree at Truman Wheeler Farm
- White oak on Hurlburt Road near Alford Road, at Bard College at Simon's Rock. This is the "Liberty Tree" living at the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and is estimated to be at least 250 years old this year

Floodplains and Flood Hazard Areas

The 100-year floodplains are illustrated in Figure 37.

In total, over 3,000 acres, or more than 10 percent of Great Barrington's land area, is in the 100-year floodplain. The most flood-prone areas along the Housatonic River are between the Rising Dam and Route 7 (the Brown Bridge), and between Bridge Street and south into Sheffield. Along the Green River, flood-prone areas include broad stretches between the airport and Seekonk Cross Road, downstream to its confluence with the Housatonic at Route 7 south.

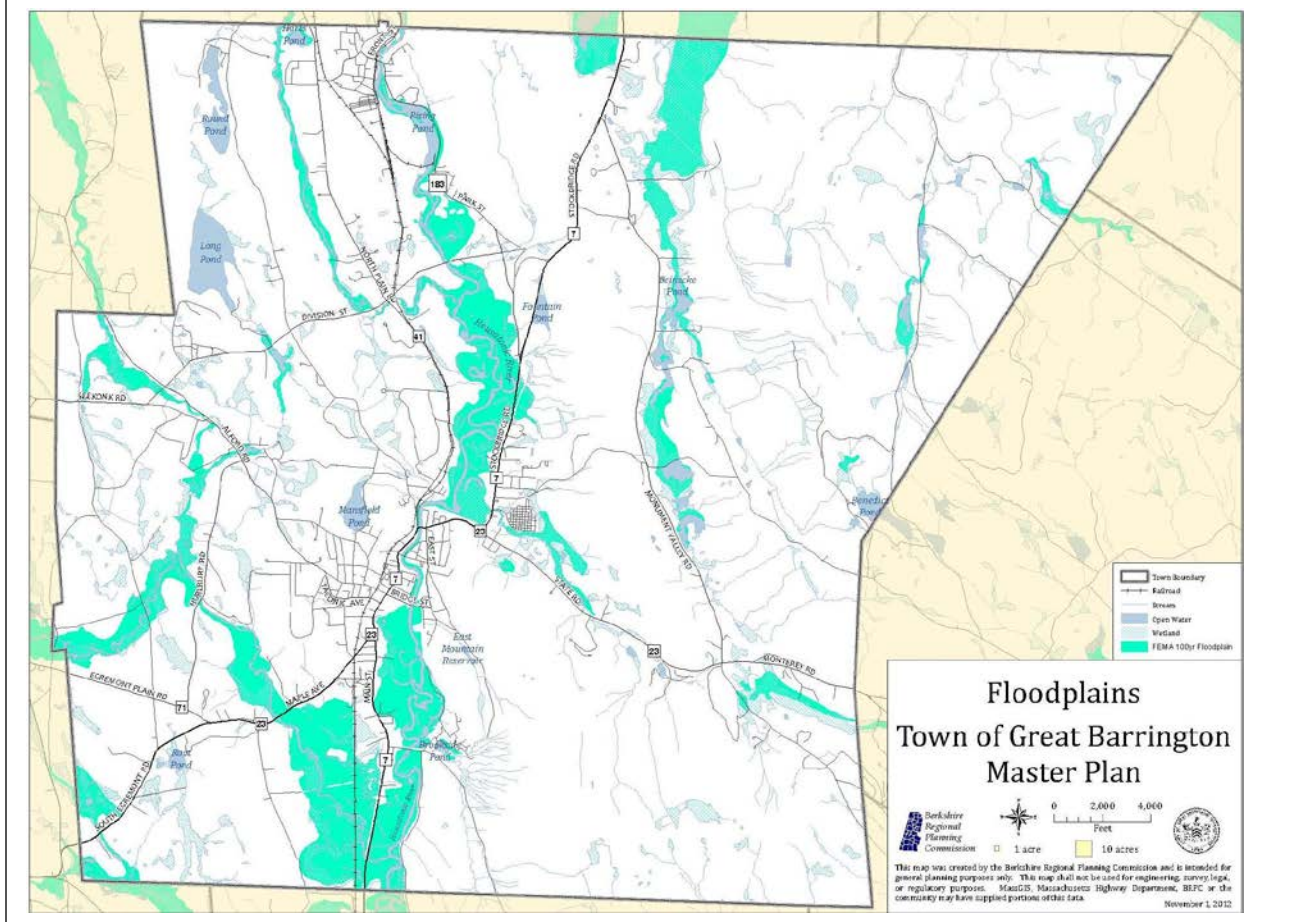
Floodplains are important natural resources and a critical component of riparian and riverine ecosystem functions. Floodplains help to spread and slow rivers and streams in times of high water, reducing downstream damage. And floodplains, where periodic floods replenish soil with nutrients, host most of Great Barrington's agricultural businesses. Other beneficial aspects of floods include scouring riverbeds of excess sedimentation, deepening riverbed channels, and recharging groundwater aquifers.

But flooding can be catastrophic, resulting in damage to property and wildlife habitat. Flooding is of particular concern in Great Barrington, where the areas most ripe for development, given their proximity to roads and railroad facilities, utility infrastructure, general visibility and marketability, and commercial zoning designation, are within or adjacent to the 100-year flood plain. In fact, in its 2011 Berkshire County Hazard Mitigation Plan, BRPC estimated the total loss value for properties in the 100-year floodplain in Great Barrington at over \$78 million.

Development within the 100-year flood plain is controlled by the Great Barrington Zoning Bylaw and by the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). Under the zoning bylaw, almost any development activity requires a Special Permit from the Board of Selectmen. The WPA requires review by the Conservation Commission and an Order of Conditions. These regulations help ensure the floodplains retain enough capacity to store and control floodwater, as well as mitigate the impacts of flooding on existing and new development. In addition to providing areas for compensatory storage of flood waters, regulations help reduce velocity of flood waters, increase the storage of flood waters, and therefore reduce overall flood damage potential.

As global climate change increases the severity of storms, runoff, and the potential for damaging floods, these regulations are increasingly important. Rivers use their floodplains, and in cases of heavy precipitation become a part of the river itself. Great Barrington should ensure that it has proper floodplain regulations and design guidelines are in place, both to protect property and to protect riverine ecosystems.

Figure 37: 100-Year Flood Zones



Biodiversity and Habitat

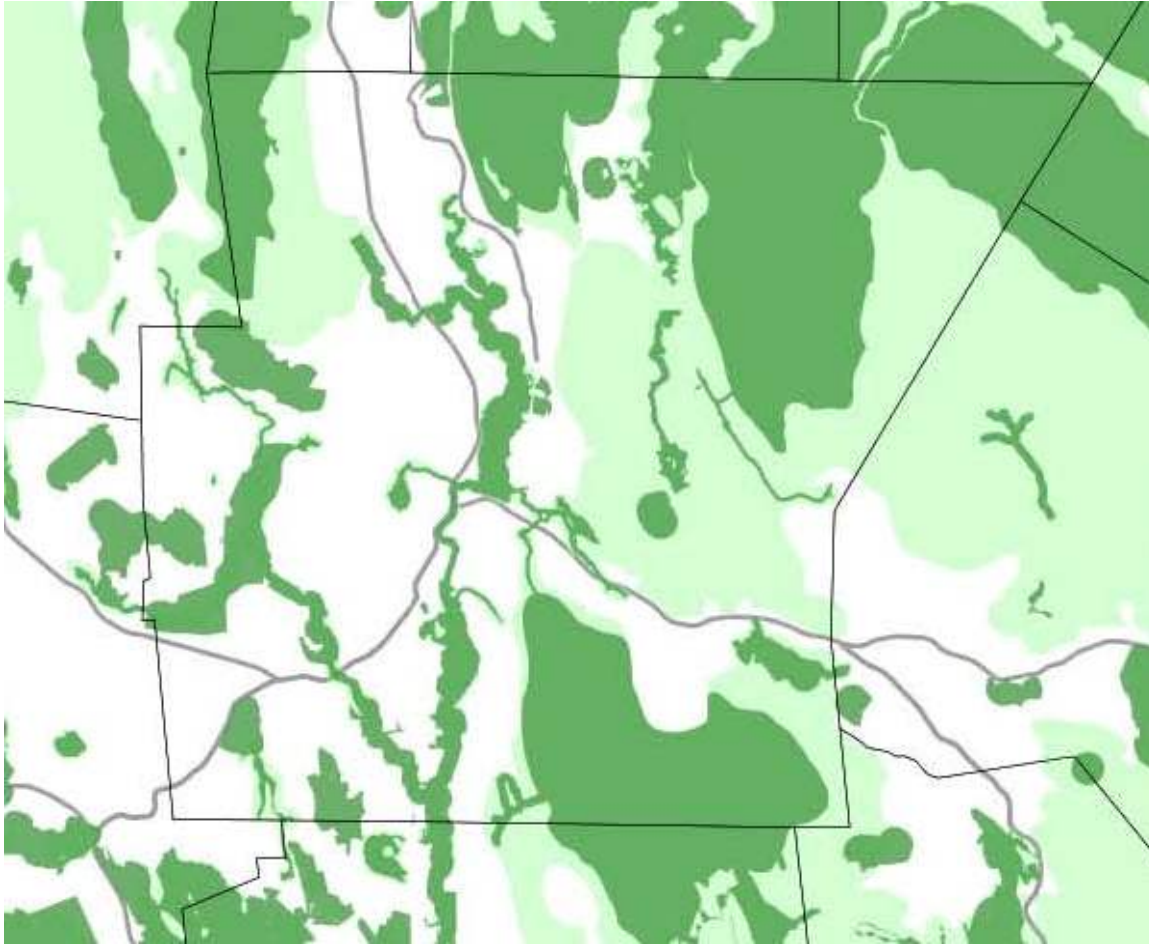
Large areas of Great Barrington comprise diverse and ecologically important landscapes. Our deep forests, slopes and ridges, extensive wetlands and marshes, and cold water streams are rich in plant and animal species that are a vital part of a healthy, balanced ecosystem. The state forests and surrounding uplands are the most important biodiversity areas, as indicated by the State's BioMap 2.

BioMap 2 was developed in 2010 by The Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) and The Nature Conservancy's Massachusetts Program to protect the state's biodiversity in the context of projected effects of climate change. BioMap2 combines NHESP's 30 years of documented rare species and natural community data with spatial data identifying wildlife species and habitats that were the focus of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's 2005 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). BioMap2 also integrates The Nature Conservancy's assessment of large, well-connected, and intact ecosystems and landscapes across the Commonwealth, incorporating concepts of ecosystem resilience to address anticipated climate change impacts.

Figure 38 illustrates the Bio Map zones in Great Barrington. Core Habitat (dark green on the map) is critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and other Species of Conservation Concern, as well as a wide diversity of natural communities and intact ecosystems across the Commonwealth. Core Habitat includes: (1) Habitats for rare, vulnerable, or uncommon mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, fish, invertebrate, and plant species; (2) Priority Natural Communities; (3) High-quality wetland, vernal pool, aquatic, and coastal habitats; and, (4) Intact forest ecosystems.

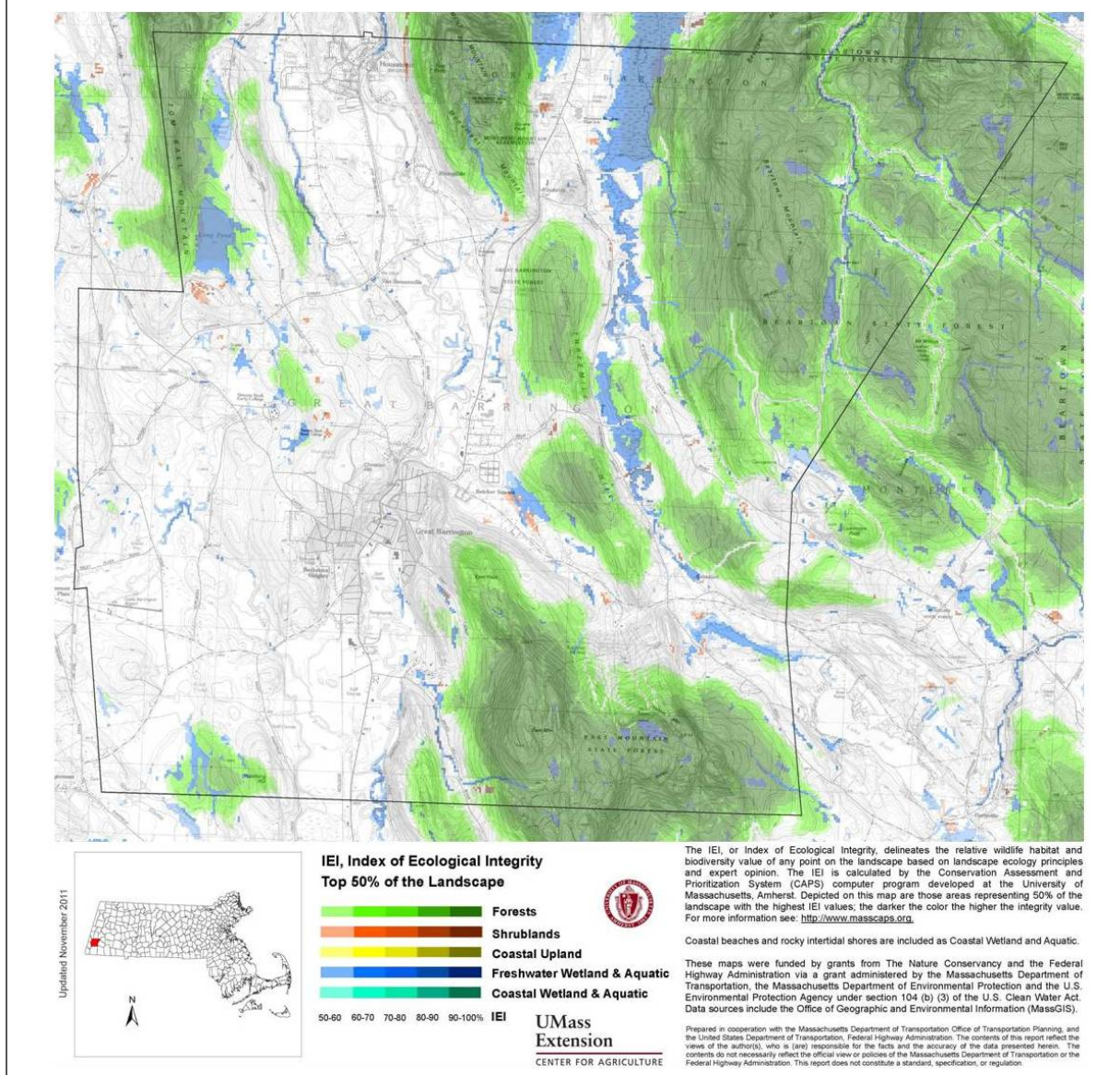
Critical Natural Landscape (CNL) (lighter green) complements Core Habitat, and includes large natural Landscape Blocks that provide habitat for wide-ranging native species. CNL supports intact ecological processes, maintains connectivity among habitats, and enhances ecological resilience. Protection of CNL helps ensure long term ecological integrity by buffering uplands around coastal, wetland and aquatic Core Habitats to help ensure their long-term integrity. CNL, which may overlap with Core Habitat includes: (1) The largest Landscape Blocks in each of 8 ecoregions; and, (2) Adjacent uplands that buffer wetland, aquatic, and coastal habitats.

Figure 38: Bio Map 2, Great Barrington



The Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System (CAPS), developed by the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, to provide an assessment of ecological integrity and biodiversity value, ranked areas like Beartown State Forest, Monument Mountain, Monument Valley, and East Mountain State Forest with relatively high ecological integrity. On Figure 39, the darker colors indicate higher integrity and biodiversity value. Darker green indicates higher forest value; darker blue indicates higher aquatic value.

Figure 39: CAPS Index of Ecological Integrity (IEI) 2011, Great Barrington



Most of our most the landscapes identified by BioMap II and CAPS are protected from development, by virtue of ownership (e.g., State forest or conservation restrictions) or regulation (e.g., the Wetlands Protection Act). However, there are biologically important areas along all three Great Barrington rivers that are not protected.

Invasive species are taking hold throughout Berkshire County's forests, fields, and waters. Pests like the Asian Longhorned Beetle, Emerald Ash Borer, and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid threaten the health and continuity of forests. Bittersweet vines strangle acres of forest, and burning bush has overtaken field edges. In lakes, ponds and streams, plants like Eurasian milfoil outcompete native plants that provide fish habitat and keep waters cool. Nonnative fauna like zebra mussels can overtake aquatic habitats. Fortunately Great Barrington's lakes have not yet been subject to zebra mussels. Our lakes have water chemistry conducive to zebra mussel growth, but lack the rocky substrate that the aquatic hitchhikers prefer.

Open Space and Protected Land

The term “open space” is most often used in reference to parks, forest, agricultural lands, or land in conservation. The phrase has a broader definition, however, for the purposes of this plan. According to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs “open space” can refer to “any undeveloped land with particular conservation or recreation interest.” It can include natural areas that are used for walking or hiking, as well as parks and sports fields. Open space can be either private or public land. It can be unprotected, provisionally or temporarily protected, or permanently protected from development. Not all public land is permanently protected, and not all private land is unprotected.

Of Great Barrington’s 46 square miles (29,280 acres), over one-third (34 percent) is permanently protected as state and federal parks, in land trusts, or under the Agriculture Preservation Restriction Program and conservation easements. The amount of protected land has increased slightly from the time of the 1997 Master Plan, with the State adding approximately 125 acres to Fountain Pond State Park in 1997, and nonprofit organizations acquiring lands for conservation. Table 16 categorizes these protected lands.

Table 16: Protected Land in Great Barrington, 2011

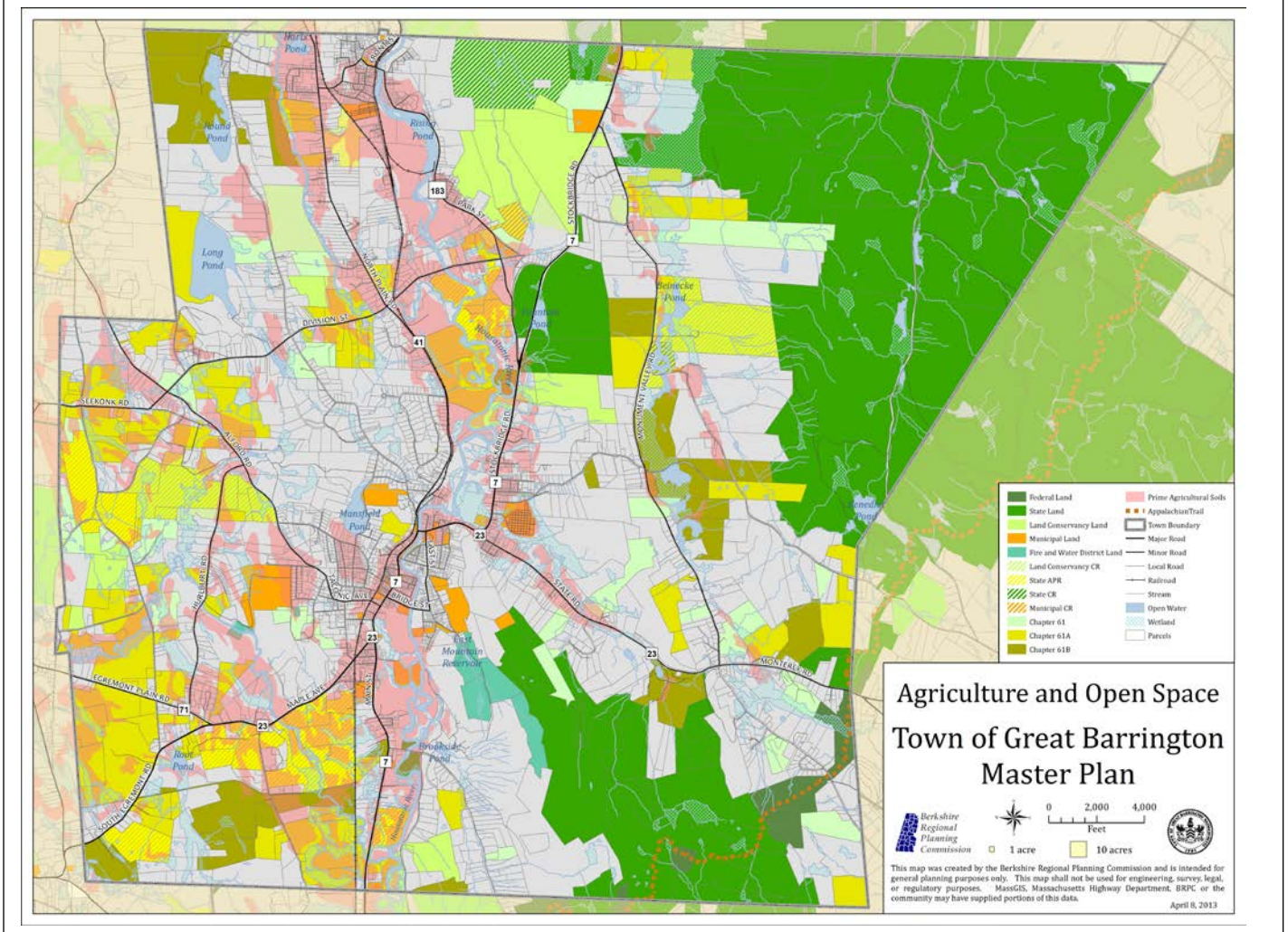
Protected Land Category	Acres	% of Protected Land	% of Total Land
Non-Profit	5	0.0%	0.0%
Federal	221	2.2%	0.8%
Municipal	336	3.3%	1.1%
Land Trust	793	7.9%	2.7%
Private	1,602	15.9%	5.5%
State	7,109	70.6%	24.3%
	10,064	100.0%	34.4%

Source: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 2011

Figure 40 shows open space and agricultural lands, with different colors indicating different types and levels of protected status. The darkest greens show the state and federal lands. Town land is in orange. The public lands are predominately hills and uplands; valleys and lowlands tend to be privately held, and a smaller portion is permanently protected.

Table 17 lists protected open spaces in Great Barrington, notes their protected status, and recreational opportunities. This list is compiled from past master plans and open space plans, as well as from community meetings held as part of the OSRP update and the Master Plan outreach efforts.

Figure 40: Protected Open Space and Agriculture



Land in Public Ownership

State and Federal lands make up 73 percent of the town's permanently protected acreage, and 24 percent of the town's total land area. **State** lands include the two state forests, a state park, and wildlife conservation areas. The largest contiguous areas of protected land are in the state forests. These tend to be dense second-growth forests and upland areas. The topography of these areas makes them relatively inaccessible. The bedrock, soil characteristics and lack of major roads all limit intensive development, reduce human disturbance, and keep habitat intact. The State has been improving the trails and other recreational opportunities in its state forests in recent years. Beartown features trails for all levels of hikers, and a trail at Fountain Pond was developed with the assistance of GB Trails and Greenways. East Mountain's recreation resources include the Appalachian Trail and Ski Butternut, but there are no formal trails here. The State does not have adequate resources to create or manage more trails than it already has. Furthermore, in wilderness areas where few trails exist, wildlife is afforded relative peace and quiet from human disturbance and intrusion. Wilderness areas like East Mountain State Forest should be respected; additional land disturbance via trail development is not recommended.

Land in **Federal** ownership includes the Appalachian Trail corridor in the southeast portion of town.

Municipal lands include town forests, parks, town buildings and their grounds, cemeteries, the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area, and the McAllister Wildlife Refuge. Three parcels on East Mountain, which are owned by the town, are integral to East Mountain State Forest. These parcels are managed by the state and protected in perpetuity.

The Lake Mansfield Recreation Area includes the lake, the beach, picnic and playground areas, the parking area, and the forest. The space is a tremendously important recreational and scenic resource for the town, given its proximity to downtown and denser neighborhoods. Excellent management over recent years, by the Lake Mansfield Alliance working together with the town and non-profit partners, has increased its use and popularity. Recently developed trail maps highlight the handicapped-accessible trail system and its proximity to downtown. The Lake Mansfield Recreation Area is permanently protected.

At the McAllister Wildlife Refuge, which is managed by the Conservation Commission, almost half of the land is hayed fields and the rest is wooded. The land was given to the town with the expressed wish that it be protected, but the property deed technically does not include any such provision. A dirt access road for the Fire District leads down to the Green River and the drinking water wellhead and pumping station. The property itself does not actually include the lawn area at the riverfront—that is owned by the Fire District (whose drinking water infiltration galleries are buried below). The Conservation Commission is interested in improving management and formalizing maintenance partnerships to realize the conservation and recreation potential of this space. There will soon be a sign kiosk indicating the property location. Parking is available only along the shoulders of Haley Road. Invasive plants need to be removed, and grassland bird activity should be assessed as part of a maintenance and management plan for the open fields. Ensuring its protection, maintaining and managing the trails and open fields, and combating invasive species are top priorities of the Conservation Commission.

Land in Private Ownership

Lands under conservation restriction include areas such as the Pfeiffer Arboretum and the Berle Conservation Area. The Berle area consists of 308 acres of fields and critical wetlands in Monument Valley. It has a conservation restriction approved in 2009 which is held by the Berkshire Natural Resources Council. Other recent land protection activities include a 36 acre Agricultural Preservation Restriction in 2009 and a 41 acre conservation restriction west of the Williams River in 2008. This was made possible by a partnership between the Berkshire Natural Resources Council and Trustees of the Reservations.

Parcels of land held in Chapters 61, 61A, and 61B are temporarily protected. This state program allows lands used for forest, agriculture, and recreation to be taxed at a reduced value. The first section, Chapter 61, applies to 10 acres or more of contiguous forest which is subject to a 10-year state-certified forest management plan developed by the landowner. Chapter 61A applies to five contiguous acres or more of land actively devoted to agricultural or horticultural use for the present year and previous two years, and showing gross sales of at least \$500 per acre. Finally, Chapter 61B applies to at least five contiguous acres of open space or recreational land, which must be open either to the public or a nonprofit organization.

According to the 2011 data from the Great Barrington Assessor, there are 7,109 acres of land in the Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B programs. Specifically, there are 1,669 acres in Chapter 61 (forest), 4,062 acres in Chapter 61A (agriculture), and 1,378 acres in Chapter 61B (recreation).

The Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B designation is not permanent. The landowner can remove land from the Chapter 61 programs, either by withdrawing the land before the designations expire and paying required tax penalties, or by simply letting designations expire without renewal. If land is removed from Chapter 61 programs prematurely, the town has 120 days to exercise its “right of first refusal”—an option to purchase the property at fair market value—or to assign its interests to a Land Conservancy to act in its stead.

In any case, when a Chapter 61 property becomes available, the town must act promptly. Therefore it is recommended that the town identify, list, and prioritize lands currently in Chapter status and determine those that are most important for conservation in advance of land status changes.

The remainder of the private land that is not under Chapter, APR, or conservation restriction is unprotected.

Inventory of Protected Open Space in Great Barrington

Table 17: Inventory of Protected Open Space in Great Barrington

Name	Owner / Manager	Current Uses	Condition	Public Access	Recreation Potential	Degree of Protection	Property Address	Acres	Zoning	Parcel ID	Book / Page	Funding or Grants, if any	Notes
TOWN OWNED LAND													
Castronova Park (aka Russell Park) (the "GB" bushes)	Town Parks Commission	Picnicking, benches, swings	Good	Open year round, sidewalk access, no parking.	Add park signage and add to park map.	Permanent	0 Main Street	0.8	R1B	Map 11, Lot 70	225 / 39		Donated to town in 1917 by Russell family for park use
Claire Teague Senior Center building + grounds	Town Council on Aging	Gardening, benches shuffleboard	Excellent	Open year round, sidewalk and bike access, parking	Possible river access, birding, southern gateway of Housatonic Greenway. Add to map.	Permanent	917 Main Street	1.6	B2	Map 38, Lot 21C	496 / 36		Donated to town from Housing Authority 1981 for express purpose of a senior center
Dewey School grounds	Town Dept. of Public Works	Swings, basketball, open lawn, dog walking	Lawn = good. Backstop = poor. Swings = good.	Open year round, sidewalk and bike access, parking	Designate as a formal park. Add park signage and add to park map.	None	9 Gilmore Avenue	1.5	R1B	Map 14, Lot 60	194 / 205		Grounds attached to former school. Not a formal park.
East Mountain Forest	Town Selectmen	Hiking, wildlife	Unimproved woods trails	Open year round. An unimproved trailhead on Quarry Street, no formal parking	Trail improvements to East Rock. Work with abutting owners for trail easements. Add info kiosk at trailhead.	Permanent	0 Quarry Street	45	R1B, R2	Map 20, Lot 131	170 / 430		Land was donated by E.F. Searles in 1894 to town for park use
Elmwood Cemetery	Town Dept. of Public Works	Walking	Excellent	Open year round, sidewalk access	Local walking resource	Permanent	90 Stockbridge Road	19	R2	Map 12, Lots 45, 46, 55			Additional acreage owned by St. Peter's parish and by Congregation Ahavath sholom
Green Lawn Cemetery	Town Dept. of Public Works	Walking	Excellent	Open year round	Important part of Housatonic Village walking loop – see Walkability study recommendations. Could link to railroad right-of-way trail.	Permanent	0 Van Deusenville Road	17.5	R1B	Map 3, Lot 65			Portion is reserved for St. Bridget's parish
Grove Street Park	Town Parks Commission	Benches, picnic tables, basketball, swings	Good. Recent repairs to fence. Recent removal of old trees	Open year round, sidewalk and bike access, parking on street	Recent improvements to fitness equipment and fence. Add signage and add to park map	Permanent	30 Grove Street	2.4	R1B	Map 20, Lot 93	170 / 545		Donated by E.F. Searles in 1895 for park use. AKA Ladies Picnic Grove
John P. Tracy Park (Tracy Sanctuary)	Town Parks Commission	None	Lawn good. Wetlands overgrown w/ invasives.	Open, no formal access point or parking	Much is wetlands, but wildlife or birding trails/platforms possible. Add Park signage and to park map	Permanent	0 Stockbridge Road	5.8	B2	Map 12, Lot 83	616 / 184		Donated to town by Tracy family in 1986 for purposes of conservation and memorial park
Housatonic Community Center	Town Selectmen	Basketball court (indoor)	Good. Recent roof and court improvements	Permission required from town. Sidewalk and bike access, parking	Used year round for basketball and community events. Improve parking.	Limited	1064 Main Street	0.4	B2	Map 1, Lots 163 and 164	155 / 445, 194 / 378		
Housatonic Park & Playground	Town Parks Commission	Swings, playground, basketball, sledding, dog walking	Good. New equipment installed	Open year round, sidewalk and bike access, parking on street	Focus of recent Parks Comm improvement plans. Add Park signage and add to park map.	Permanent	207 Pleasant Street	1.1	B2	Map 1, Lot 165A See also Plat file P-109.	101 / 496 133 / 413 193 / 354 200 / 29		Town Meeting May 2008, Article 16 dedicated to Parks Comm per MGL Ch. 45, ss. 1-14.
Lake Mansfield	Town Conservation Commission	Swimming, boating, fishing, ice skating	Good. Weed growth low. Stormwater and road improvements are needed	Open year round, sidewalk, trail, and bike access, parking at beach area and boat launch	Continue year round scenic boating, fishing, swimming. Continue to promote as part of downtown walking routes. Improve boat launch area with State.	Permanent. Cons Comm regulates uses and activities	45 Lake Mansfield Road	28.5	R2	n/a	2180 / 93		Also a "Great Pond," and protected by wetlands protection act.

MASTER PLAN APPENDICES
October 2013

Name	Owner / Manager	Current Uses	Condition	Public Access	Recreation Potential	Degree of Protection	Property Address	Acres	Zoning	Parcel ID	Book / Page	Funding or Grants, if any	Notes
Lake Mansfield Forest	Town Conservation Commission	Hiking, dog walking, wildlife	Good. New accessible trail installed. Continued attention to invasives is needed.	Open year round, sidewalk, trail, and bike access, parking at beach area and boat launch	Complete accessible trail system. Continue to promote as park of downtown walking routes. Trail brochure was developed by volunteer stewards	Permanent. Cons Comm regulates uses and activities	40 Lake Mansfield Road	29	R2	Map 10, Lot 40	393 / 501	US DOI Land & Water Conservation Fund; Recr. Trails Grants; Housatonic Heritage grant for brochures & conservation	Sold to Conservation Commission for recreational and conservation purposes per MGL Ch. 40, s. 8C
Lake Mansfield Beach	Town Parks Commission	Swimming, swings, playground, picnicking	Good. Regular maintenance of sand, weed fabric, lawn, benches etc to be continued	Open year round, sidewalk, trail, and bike access, parking at beach area.	Continued water testing, lifeguards, swimming lessons. Info kiosk maintained by volunteers. Address parking lot runoff.	Permanent	45 Lake Mansfield Road	1	R2	Map 32, Lot 78.1	392 / 207		Beach and parking area acquired by town from Dehon Seminary in 1973
Mahaive Cemetery	Town Dept. of Public Works	Walking	Excellent	Open year round, sidewalk access	Walking. Historic interpretation.	Permanent	Main Street / Silver Street	13	B2	Map 24, Lot 8			Oldest cemetery in town
McAllister Park	Town Conservation Commission	Hiking, horseback riding, dog walking, wildlife.	Fair. Trails and forest overgrown with invasives	Open year round, parking on-street	Conservation Comm mapping trails in 2012-2013, will add info kiosk on Haley Rd in 2013. Manage invasives.	Permanent. Cons Comm regulates uses and activities	Haley Road	91	R2, R4	Map 31, Lot 34	397 / 477	Housatonic Heritage grant 2012 for info kiosk	Granted to town Conservation commission in 1974 per MGL Ch. 40, s. 8C
Memorial Field Park ("Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Field")	Town Parks Commission	Skateboard park, basketball courts, baseball field	Good	Open to seasonal use of baseball, basketball, & skate park. Sidewalk and bike access. Parking across street at old school	River walk greenway trail would connect through this property. Add Park signage and add to park map.	Permanent	Bridge Street	3.8	B2	Map 19, Lot 145	267 / 289	Urban Self Help grants used for 1990's era improvements	Acquired with town funds in 1940.
Newsboy Monument	Town Dept. of Public Works	Benches, historic markers	Excellent	Open year round	Continue to promote its historic legacy, working with Historic Commission. Makes good rest stop for touring bicyclists.	Permanent	Newsboy Lane / Rte. 23	0.25	R2	n/a	n/a		Donated to town in 1895 by Col. W.L. Brown who also erected the statue
Old Maid's Park	Town Parks Commission	Picnicking, wildlife	Good	Open year round	Add park signage and add to park map. Designate as a formal park. Connect to Housatonic with crosswalk/sidewalks. Improve picnic facilities.	Limited	31 Wyantenuck Street	3.9	R1A, R2	Map 26, Lot 81A	334 / 594		Donated to town in 1962 from Wheeler & Taylor. No apparent protections or restrictions
Olympian Meadows	Town Parks Commission	Baseball fields, sports fields	Excellent	Open seasonally, sidewalk and bike access, parking	Add park signage and add to park map. Improvements to restroom and storage underway. River Walk greenway trail will connect through this property.	Permanent	Main Street / Olympian Meadows	22.2	B2, Floodplain, WQPD	Map 22, Lot 64	170 / 485		Land was donated by E.F. Searles in 1894 to town for park use
Park Street Park	Town Parks Commission	Swings, dog walking, picnicking	Good	Open year round, sidewalk access, parking on street	Add park signage and add to park map. Potential to connect to or be a trailhead for trails into East Mountain Forest and East Rock.	Permanent	Park Street	5	R1B	Map 14, Lot 304	170 / 430		Land was donated by E.F. Searles in 1894 to town for park use
Parrish Park	Town Parks Commission	Benches	Good	Open year round, but near busy bridge/ intersection so not widely used. Parking on street	Add to park map. Potential overlook of Housatonic River; highlight town history, former mills and hydro plant at this location.	None	Main Street	0.2	B2, Village Center	Map 14, Lot 6	385 / 26		Purchased from Massachusetts Electric in 1971. Portions of it are used for parking on upper Main St

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Name	Owner / Manager	Current Uses	Condition	Public Access	Recreation Potential	Degree of Protection	Property Address	Acres	Zoning	Parcel ID	Book / Page	Funding or Grants, if any	Notes
Pelton Brook Cemetery	Town Dept. of Public Works	Walking	Good	Open year round	Historic cemetery	Permanent	Park Street / Route 183	0.6	R2	Map 28, Lot 36 - 36A			
South Street Park (aka Church Memorial Park)	Town Parks Commission	Picnicking, dog walking, fitness course	Good. New fitness equipment being installed	Open year round, sidewalk access, on street parking	Add park signage and add to park map. Fitness equipment to be installed 2013.	Permanent	South Street	1.3	R1A	Map 19, Lot 51	238 / 329		Donated to the town in 1925
Stanley Park (aka Riverside Park)	Town Parks Commission	Benches, historic markers	Good	Open year round, sidewalk access, on street parking	Add park signage and add to park map. Designate as a formal park. History is highlighted with "Stanley" light. Future northern trailhead of River Walk	Limited	Main Street	2.6	B2, Village Center	Map 14, Lot 38	180 / 223 205 / 175 205 / 181 205 / 205		Acquired by town in 1909 from Russell estate
Stony Brook Cemetery	Town Dept. of Public Works	Walking	Good	Open year round	Historic cemetery	Permanent	Stony Brook Road	0.75	R4	Map 36, Lot 13			
Town Hall Park	Town Parks Commission	Children's playground, picnicking, benches, gazebo and summer concerts	Good. New children's playground installed. Gazebo upgraded recently with donations and volunteers	Open year round, sidewalk and bike access, parking on street	Add park signage and add to park map. Highlight history of town hall area with a plaque	Permanent	334 Main Street (rear)	0.75	B2, Village Center	Map 19, Lot 91	148 / 109, 119 / 438, 119 / 458		Purchased by town from John Dodge in 1875, and specifically for use as a public park.
Water Street Cemetery	Town Dept. of Public Works	Walking, historic markers	Good	Open year round, sidewalk access	A marker locates the town's first Meeting House.	Permanent	State Road	4.7	B2, RIB	Map 14, Lot 13			
Weir Park (Belcher Square)	Town Parks Commission	Benches	Good	Open year round, sidewalk access	Add park signage and add to park map.	Permanent	Stockbridge Road / State Road	0.1	B2	n/a			
STATE OWNED LAND													
Agawam Lake Wildlife Management Area	Mass. Div. of Fisheries and Wildlife	Conservation area. Hunting in season.	Wild	None	Relatively inaccessible. State DFW will be managing invasives in 2013-14.	Permanent	Stockbridge Road	26	R2	Map 35, Lot 7A. Map 39, Lot 21			
Appalachian Trail Corridor	Mass. Dept. of Cons. and Recreation	Hiking	Good	Route 23	Active partnerships with App. Trail Conservancy are in place. GB is an ATC "Trail Town." The AT is a wilderness trail and does not desire a trail-spur connection.	Permanent		51	R2	Map 41, Lots 25C, 41, 41B, 41C.			
Beartown State Forest	Mass. Dept. of Cons. and Recreation	Hiking, hunting in season swimming, paddling, fishing, camping, cross country skiing and snowshoeing snowmobiles. Areas are wild.	Good	At Benedict Pond	Benedict Pond and various winter and summer trails could be better publicized to tourists. Keep habitat intact and limit human disturbance in wilderness areas—trail to high schools is not recommended.	Permanent		5,024	R4	Map 39, Lots 5-18, 24-26. Map 40, Lots 1-2. Map 43, Lots 1-4, 6-14			Areas are designated as Reserve and Recreation under recent State Forests Plan
East Mountain State Forest	Mass. Dept. of Cons. and Recreation	Hiking, hunting in season. Areas are wilderness.	Wild	No formal access point	Ski Butternut leases land from State and continuation is desired by all parties. Balance of Forest is wilderness area designed as Reserve—habitat should remain intact and disturbance should be limited.	Permanent		1,755	R2	Map 37, Lots 50A, 55-56, 58-59, Map 38, Lot 17, Map 42, Lots 22-37, 49, 52-60, 63			Areas are designated as Reserve and Recreation under recent State Forests Plan

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Name	Owner / Manager	Current Uses	Condition	Public Access	Recreation Potential	Degree of Protection	Property Address	Acres	Zoning	Parcel ID	Book / Page	Funding or Grants, if any	Notes
Fountain Pond State Park	Mass. Dept. of Cons. and Recreation	Hiking, hunting in season.	Good	Stockbridge road parking area	Excellent trails and partnerships in place. Possible future connection north to Lover's Land and the local school system	Permanent	Stockbridge Road	395	B2A, R4	Map 36, Lots 1, 2, 8		Housatonic Heritage grant 2012 for trails maintenance and brochure	Designated as Forest under recent State Forests Plan
Housatonic River Access	Mass. Div. of Fisheries and Wildlife	Canoe access. Fishing.	Good	Brookside Road	Explore partnerships with town + DCR for river access at Senior Center	Permanent	Brookside Road	17	B2, R2	Map 38, Lots 13, 22			
W.E.B. Du Bois Homesite	University of Massachusetts & National Park Service	Walking and historic / cultural interpretation	Good	Parking on Route 23	Existing interpretive signage and parking. National Historic Landmark	Permanent	Route 23	4.5	R2	Map 30, Lots 11A, 11B	676 / 232		National Historic Landmark
FEDERAL LAND													
Appalachian Trail Corridor	National Park Service (App. Mountain Club, App. Trail Conf	Hiking.	Good	Trailheads at Route 23 and Lake Buel Road	Active partnerships with App. Trail Conservancy are in place. GB is an ATC "Trail Town." The AT is a wilderness trail and does not recommend a trail-spur connection with downtown.	Permanent	Lake Buel Road	221	R2	Map 42, Lots 10G, 15, 41, 43, 44A, 50, 51, 65			
OTHER													
East Mountain Reservoir	Fire District Water Dept.	None (water supply)	Good	None	Eventual public use, town, FDWD, and State cooperation will be needed. Rock climbing and hiking is nationally known. Improve trailhead, maps, and access. A trail connection to the AT is not recommended by the AT managers.	Water supply	Pine Street	178	R2	Map 38, Lots 3-10, 16			
Green River water infiltration station	Fire District Water Dept.	None (water supply)	Good	None	None (water supply)	Water supply	Hurlburt Road	6	R2	Map 31, Lots 55, 56, 60E			
Berkshire Hills Regional School District	Berkshire Hills Regional School District	Sports fields, running track, trails, basketball courts, playground	Excellent	Open	Keep habitat areas east of the school intact—a trail to the state forest is not recommended.	None	600 Stockbridge Road	175	R4	Map 39, Lots 4, 19, 20, and Map 35, Lot 24			
Bard College at Simon's Rock	Bard College at Simon's Rock	Sports fields, trails, indoor athletic center open to members	Excellent	Open	Work with college to designate safe walking routes to downtown. Work with college on Lake Mansfield water quality improvement projects and education.	None	84 Alford Road	291	R2	Map 32, Lots 41-44, 78-80, 78 B-H, 81-81C, and Map 31, Lots 9A, 10B			
Berkshire South Regional Community Center	Berkshire South	Indoor facilities, outdoor accessible picnic gazebo, trail up three-mile hill	Very good	Open	Trail connects to BNRC Route 7 backland property and to Fountain Pond State Park	None	15 Crissey Road	78	B2, R2	Map 36, Lot 30.2	1087 / 162		Successful local – nonprofit – state DCR partnership and trail connection

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Name	Owner / Manager	Current Uses	Condition	Public Access	Recreation Potential	Degree of Protection	Property Address	Acres	Zoning	Parcel ID	Book / Page	Funding or Grants, if any	Notes
LAND TRUSTS (Not necessarily a complete list. Does not include private parcels that are under a Conservation or Agricultural Restriction and to which there is no public access.)													
Pfeiffer Arboretum	Great Barrington Land Conservancy	Walking.	Fair. Boardwalks need repair and invasives need managing	Open year round. Parking on street	GBLC is actively maintaining the area and has published a trail map	Permanent (GBLC fee simple)	249 Long Pond road	38	R2	Map 33, Lot 5A	998 / 299	Housatonic Heritage grant 2012 for brochure, trail maintenance	
Housatonic River Walk	Great Barrington Land Conservancy	Walking and historic interpretation	Excellent	Yes (closed in winter). Trailhead on Main Street, Dresser Avenue, River Street, or Bridge Street	Includes historic interpretation at William Stanley Overlook and WEB Du Bois River Garden, as well as native plantings	Permanent (easements across private properties)	Downtown Great Barrington	0	Various	Easement across various	See 904 / 41, 927 / 34, 1007 / 165, 1165 / 205 for easement docs.	Natural Resource Damage (NRD) funds	
Rob's Landing	Great Barrington Land Conservancy	Conservation area	Unknown	No formal access point.	Access to the River. Floodplain, endangered species, wetlands	Permanent (GBLC fee simple)	East Sheffield Road / Boardman St	14.6	R2	Map 38, Lot 49	882 / 28		Portion of property is in Sheffield.
Andrews Property / William Taylor Day Preserve	Berkshire Natural Resources Council	Hunting in season. Conservation area	Wild	Open to public. Map on BNRC website.	Trails	Permanent (BNRC, fee simple)	East Sheffield Road	72	R2	Map 38, Lots 45, 57	489 / 233		
Barrett Property	Berkshire Natural Resources Council	Hiking. Hunting in season. Conservation area	Wild	Open to public. Map on BNRC website.	Trails	Permanent (BNRC, fee simple)	Seekonk Cross Road	77	R4	Map 31, Lots 2D, 22, 23	517 / 164		
Brownson / Housatonic Flats	Berkshire Natural Resources Council	Hiking. Conservation area	Owner is investigating cleanup measures	Open to public. Map on BNRC website.	Trails, river overlook, canoe access point	Permanent (BNRC, fee simple)	Stockbridge Road	26	B2	Map 29, Lot 4	2141 / 257	Natural Resource Damage (NRD) funds	Recently purchased by BNRC.
Mahaiwe Harvest / Project Native	Berkshire Natural Resources Council	Conservation area. Farm.	Good	Open to public. Map on BNRC website.	See Project Native, below	Permanent (BNRC, fee simple)	350 North Plain Road	5	R1A	Map 26, Lots 28B, 28C	1500 / 265		
Neenah Paper / Risingdale	Neenah Paper	Floodplain, habitat, and 3000' Housatonic river frontage	Invasives. Trash, solids, and white goods littered around the site.	None at this time	River access, fishing, hiking, horseback riding. Portions of site being remediated and riverbank stabilized	None at this time	Park Street and Division Street	67	R2, I	Map 7, Lot 30		Possibility of using Natural Resource Damage funds	Not yet protected open space. But 67 acres to be conserved in perpetuity per 2012 Mass DFW permit
Route 7 backland / Three Mile Hill	Berkshire Natural Resources Council	Hiking. Hunting in season. Conservation area	Wild. Trails in good condition	Open to public. Map on BNRC website.	Trails link to Fountain Pond and Berkshire South. Trail map has been published.	Permanent (BNRC, fee simple)	Stockbridge Road	101	B2	Map 36, Lot 25A	917 / 327, 1044 / 205	Housatonic Heritage grant 2012 for brochure, trail maintenance	
Williams River Preserve	Berkshire Natural Resources Council	Hunting in season. Conservation area	Wild	Open to public. Map on BNRC website.	Trails	Permanent (BNRC, fee simple)	Long Pond Road	41	R2	Map 33, Lots 18-19	1622 / 281		
Monument Mountain Reservation	Trustees of the Reservations	Hiking. Hunting in season. Conservation area	Wild. Trails in good condition	Open to public	Link to possible preservation of Flag Rock, and link to Housatonic	Permanent	Stockbridge Road	385	R2	Map 35, Lots 9A, 16-20A			
Project Native / Sunways Farm	Project Native	Conservation area. Farm. Walking trails	Excellent	Open to public	Trails are now open to public	Permanent	342 North Plain Road	52	R1A, R2	Map 26, Lot 28			No dogs

Other Scenic and Distinct Landscapes

Restoration and conservation of the Fairgrounds, more than 50 acres of floodplain land south of downtown, is a top priority of Great Barrington residents. At nearly every public meeting in the course of this Master Plan process, residents have called for the Fairgrounds to be used for open space and recreational purposes for the benefit of all residents. The property has had a troubled history ever since it was decimated by the 1995 Memorial Day tornado. After short lived attempts to restore racing and gaming, and a failed effort at commercial development, the property fell into neglect and has been a prominent eyesore for a decade. The same floodplain, wetlands, riverfront, and endangered species habitat issues that limit conventional development add value as open space. For example, along an existing sewer main easement the Housatonic River Greenway is proposed. The soils are classified as prime agricultural soils. Finally, new owners have the expressed interest in developing the property as an agricultural, housing, open space, and recreational asset for the community. The owners will be seeking public participation to help shape, and to help fund, the redevelopment plan.

Neenah Paper property, located south of the Rising Mill, is a 72 acre parcel on the Housatonic River between the Rising Paper dam and Division Street. Once used as a landfill for old cars and appliances, it is in the process of being remediated. The work has involved testing, monitoring, and cleanup, and will also restore 360 feet of eroding riverbank. A recent agreement with the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife as part of this work requires the owner to convey nearly 67 acres of the property be sold and held in conservation restriction to be protected in perpetuity. Per the agreement, this must happen by November 2014. The area to be protected includes floodplain, endangered species habitat, and more than a half mile of Housatonic River frontage. The owner has expressed interest, in partnering with the town and nonprofits like Berkshire Natural Resources Council to protect this tract. No doubt it would become a popular fishing, paddling, horseback riding, and recreational space. Opportunities also exist to connect it to Monument Mountain and Rising Pond. The town and conservation organizations must act together as partners to implement the protection agreement and plan for future recreational uses.

Flag Rock overlooks Housatonic Village and is located near the westerly edge of Monument Mountain Reservation. There is no formal trailhead; those in the know begin at either Grove Street in Housatonic or Route 183 near Root orchards and Division Street. While Flag Rock is privately owned, the landowner and nonprofits like the Trustees of the Reservations are currently exploring conservation options. There is a significant opportunity to link Flag Rock with Monument Mountain and with the Housatonic River. Such a link would connect miles of hiking trails and hundreds of acres of permanently protected mountain slopes to Housatonic Village—an opportunity that could be a boon to quality of life, tourism and redevelopment there.

Reservoir Rocks consists of a cliff wall some 100 feet high with talus at the foot. The property, owned by the Great Barrington Fire District Water Department, lies east of downtown, on the western face of East Mountain and includes the Reservoir and some of the most challenging boulder and rock climbing in western New England. Climbers come from around the region and the country to Reservoir Rocks. Unfortunately, the Fire District technically does not allow any public access, due to liability concerns and the need to protect East Mountain Reservoir as an emergency water source. However, if it can find a secondary water source elsewhere, the Fire District may sell this property. In the meantime, the town should continue dialogue with the Fire District. This unique feature, so close to downtown, and already so well known, is a tremendous recreational opportunity for Great Barrington. If planned cooperatively and promoted correctly, Reservoir Rocks would be a significant component of a future tourism strategy that emphasize outdoor recreation.

East Rock is located on the western side of East Mountain State Forest, overlooking downtown Great Barrington, and with views as far west as the Catskills. It can be reached via a hiking trail from Quarry Street. Despite it being in use for decades, the trailhead is not marked, the trail is not maintained, and parking is limited. It begins on town-owned land but progresses upward over private land. Greenagers and Railroad Street Youth Project have expressed interest in trail stewardship. Cooperation between these groups, neighborhood volunteers, the landowners, and the town could improve this hiking resource.

Ice Gulch is located on the easterly side of East Mountain, within the State Forest. The gulch is a deep ravine with a face seventy to eighty feet in height. The Appalachian Trail (AT) passes nearby; the trail's Tom Leonard shelter is near the head of the gulch. It is relatively unknown outside of the AT hiking community.

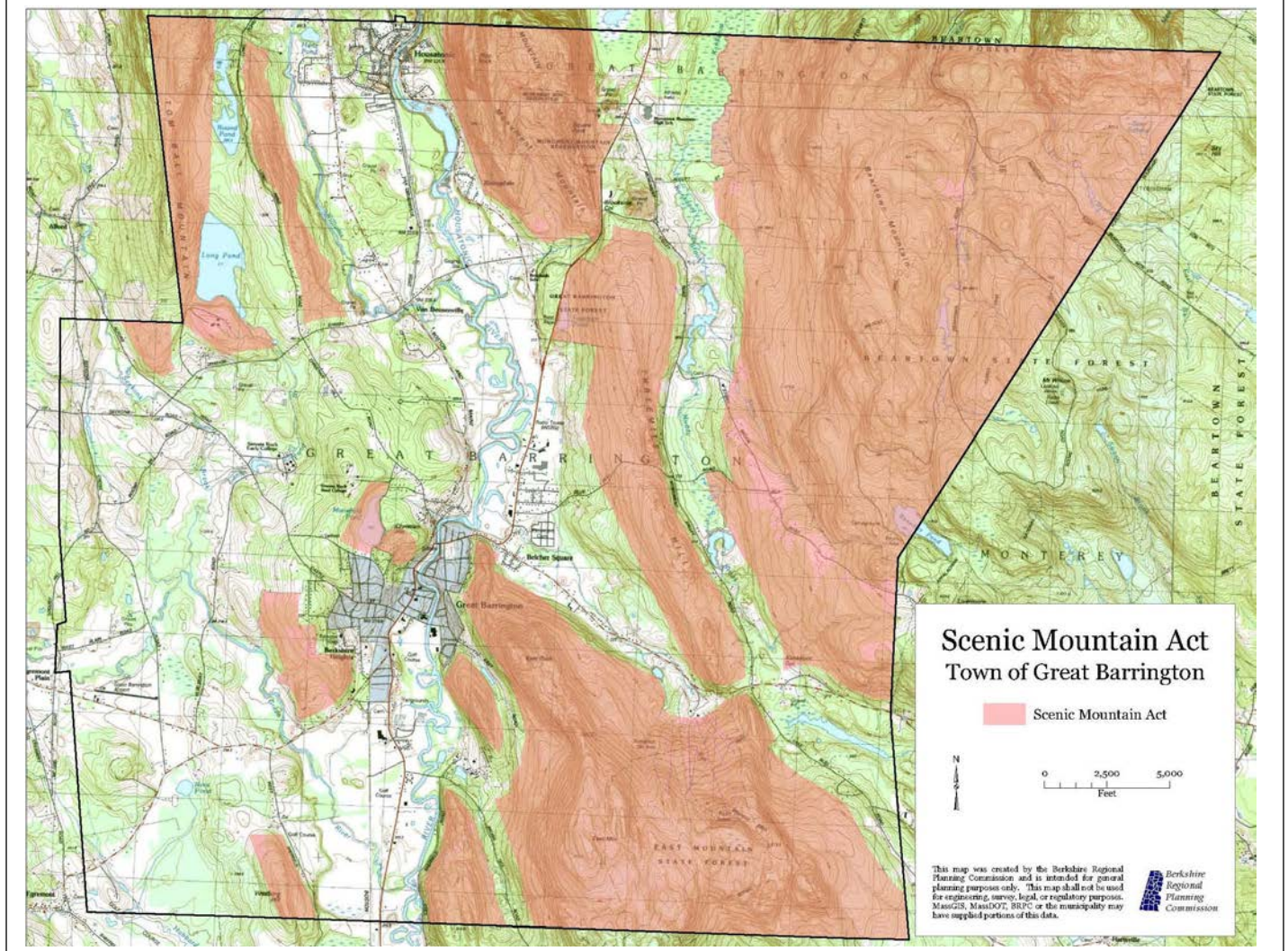
Konkapot Brook and Muddy Brook: These brooks east of Monument Valley Road flow north out of Beartown State Forest, eventually reaching the Housatonic River in Stockbridge. The wetlands are core habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered

species. Development is naturally limited due to wetlands, topography, soil characteristics. Several large tracts have been conserved in the last five years, including the Berle property by the Berkshire Natural Resources Council, but vast areas remain unprotected. The School District has embraced the open spaces as educational and recreation areas. It has held its “people in the environment” classes here every year for over three decades.

Scenic Mountains Act

In 2006, the town adopted the Berkshire Scenic Mountains Act (SMA) to protect scenic highlands and slopes from clearing and development that might harm their scenic qualities, cause erosion, and adversely impact water and wetland resources. The SMA regulates development in the areas shown in the map in Figure 41, below.

Figure 41: Scenic Mountains Regions



The SMA regulates removal, filling, excavation, clearing of vegetation or other alteration of land within these mountain regions. The SMA applies to alterations which are likely to have a significant adverse effect on watershed resources or natural scenic qualities because of the pollution or diminution of ground or surface water supply, public or private; erosion; flooding; substantial changes in topographic features; or substantial destruction of vegetation.

Many of these areas are permanently protected and will not be developed. For example, application of the SMA in Beartown State Forest or on Monument Mountain seems unlikely. However, the SMA does provide a layer of scenic protection on important developable areas like Knob Hill, Berkshire Heights, Three Mile Hill, and around Long Pond. The Conservation

Commission should ensure the SMA regulations are kept up to date, and, like the Wetlands Protection Act, should educate landowners about the law and its benefits to the town.

Conservation Priorities

Fortunately, and unlike many towns, significant swaths of Great Barrington are permanently protected. As noted previously, one-third of our land area, 10,000 acres, cannot be developed. Additional land and water resources are protected by virtue of regulations like the Wetlands and Rivers Protection Acts, the Scenic Mountain Act, and zoning such as the Water Quality Protection Overlay District. These protections are the result of generations of land stewardship by landowners, and of the dedication of land trusts, advocacy groups, and town officials working to realize the goals of past plans. Because of their efforts, today we are reasonably assured that many of our scenic resources and environmental assets are protected.

But significant work remains to be done. Our small town character continues to be threatened by the division of former farmland and forest into building lots. Our town is getting older and more ethnically diverse, and this changing population may have recreational needs that we do not currently meet. While hills and highlands are largely protected, lowlands and river valleys are not. Substantial natural areas, like the Housatonic River, are polluted, threatened, or relatively unknown, despite the fact that they offer some of our best recreational, tourism and economic development opportunities. Wilderness areas and vistas like Flag Rock, East Mountain, and Reservoir Rocks are near to village centers but access to them is not formalized or well known. These are all priority conservation areas, not just for their ecological and scenic assets, but also for their potential to boost outdoor recreation and the tourism economy. The town must work proactively to capitalize on these opportunities.

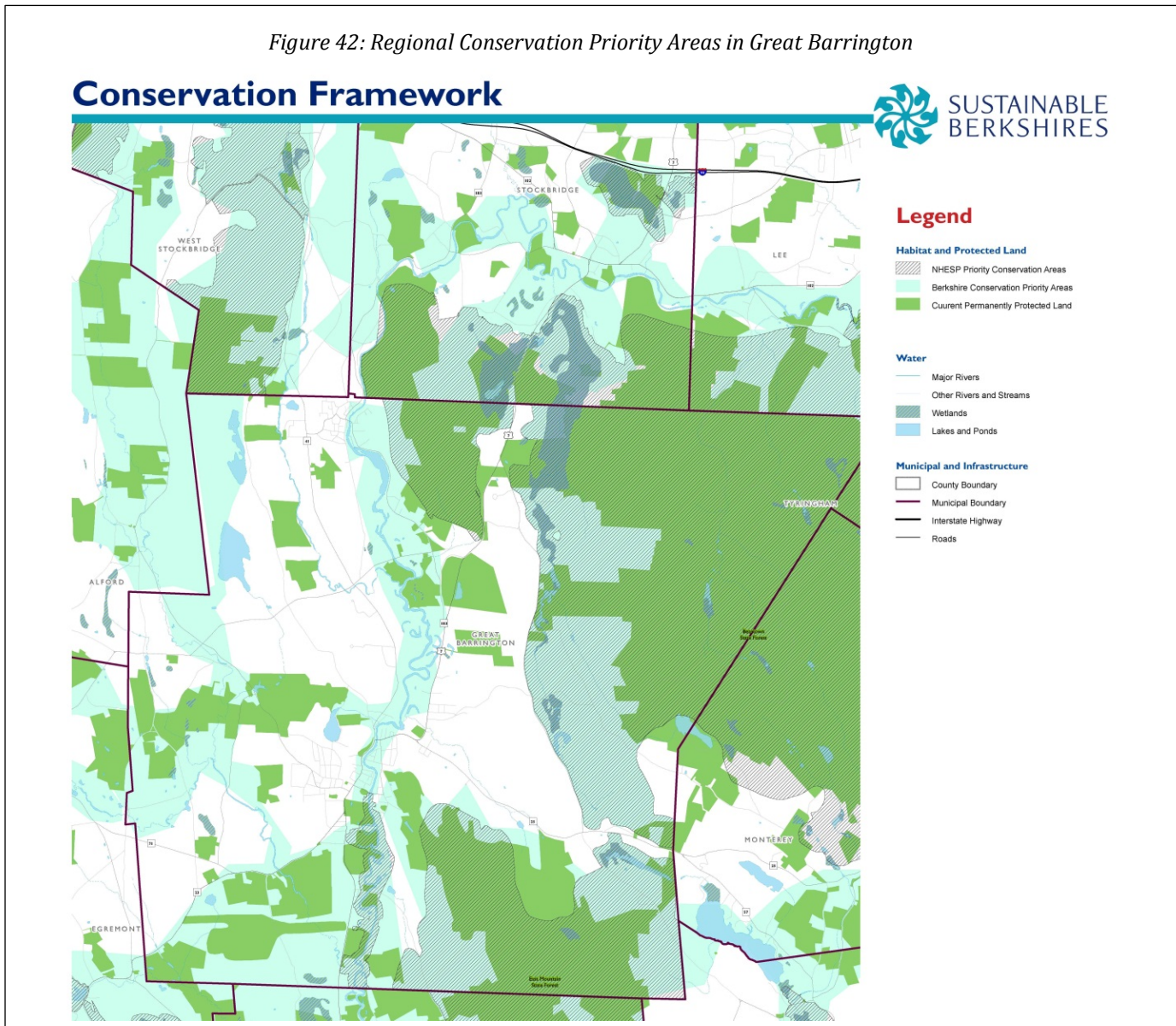
Additionally, more attention should be given to the lowland areas of town. Relatively little of the land in the Housatonic, Green, and Williams River valleys, or in valleys such as Monument Valley, Alford Brook, and Seekonk Brook, is permanently protected. These valleys are recreational and scenic assets, important agricultural areas, watersheds for drinking water supply, and home to numerous rare and endangered plants and animals. They rank high on regional and statewide maps of conservation priorities and ecological integrity. They are vulnerable to development now that much of the town's developable land is used up. Stream buffers and aquatic habitats must also be protected to absorb the impacts from more frequent heavy storm events and to keep fragile ecosystems cool as temperatures increase. For these reasons, river valleys and lowlands must be priority conservation and preservation areas.

Other lands to be considered for primary conservation measures are: those that contain water supplies (including Massachusetts DEP wellhead aquifer recharge areas); prime agricultural soils; riparian and habitat corridors; core habitat (as identified by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program); working farms; and lands of special scenic or recreational value, as identified by the people of Great Barrington. Of high priority are large parcels and lands that connect already protected areas, as well as lands that are identified in the Sustainable Berkshires regional plan as Conservation Priority Areas.

Land that has two or more of the above characteristics deserve priority attention for conservation measures, especially if these lands are not already protected due to wetlands, floodplain, steepness, or other constricting conditions. Other lands of interest are lands that permit recreational access by creating or connecting recreational trails. Riverfront land that allows extension of the Housatonic River Walk or abandoned rail beds where trails can be developed are examples of lands to be considered for acquisition or conservation easements.

Figure 42, developed as part of the regional plan by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, identifies some areas where these conditions overlap. Lands shown in green on the map are protected already; conservation priorities are shown in blue and with gray shading.

Figure 42: Regional Conservation Priority Areas in Great Barrington



Skeptics might take issue with land conservation, crying foul as landowners place large tracts in conservation, contribute less in property taxes, and reap income tax benefits from the donation, all while the rest of the community's tax bill must consequently be increased. This is a real issue, and all the more reason for the town to make informed, calculated decisions when considering land for conservation status. The financial impacts of conservation, as well as the ecosystem, resource, and recreational impacts, must thoughtfully be weighed. As with a retirement package or investment plan, Great Barrington's portfolio of land must be managed wisely and for the long term.

Our citizenry recognizes the importance of conservation. The role these open spaces play—providing ecosystem services, boosting tourism, enhancing quality of life—is critical to life in Great Barrington. Land conservation increases the value of our community. It increases the health of our ecosystems, including our farms, forests, and water resources. It increases the desirability of our community.

The increased desirability has another side, of course. By its nature, land conservation increases the value of parcels surrounding conservation land. This can be a windfall to those looking to sell, but it can be a financial brick wall to those of limited means who are looking to move into our community. As overall values increase, affordability decreases. As buildable land is conserved and no longer developable, the already finite inventory of land in Great Barrington is made ever smaller. As supply shrinks and demand continues apace, prices will increase.

Indeed, the Master Plan has heard two main themes loudly, clearly, and continuously. First, protect the environment, scenery, and recreation opportunities that make our community such a unique place to live and work. Second, do everything you can to control costs and keep taxes low. Thus, when we conserve, we must simultaneously identify areas that are appropriate for development and redevelopment. Paradoxically, the better we are at conserving and protecting open space, buildable land will become more dear and more expensive, making it harder for many to afford our town.

Parks, Playgrounds, and Open Space Equity

As noted above, Great Barrington's open space consists of over 200 acres of open space in 20 town-owned properties. These parks and playgrounds are conveniently located throughout town. Over 50 percent of Great Barrington's population is within one-half mile (a 10 minute walk) of a park, playground, or open space where active recreation is possible. Ten of our parks have playground equipment, swings, or ball courts. All of these 10 locations are accessible via a sidewalk network.

Since the population is not growing and our population is well-served by existing parks, there is no need to expand our park system. Rather, the priority is to ensure our parks programs and equipment meet the needs of our changing population. Currently playgrounds, equipment, or sports courts are located in the following places:

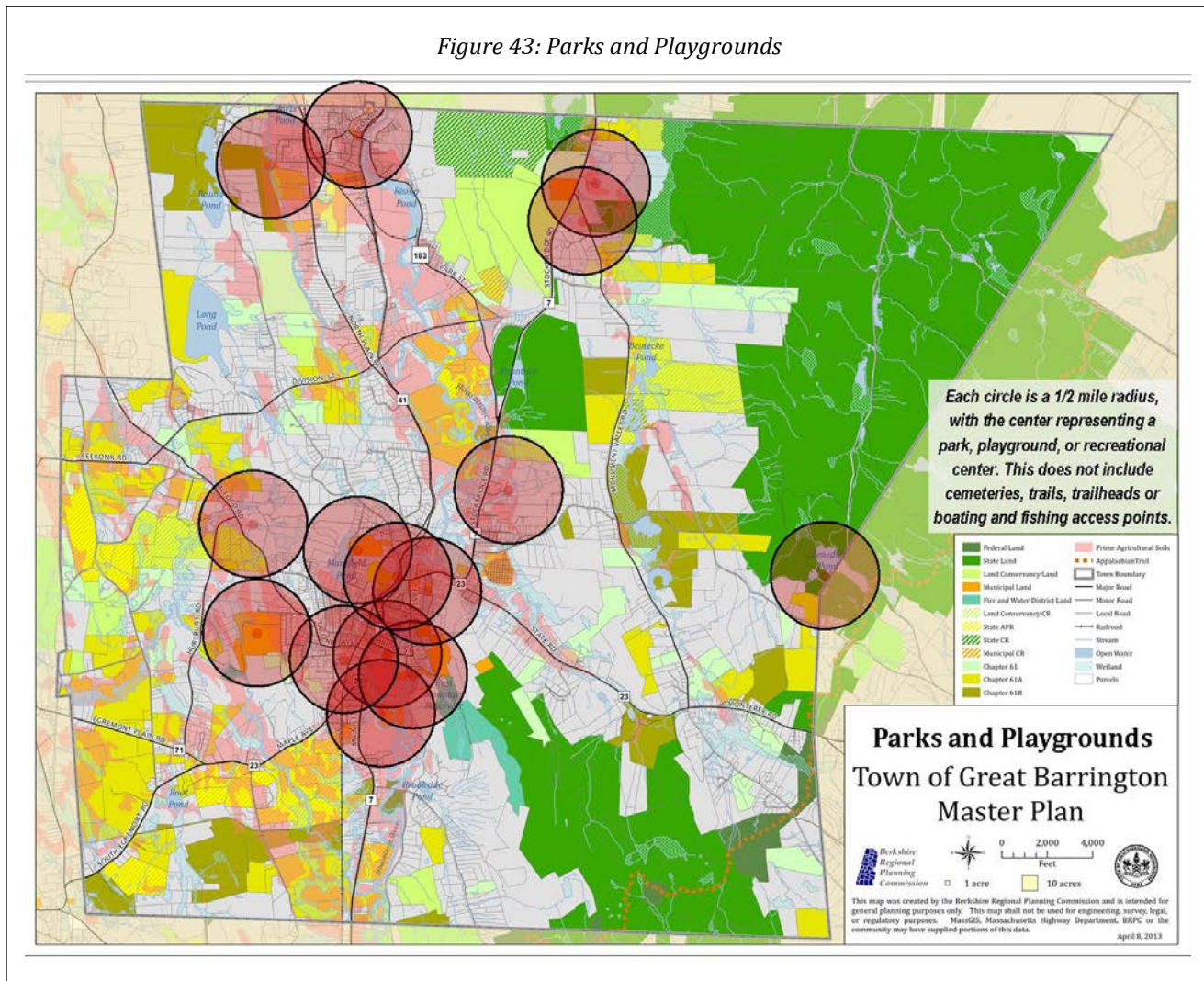
1. Castranova Park (the "GB bushes") is a one-acre park at the intersection of Main Street and State Road with an old set of swings and benches. It is a prominent landmark, and is a link on the "central loop" trail (see trails, below).
2. Dewey School is a one and one-half acre space in a residential neighborhood. It has a baseball backstop and set of swings. A part of the campus of the old school, it is not protected as an official park. Neighborhood advocates would like to see it protected as a permanent park and not developed. After a long term lease for the use of the former school is secured, the town should seek Town Meeting approval to convey it to the Parks Commission jurisdiction as a permanent park.
3. Grove Street Park is a three acre space in a residential neighborhood. It has play equipment and basketball court. Recent improvements by the Parks Commission have been welcomed, but the sidewalk to the park needs improvement.
4. Housatonic School Park was once a part of the school campus. This one acre space in the village center is highly visible. It includes an impressive playground as well as ball courts and a lawn, used for sledding in the winter. Together with the Community Center and the former school building, it is the civic center of Housatonic. The Park was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Parks Commission and is a permanent park.
5. Lake Mansfield Recreation Area is a 30-acre park and forest that connects Lake Mansfield to the town center. At the beach there is playground equipment, picnic and grilling facilities, portable toilets, and parking. This is the primary swimming area for Great Barrington village and is conveniently located near to residential neighborhoods. Lake Mansfield Road bisects the play area and the parking lot, making pedestrians crossing the road vulnerable to traffic. Residents would like to see better toilets, changing facilities, trash receptacles, and updated play equipment, as well as improved pedestrian and bicycle safety along Lake Mansfield Road.
6. Memorial Field is a four acre park with baseball diamond, skate board park, and basketball court. It is on Bridge Street in downtown and is a popular spot for teenagers. It is used for Babe Ruth league and adult league amateur baseball. The Parks Commissioners, Police Department, and Railroad Street Youth Project are working to increase police presence in this area. If the River Walk were to be extended south to the Senior Center, this would be the "trailhead".
7. Olympian Meadows: This 22-acre space off of Main Street south of downtown consists of four baseball diamonds used for little league baseball and softball. There is a restroom and concession building in need of repair. A sidewalk currently leads to the access road, but the road is steep and narrow. Access on foot or by bike might be improved, however, since the fields are located along the route of the proposed river trail, the Housatonic River Greenway, that will link downtown to these ball fields, the old Fairgrounds, and south to Historical Society and the Senior Center.
8. Park Street Park: Less well known but adjacent to residential neighborhoods, this five acre sloping space includes a swing set. It is unmarked and rarely used, except for sledding.

9. South Street Park: A one acre space on South Street in a residential area adjacent to downtown. The Parks Commission will soon install fitness equipment. It is unmarked and few know it exists.
10. Town Hall Park / “Giggle Park”: Behind Town Hall in downtown, this one acre lawn includes the bandstand for summer concerts and a popular playground for youngsters. The equipment was recently donated by Iredale Mineral Cosmetics, to replace the dilapidated old play set at the former Bryant School. Future plans to link parking lots behind Town Hall and St. James Church must be sensitive to playground safety.

Some town parks and open spaces do not have recreational equipment. Rather, they offer lawns or natural areas for passive recreation. These include Old Maid’s Park off of Wyantenuck Street in Housatonic, on the Williams River, Stanley Park in downtown Great Barrington, and Tracy Park on Stockbridge Road.

Other parks and playgrounds (indoor and outdoor) are provided at State, nonprofit, and education facilities in town. These include Beartown State Forest at Benedict Pond, the Monument Valley schools, Berkshire South Community Center, and Bard College at Simon’s Rock. The following map, Figure 43, shows each park and playground with a half-mile radius circle (one mile diameter) drawn around it.

Figure 43: Parks and Playgrounds



Despite this excellent inventory of parks, time and again, in community forums, neighborhood meetings, and in surveys, residents have stated their desire for more and better parks. Given our town’s declining population, however, it is unlikely that more parks are actually needed. Instead, Great Barrington must recognize that our citizens have a range of recreational needs. Outreach conducted during this Master Plan process revealed that our youth need access to parks, playgrounds, and active

sports. Our growing population of 50- and 60-somethings is seeking a wide range of options to stay active and fit. Finally, our seniors are seeking more passive options including walking. There is an enormous potential of meeting this need through the completion of the Housatonic River Greenway south to the Senior Center. A bird watching platform or other access to the river at the Senior Center would also be a boon to our aging population.

For example, the Parks Commission has recognized the need to have a variety of parks throughout town. Play sets for young children, for example, are available at Housatonic, Lake Mansfield, Town Hall, and the Elementary School, but few other places. The Commission has been developing an improvement plan that focuses on providing multi-generational parks, where children, families, and seniors can recreate in ways that suit them. In some parks, like Grove Street and Park Street, the Commissioners are providing fitness equipment so that parks can fulfill the need and desire of seniors for heart-healthy activities.

Moreover, the town has little capacity on its own to acquire and/or maintain more parks. Local organizations face difficulty raising enough funds to sustain what we already have. For example, the Town DPW maintains 140 acres of parks and cemeteries with a staff of only four people (two full time, supplemented with highway division staff and one seasonal employee). With so much land to cover and so few resources, they are often behind before they can even begin. Either additional funds and staff, or new partnerships, or both, would be needed if the parks system is to be expanded.

The more immediate need is better use of what we already have. In public meetings about parks and about space, many people did not know where Old Maid's or South Street Park are located or what activities are available, even when these people lived nearby. A guide to the parks system, available to all, with accompanying signs or markers at the parks would help in this regard. And, since many comments of this sort came from our surveys of English as a Second Language classes, these guides should logically be available in Spanish, as well. The expressed desire for more parks is likely a reflection of how little residents know about their existing park system.

It should be noted however that redevelopment efforts around town may in fact yield new park facilities to our inventory at little direct cost to the town. At Dewey School the town could enhance current play facilities. The redevelopment of the Fairgrounds may include community open space. It is as yet unclear what space would be offered. In any case, new parks and playgrounds should not be developed unless funds for long term maintenance and programming are also developed.

Walking and Bicycling

Sidewalks

In our densest neighborhoods, it is generally easy for able bodied people to walk for recreation (or as their means of transportation). A fairly good sidewalk network serves our town, linking residential neighborhoods with community facilities, parks and playgrounds, and businesses. A recent survey by the Department of Public Works shows the location and condition of all 13.5 miles of town-maintained sidewalks in town (not counting state sidewalks on Stockbridge and State Roads, or sidewalks in private developments).

Some sidewalks are in excellent shape, particularly those in the center of Housatonic. But a total of 6.6 miles, or 50 percent of our sidewalk miles, are rated by DPW as in poor condition. Tripping hazards and crumbling pavement can be a serious obstacle to somebody pushing a stroller or unstable on their feet. Further, not all sidewalks are connected or linked with crosswalks. It may sometimes be dangerous to cross. Identifying and fixing the deficiencies of condition and connection is critical to ensuring our neighborhoods are walkable, connected, and safe for aging seniors and young families. Improving the ability to access and use all of the recreation assets our town offers will improve our quality of life.

With that in mind, as part of its 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), the DPW should specifically address how walking options—sidewalks and crosswalks in particular—will be improved.

Maps included in the transportation chapter show the condition of the sidewalk network, noting locations of existing crosswalks and existing parks.

Trails and Greenways

Great Barrington is a town full of trails. Nearly every protected public open space, and countless unprotected, private lands, is crisscrossed with trails. Some are known and well maintained; others less so. Some are interconnected, but many are not. Connecting these areas, preferably by conserving intervening lands, would provide beneficial wildlife corridors and create a network of scenic hiking trails. Most importantly, this would connect the village center of Housatonic and downtown Great Barrington to wilderness and recreation areas, enhancing tourism and economic development potential. A good trail network would also provide access between community facilities (like the regional schools, the community center, and the Senior Center) to these resources. A long term town goal is the Housatonic River Greenway, an extension of the downtown River Walk to the south, along the River through the Fairgrounds, to Brookside Road and the Senior Center. A shorter extension would connect northwards from its current terminus at Rite Aid pharmacy, to Cottage Street and Stanley Park.

Following is an inventory of existing trails and greenways and future opportunities.

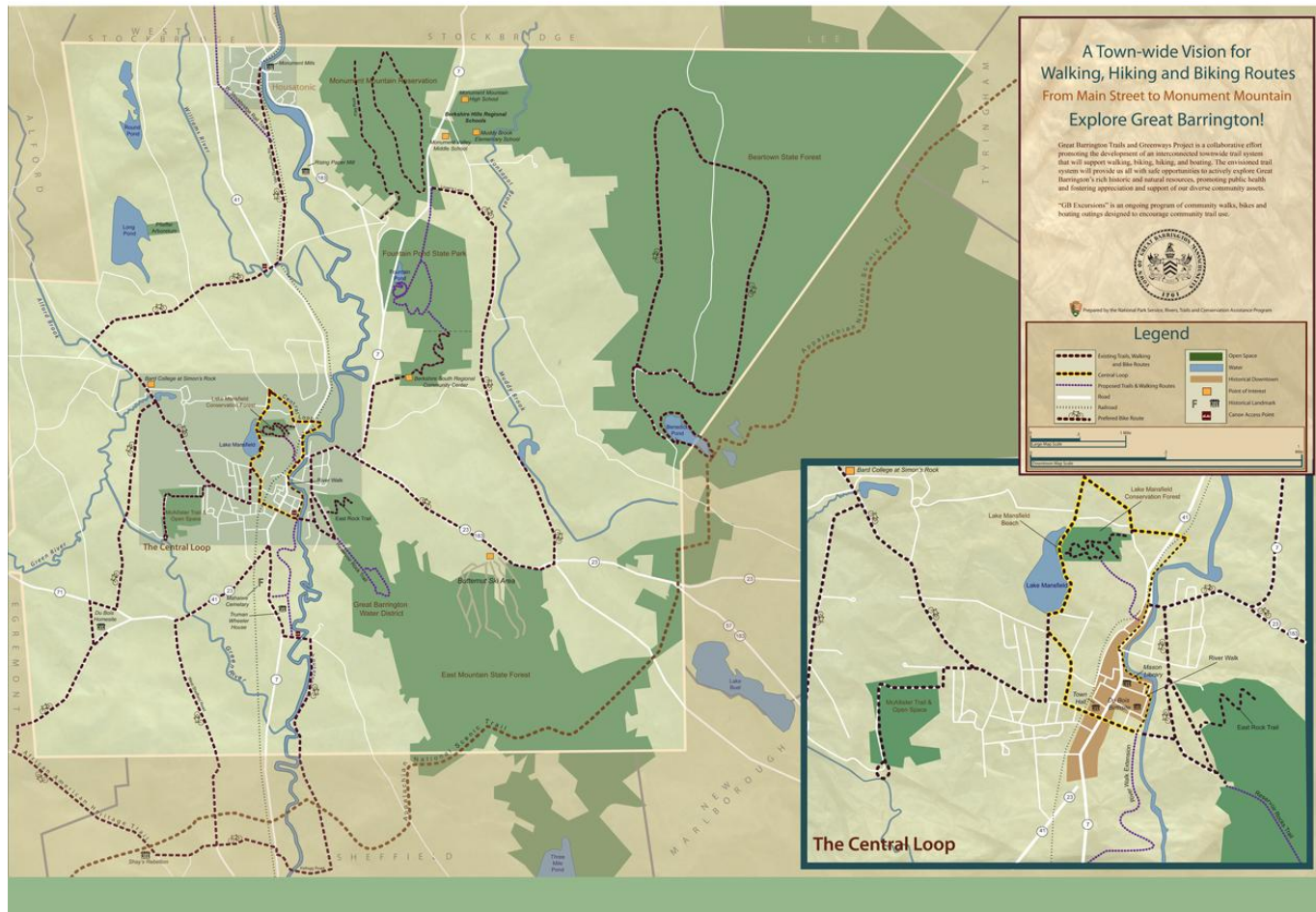
1. Appalachian Trail ("AT"): Just over three miles of this 2,180 mile National Scenic Trail that connects Georgia and Maine cuts through southeastern Great Barrington, connecting East Mountain and Beartown State Forests. Popular day hikes begin on Home Road in Sheffield, Lake Buel Road in Great Barrington, or at Benedict Pond in Beartown. On East Mountain, the trail skirts Ice Gulch, where Tom Leonard shelter provides an overnight rest stop for hikers. This popular portion of the trail is maintained by volunteers of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), Berkshire Chapter. Local hikers take to the trail in all seasons, and through hikers begin to appear in late summer. Since our official designation as an Appalachian Trail Community, partners including GB Trails and Berkshire South Community Center help organize volunteers and steward the trail.
2. Great Barrington Housatonic River Walk ("River Walk"): Designated a National Recreation Trail by the National Park Service, this 0.5 mile trail in downtown Great Barrington reestablished our downtown's connection with, and respect for, the Housatonic River. Approximately 5,000 residents and tourists visit this popular downtown site yearly. Not only is it a peaceful retreat along the river, it is also a model of natural resource protection that uses native plant buffers, invasive-exotic plant control, local non-toxic trail materials, and non-point source pollution controls like rain gardens. In addition to its recreational value, it is also a cultural and historic resource. River Walk's William Stanley Overlook and W.E.B. Du Bois River Park promote the river's significance to industrial and civil rights leaders of national and international importance. The trail can be used as a portion of a 3.5 mile Central Loop connecting downtown with Lake Mansfield. The Great Barrington Land Conservancy administers the trail and manages its conservation easements on behalf of the community. Greenagers has been contracted to maintain the River Walk, and the town continues to provide some in-kind services. The River Walk is a shining example of success through hard work, volunteerism, commitment to ecological restoration, and long term partnerships. The town recognizes partnerships like these need constant care and continuous commitment on the part of the town.
3. Housatonic River Greenway: For years, Great Barrington citizens have advocated for an extension of the River Walk south from Bridge Street to the Claire Teague Senior Center. This trail, sometimes dubbed the Housatonic River Greenway, would be an approximately 1.5 mile trail to connect downtown with Olympian Meadows, the Fairgrounds, the Great Barrington Historical Society at Truman Wheeler Homestead, senior housing at Brookside Road, and the Senior Center. The idea was included in the 1997 Master Plan. After a design study in 1996 (resulting from a partnership of the town, Main Street Action, and the Great Barrington Land Conservancy), a route was determined and Federal transportation funds were available. Unfortunately, the project never came to fruition.

The need and desire for a multi-use path remains, however, and its recreational, transportation, historic and conservation potential is immense. It could also connect popular fishing spots, canoe launches, and wildlife viewing locations. The route still exists in the form of a sewer easement to the town. While concerns of abutters and property owners, not to mention the construction costs, are significant hurdles, the opportunity and the strong desire still exists. The new owners of the Fairgrounds, the Historical Society, and private landowners have all expressed their willingness to partner with the town to accomplish this vision. Moreover, participants in this Master Plan process have resoundingly called for both redevelopment of the Fairgrounds and the creation of the Housatonic River Greenway. In developing the Greenway, the town will seek to apply the trail principles used by the downtown River Walk, namely that trail activities will comply with sound ecological practices, provide safe access, and educate the public in river stewardship. A list of other principles to guide the development of the river trail is included in the sidebar at right.

4. Lake Mansfield Forest: Nearly a mile of trails traverse this 30-acre woodland. It connects the beach area at Lake Mansfield to Christian Hill Road, via a bridge and boardwalk hewn from local lumber. A portion of the trail system is accessible to people with disabilities. The trail system here is part of the 3.5 mile Central Loop connecting downtown with Lake Mansfield. Future plans include connecting with Christian Hill Commons and Knob Hill. A trail map is available at downtown trail kiosks and on the GB Trails and Greenways website. The Lake Mansfield trails are another example of a successful partnership between the town and trail advocates.
5. Beartown State Forest: Trails and old roads provide ample opportunities for hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobile and ATV riding in Beartown. The Appalachian Trail runs through the Forest, along the eastern end of Benedict Pond. The 1.5 mile Benedict Pond loop trail is beautiful in any season. Parking is available at Benedict Pond. Recently, the state has been promoting short, easy to moderate trails as “Heart Healthy” trails. The program promotes the trails system to get people outdoors to have fun and get heart healthy exercise. It could be a model for Great Barrington to follow in promoting its own parks and recreational resources.
6. Monument Mountain: Owned and managed by the Trustees of the Reservations, an extensive trail system winds around the mountain. Upwards of 20,000 visitors a year come to this spectacular location, many to trudge up the one mile trail, gaining over 700 feet in elevation to reach the 1,642 summit of Squaw Peak. Views as far north as Mount Greylock and east to the Catskills are possible. Countless informal trails wind their way through the forests on the mountain’s western slopes. These are unmanaged, but the potential exists to formalize and promote the connection with Park Street (Route 183) where a trail head could be possible at the old Rising Field. The Berkshire Hills Regional School District tries to utilize this resource area, but a safer crossing of Route 7 is desired. There is currently no crosswalk or link to the trailhead from the school campus.
7. Flag Rock: Recently, the Trustees and the owner of Flag Rock have explored the exciting potential to connect Monument Mountain, Flag Rock, and the Housatonic village center. This is a historic opportunity and could potentially catalyze redevelopment at the mills. Few other places offer the beauty of a scenic river, the heritage of the mills, and wilderness hikes offering spectacular views, all within walking distance of a village center.
8. Fountain Pond and Three Mile Hill: A two mile trail connecting Fountain Pond and Berkshire South Community Center traverses a portion of Three Mile Hill. The trail traverses property owned and managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, and Berkshire South Community Center. The trail is open year round, and parking is available at both ends of the trail. Future plans call for extending the trail north to Lover’s Lane and eventually to the regional schools, and south to Route 23 and Butternut Basin. A trail map is available at downtown trail kiosks and on the GB Trails and Greenways website.
9. McAllister Wildlife Refuge: Beginning at Haley Road on Berkshire Heights, the gravel access road winds past hay fields, meadows, and mixed forest for about three-quarters of a mile to the Green River. At least another mile of trails loop through the forests and fields. The Conservation Commission is beginning active stewardship of this space, starting with a wetlands and trail mapping project. A future kiosk and brochure will help promote this unique place.
10. East Rock and East Mountain: Overlooking downtown Great Barrington, just off Quarry Street, a half-mile long trail leads to the top of East Rock—a boulder formation on the northwestern slopes of East Mountain State Forest. On a clear day, the Catskill Mountains can be seen. The trail traverses town, State and private property. The Greenagers and Railroad Street Youth Project have recently begun an effort to maintain and map the trail. While the Appalachian Trail is not interested in side trail connection—the AT is intended as a wilderness corridor—a significant opportunity exists to promote this area as a wilderness recreation area so close to downtown. Already Reservoir Rocks is a renowned climbing destination in New England. Cooperation with the Fire District and private property owners is essential. Communication with the State DCR should continue, since DCR funding may be essential to permanent preservation of this area.
11. Pfeiffer Arboretum: A 0.7 mile loop trail winds through this 28 acre property owned and managed by the Great Barrington Land Conservancy. An overlook near the edge of Long Pond provides views of the pond, and the slopes of Tom Ball Mountain. A trail map is available at downtown trail kiosks and on the GB Trails and Greenways website.

12. **Project Native:** A recent addition to the town's trail system, a loop trail system access over 20 acres of wildflower meadows and six acres of old growth white oak forest known as Wislocki Woods. Parking is available at Project Native on North Plain Road. Dogs are not permitted due to concerns for birds, plants, and other wildlife. The property abuts the old State Line Railroad branch, where walkers and mountain bikers use the railroad right of way to connect with Greenlawn Cemetery and Main Street in Housatonic.

Figure 44: Great Barrington Trails and Greenways Vision Map



Other Trails and Trail Opportunities:

The former State Line Railroad, connecting Van Deusenville with West Stockbridge, has been a footpath, cross-country ski trail, and mountain bike route for years. Its Great Barrington portion is over a mile in length. It is owned privately and is not a formal trail. Advocates wish to see it improved and be a part of a trail loop system with Greenlawn Cemetery and the village center, but concerns of abutters have in the past proved insurmountable. It remains a vision of many.

The revitalization of the former mills in Housatonic will be a golden opportunity to construct a River Walk in Housatonic. This section of the river, framed by the mills and the mountains, is swift and beautiful. People would like to see outdoor dining, picnic areas, canoe and kayak launches, fishing platforms, and other opportunities to connect to the river.

Informal trails on the western edge of Rising Pond cross property now owned by General Electric to reach the pond. If improved, it would be part of a multi-mile loop system connecting Housatonic village, the pond, and Greenlawn Cemetery. Connections to the State Line Railroad, Project Native, and across Rising Dam to the western flanks of Monument Mountain might also be possible. PCB remediation efforts at Rising Pond could prove to be the ideal opportunity to improve this trail

system for year round use and guarantee public canoe or kayak and fishing access to the pond. Launches could be located at the dam, on the western shore, or at the north end of the pond near the sewer pump station (a site recommended by the 1974 Town Plan).

Bicycling

Bicycling is a popular past time in the Berkshires, and Great Barrington offers a great many scenic rides for riders of all ages. In the summer, it is not uncommon to see up 30 or 40 bicyclists converging at the local bike shop for community rides planned for everyone from beginners to experts. The annual Josh Billing Run Aground race begins its bicycle component on Stockbridge Road and winds five miles through town before entering Alford, on the way to Lenox and Stockbridge. The inaugural Berkshire Cycling Classic in 2012 drew 300 competitive riders from around the world to an 80-mile course through central and south Berkshire.

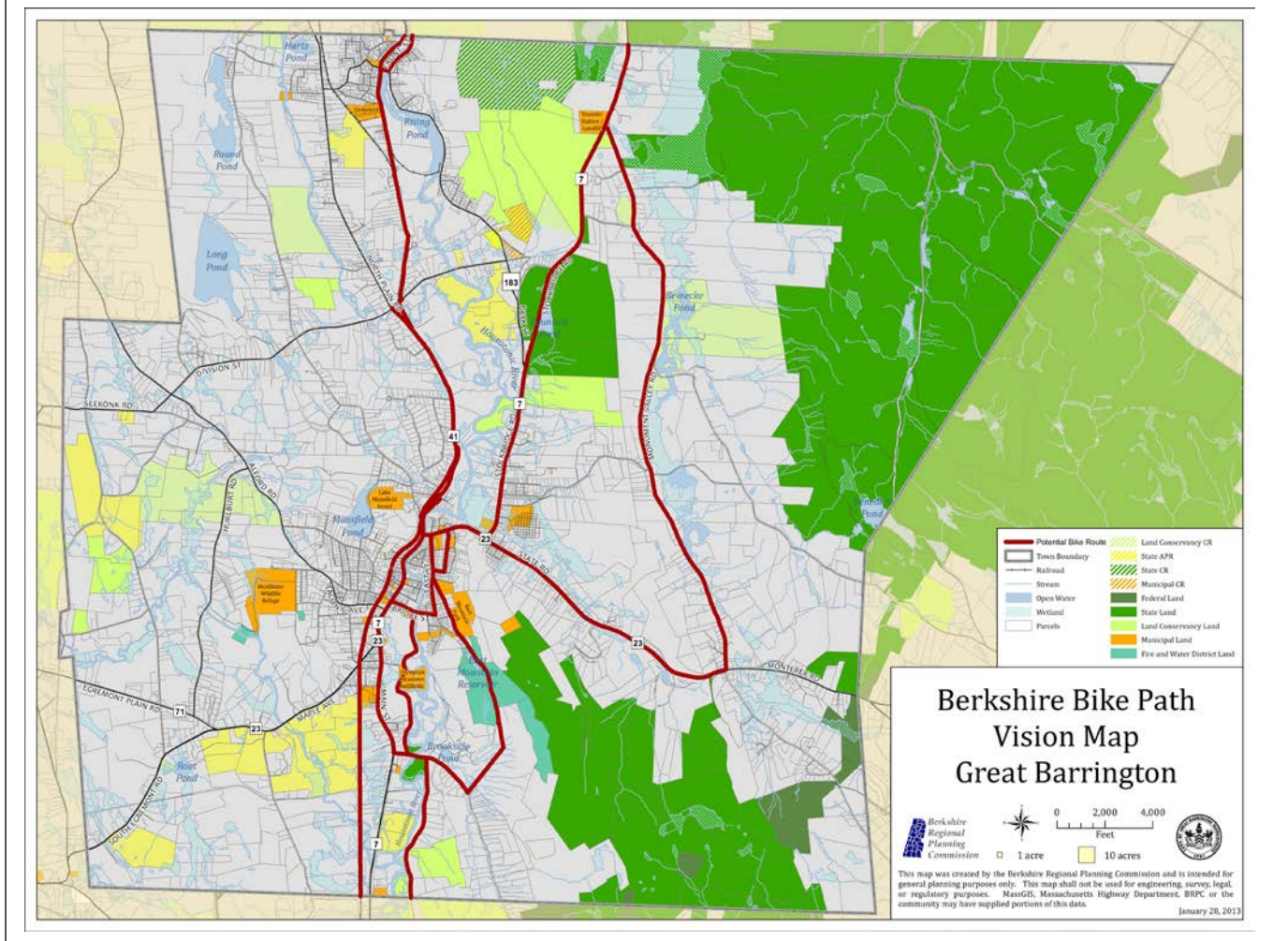
Unfortunately, riding on local roads can be dangerous, even for experienced cyclists. Narrow or nonexistent shoulders offer no refuge from speeding vehicles. Limited street lighting and low visibility in bad weather effectively limits safe cycling to the warm temperatures and long days of summer. To increase bicycle accommodate, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation has a policy to address all modes of travel when doing road redesign or repair. The Town DPW should adopt a similar policy.

Local bicycling groups are taking steps to achieve their vision of more and safer bicycling options. With the help of the Department of Public Works and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, advocates had "share the road" and "bicycle route" signs posted on Route 7, Monument Valley Road, Main Street, and Route 23, all of which are popular on-road routes. Advocates have held bicycling days, with the help of a local cycle shop and the Police Department, to encourage safe bicycle riding practices. And recently, an effort funded by Housatonic Heritage produced bike route maps to connect scenic roads, historic and cultural resources, and village centers throughout the upper Housatonic Valley.

A frequently expressed desire by participants in the OSRP update and Master Plan process is for a safe route to connect Housatonic with downtown Great Barrington. Such a route would increase transportation and recreation options. Numerous proposals hope to utilize the railroad corridor, which already links the downtowns. While this may not be possible given the limited right of way and other issues with the active railroad, it should remain on the table for discussion. In the meantime, on-road routes along Van Deusenville Road, North Plain Road, and Park Street should be explored.

The local routes in Great Barrington are also envisioned to be part of a longer Vermont to Connecticut multi-use recreational path of approximately 75 miles. Coordinated by the Berkshire Bike Path Council and with the steady support of BRPC and former US Congressman John Olver, the border to border trail will utilize railway corridors and related off-road bike paths, where possible, with on-road bike lanes. Great Barrington has been doing its part in this effort since 2009 when the Board of Selectmen signed a "Joint Planning Resolution" committing the town to plan cooperatively with the 10 other Berkshire County communities through which the projected Berkshire Bike Path will travel. Since then, a bike trail vision map (see Figure 21) was developed with the cooperation of our northern (Stockbridge) and southern (Sheffield) neighbors.

Figure 45: Options for Berkshire Bike Path within Great Barrington



Cemeteries

Cemeteries are often overlooked but are peaceful open spaces for walkers. Level paths and scenic views are perfect for thoughtful strolling and historical insight. They are also popular for families with young children learning to ride their bikes. Great Barrington owns over 50 acres of cemeteries, several of which are over two hundred years old, and in convenient locations near downtown and village centers. Residents in Housatonic frequently walk to and through Greenlawn Cemetery, and residents of the Blue Hill Road and Fairview Terrace neighborhood use Elmwood Cemetery. There is enormous potential to connect and promote our cemeteries as recreational spaces.

Boating, Fishing, and Hunting

Despite an impressive 562 acres of water in Great Barrington, only two surface water bodies and a short stretch of the Housatonic River are accessible to the public for boating, paddling, or kayaking. Only Lake Mansfield and Benedict Pond actually have boat access points. The space at Benedict Pond was just renovated in 2012, but the boat launch at Lake Mansfield near the foot of Knob Hill is in need of stormwater management and parking improvements. On the Housatonic River, there is only one formal canoe access, at Brookside Road, but there is the desire and opportunity for additional spots, at Rising Pond (at the dam, across from Cone Avenue, and/or on the western bank), Division Street, and Bridge Street. Only non-motorized boats are allowed on any of these waters in Great Barrington. (Lake Buel, just east of Great Barrington in Monterey, has a public launch off of Route 57.)

Invasive plant (milfoil, for example) and animal (zebra mussels in particular) species present a growing threat to our water bodies. These are often transported by boats and other watercraft. Recent efforts to stop these “aquatic hitchhikers” center around educational pamphlets and requiring boaters to first clean their boats before entering the water. The town will continue to partner with the state on these efforts.

Fishing is a popular past time in the Berkshires. Again, there are few publicly-accessible fishing spots. The most popular, year round, are Lake Mansfield and Benedict Pond. Trout, pickerel, and bass are stocked in Lake Mansfield. Dangerous traffic on the road and heavy weed growth, however often conspire to make fishing difficult in the late summer. Ice fishing derbies and family fishing days bring enthusiasts from across the region. At Benedict Pond, sunfish, bass, and perch are the most frequently taken fish.

While PCB contamination of the Housatonic River renders its fish inedible, fishing is possible along the river, although there are no formal fish access points in Great Barrington. When trails are extended along the river, in Housatonic village, at Rising Pond, and south of Great Barrington on the Housatonic River Greenway, fishing access should be incorporated. If and when bridges are replaced, such as Park Street in Housatonic, Division Street, Cottage Street, and Bridge Street, consideration should be given to fishing access, including piers on the bridge.

Fly fishing is popular along the Williams and Green Rivers, but there are no formal access points. The most frequently used spots are at Division Street on the Williams River, where access for fishing, but not swimming, is possible with permission from the landowner. Each spring the Great Barrington Fish and Game club sponsors a fishing derby here for families. On the Green River, fishing spots can be accessed at Seekonk Cross Road, Pumpkin Hollow Road, Hurlburt Road, McAllister Wildlife Refuge, and Route 23.

Hunting is an important part of our heritage and a popular pastime in Berkshire County. Hunting is one way in which people connect with their natural surroundings, and is an activity that is compatible with the emerging local food movement and the desire to promote outdoor recreation. Hunting is permitted in season in Beartown and East Mountain State Forests, Fountain Pond State Park, and at Monument Mountain reservation. It is not permitted on any town properties (including Lake Mansfield Forest or McAllister Wildlife Refuge). The restriction is appropriate in these spaces given the number of people recreating here, and homes in the vicinity. Hunting is managed and licensed by the State, so there is little for Great Barrington to do on this score. The town should better post town properties to be clear about these restrictions.

Skiing and Other Winter Sports

In Great Barrington in the winter, hiking boots are set aside in favor of skates, skis, and snowshoes. All but the steepest of trails are accessible to cross country skiers and snowshoe enthusiasts. Lake Mansfield, McAllister Wildlife Refuge and Beartown State Forest all offer exceptional trails in this regard. Future trails, along the old State Line Railroad and at the Fairgrounds, for example, would add to the inventory.

Downhill skiers can enjoy Ski Butternut, on the north face of East Mountain State Forest, or travel 15 minutes west to Catamount in South Egremont. Ice skating and ice hockey are popular at Lake Mansfield. The hills of Housatonic School Park, Park Street Park, and Monument Mountain Regional High School beckon sled riders of all ages.

Fitness and Recreation Centers

Great Barrington’s outdoor recreational opportunities are supplemented by an array of private nonprofit and for-profit fitness centers. Health, wellness, and fitness coaches abound, with fitness studios throughout town. The Kilpatrick Athletic Center at Simon’ Rock and Berkshire South Community Center both offer swimming pools and other facilities for members.

Summary of Resource Protection Needs

The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) identified a number of important needs for resource protection. Some of these are new; some are abiding concerns or needs from the 2007 OSRP. These needs are summarized below.

- Cleanup of the PCBs from the Housatonic River and its floodplain is a major need and desire. The Housatonic River is a central resource in Great Barrington and its health impacts the health of the surrounding natural systems, especially when contaminants spread through the food web. Further cleanup efforts are needed, and the town is committed to continuing in the dialogue on the cleanup process, working with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. A long term goal of the town is that the river be safe to fish and swim.
- Some open space resources, including town parks, are not permanently protected from development. These are detailed in the inventory in Table 17. Unprotected lands should be made permanent by deed, and/or Town Meeting vote as appropriate.
- While upland areas are protected from development by virtue of land ownership (e.g., state forest) or other regulations, many lowland areas remain unprotected. A goal of this plan to protect, by conservation restriction or other appropriate regulation, lowland areas that have significant environmental features including, for example, habitat, floodplain, endangered species, and wetlands.
- There is a desire to protect as much unprotected agricultural resource land as possible, so that agriculture can remain a thriving component of the local economy and important aspect of our open space and scenic resources.
- A general improvement of sidewalks, particularly where they connect to community resources including parks and open spaces.
- The need for a reliable long-term secondary water supply source, and the protection of existing water supply areas. This includes ensuring the regulations of the Water Quality Protection District are enforced, and quasi commercial home businesses reduce, treat, or manage and hazardous materials they may generate.
- The need to adapt to impacts of climate change. This includes protecting wetlands and floodplains and managing invasive species, as well as addressing many of the other needs noted above.

Open Space and Recreation Needs

Consistent with the needs summarized by the 2006 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), the five-year Open Space and Recreation Plan for the Commonwealth, Great Barrington's key needs are the protection of existing open space and recreation assets. Second is the improvement or creation of new water-based recreational assets, for fishing, swimming, and paddling. This is particularly important in Great Barrington where public access to water resources is limited to a handful of sites.

There is also a strong desire in Great Barrington to better connect existing open space and recreational resources to each other and to developed areas including neighborhoods. This includes a need to improve sidewalks and trails, add new sidewalks and trails where possible, and connect the village of Housatonic with downtown Great Barrington. Meeting these needs will not only increase opportunities for walking, hiking, and biking, but also address some transportation needs and help mitigate long-term impacts of climate change and rising energy prices. Given the region's declining population, but increasing senior and minority population, adapting existing resources to meet the needs of less mobile seniors or the demands of people of different cultural backgrounds and language abilities will become more important than creating new recreational assets.

The Parks Commission continues to work on maintenance and an improvement plan for all town-owned parks and recreational areas, particularly playgrounds. Their five year capital program will fund swings and other play equipment, fencing and field improvements, as well as fitness equipment in circuits or stations in select town parks.

Keeping in mind the aging population, but also those with mobility challenges or even children learning to ride their bikes, the town needs to ensure its roads, sidewalks, trails, and recreation assets are safe and accessible. Indeed participants in OSRP and Master Plan public forums described dangerous intersections and stretches of road without sidewalks or shoulders. While the sidewalk and crosswalk improvements in Housatonic in 2009, funded by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, help improve accessibility in that village, improvements are needed elsewhere. Sidewalk and trail needs are discussed in the transportation section. It should be noted that the Main Street Reconstruction project beginning in 2014 is incorporating a bike lane and ADA accessible sidewalks in downtown Great Barrington.

A good pedestrian and ADA accessible network would allow local people to lessen their participation in the heavy through-traffic congestion when meeting their local needs. In developing the broader network, trails need to be designed so as not to interfere with habitat, water quality, farm operations, or scenic value. Some accessible trails have been developed in the Lake Mansfield Forest, are frequently used by wheelchair users. Several other upgrades are needed in order to make many of the parcels ADA compliant. Most of the buildings, amenities and equipment lack both accessibility and services for the disabled. Site access for several properties needs to be improved to provide suitable parking and unloading for handicapped persons near entrances, as well as user friendly pathways, since the ground is often uneven. Similarly, the two properties that have public restrooms and picnicking areas (Olympian Meadows and Lake Mansfield) are currently unable to accommodate handicapped persons in those capacities and could greatly benefit from such additions.

Management Needs

The Town's Agricultural Commission, Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Parks Commission, and Planning Board are all actively working to protect and promote the town's open space resources. The boards hold joint meetings when appropriate and have participated in crafting town policy through nearly three years of working on the Master Plan together. Several goals such as preserving working farmland and conserving lowland habitats will require their continued close cooperation. Other initiatives such as promotion of existing recreational opportunities will have direct quality of life and economic development benefits, and should be cooperatively undertaken. Regular joint meetings should continue and should include such items as management and promotion of existing assets and conservation of new assets.

With the Town Planner and Conservation Agent working together and with each of the above boards, communication is regular and planning is comprehensive. Furthermore, with the adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in 2012, and the creation of a Community Preservation Committee (CPC) in 2013, the town has good management and funding infrastructure to have an active and ongoing role in open space management and conservation.

The Agricultural Commission has been working on a regional agriculture plan called Keep Berkshires Farming. This initiative with the Glynwood Center of Cold Spring, New York, and with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, is being conducted in concert with this OSRP update and the Master Plan. The Agricultural Commission will need to continue its active role and coordinate regularly with other boards and the Town Planner's office in order to implement Keep Berkshires Farming initiatives.

The Conservation Commission and the Conservation Agent are becoming more proactive in managing the open space assets for which they are responsible, such McAllister Wildlife Refuge and Lake Mansfield. This should continue and be coordinated with the other boards and the Parks Commission.

The Parks Commission has an active working relationship with the Department of Public Works (DPW), whose staff maintains parks and playgrounds. However, if the goals of this plan, including maintenance and promotion, are to be accomplished, DPW will need assistance. The staff has a good deal of ground to cover in the summertime, and cannot always keep up with the work. One of the only instances in the entire Master Plan that calls for an increase in town staff is to increase DPW staff in order to address this issue.

Additionally, or, if needed, alternatively, volunteer stewardship can assist with basic maintenance of the parks and open spaces. Projects by neighborhood groups or "friends of a park" could help pick up trash, rake leaves and clear brush, clean up graffiti, and keep watchful eyes on the park to increase safety and comfort levels for all users. There are several successful examples of volunteers to follow, such as Great Barrington Trails and Greenways is a stellar organizer of volunteers of like-minded organizations. Schools and groups like the local Berkshire Hills Regional School District, Berkshire School (Gracious Living Day every April), Greenagers, and Lake Mansfield Alliance are good places.

To capitalize on open space and conservation opportunities, such as Neenah Paper, canoe access points at Rising Pond and elsewhere, the Three Mile Hill trail, the Fairgrounds project, and East Mountain Reservoir, cooperation and communication between the town, private property owners, land conservation groups, and regional, state and federal agencies must continue. The Town Planner will be responsible for this and for keeping local boards informed about opportunities in land use.

Economic Development

Infrastructure

Great Barrington has a well-balanced mix of land uses, including scenic open spaces, historic downtown, safe neighborhoods, and rural country side that attract residents, workers, and employers from around the country. Our town also has the basic infrastructure, such as water, wastewater, natural gas, electric, cellular phone, and high-speed internet service necessary for economic competitiveness. We are at the crossroads of major north-south and east-west routes like Routes 7 and 23, though we are 20 minutes away from the Interstate 90, the Massachusetts Turnpike. Great Barrington has freight railroad service from the Housatonic Railroad, and a local airport, though this is used only for private, mostly recreational, flights. The nearest large commercial airports are in Albany and Hartford, and the nearest passenger railroad connections are in Hudson and Wassaic, New York.

With no dependence on heavy industry and little desire for more high-traffic retail development or high volume distribution operations, the town has a transport infrastructure that is adequate for most business needs. Passenger railroad service to link Great Barrington to New York City is being explored by the Housatonic Railroad. The railroad company's surveys indicate a strong ridership potential, but the time and amount of funding to upgrade the line is less certain. Good public transportation to New York City (and Boston) would make it even more attractive as a base of operations, making it even more convenient to the big metropolitan areas for developing business, meeting clients and connecting with long-range transportation. Until passenger rail service is reestablished to Berkshire County, it would be good to have regular, reliable shuttles to meet the trains in Wassaic and Hudson.

Nevertheless, infrastructure improvements can and should be made where they will result in increased competitiveness. Critical in this regard is broadband fiber optic internet service. Most of our town is currently served by either cable or DSL service, but for businesses that need more bandwidth capacity, the current infrastructure is inadequate and expensive. The Massachusetts Broadband Institute has nearly completed installing fiber optic cable in southern Berkshire (expected to be operational in mid-2013), but the challenge and expense of extending the lines from the anchor institutions (Town Hall is one) and trunk lines to businesses and homes remains.

More information on drinking water infrastructure can be found in the Natural Resources section of this plan. More information on wastewater service can be found in the Services section.

Land and Buildings

As detailed in the Land Use chapter, ***Great Barrington has a good supply of commercial and industrially-zoned land.*** In fact, we have more than current demand seems to warrant—many buildings and lots are vacant or undeveloped. Flood plains and environmental regulations may constrain development in flat open lands, but there are number of vacant commercial sites and buildings.

Our stock of existing buildings and infrastructure, like the mills and other in-town commercial sites is an important economic development asset. Because new companies typically look for existing buildings rather than build new facilities, reusing these sites, which are in developed locations and in convenient locations in our downtowns, may allow businesses and industries to reduce start-up costs and integrates employers into the existing economic and social fabric of our downtowns. As Iredale Mineral Cosmetics is showing, these sites can be redeveloped for use as corporate headquarters or small-scale specialty manufacturing to add jobs and tax revenue while preserving the rural landscapes.

the reuse of derelict sites and buildings is critical to efficiently using existing buildings and infrastructure, and reducing the need or pressure to build in sensitive environments. Unfortunately, several sites in town are brownfields, meaning they are contaminated, or potentially contaminated. Several brownfields have been identified and are being monitored. This includes the former Ried Cleaners building on Main Street in downtown, and the lands of Neenah Paper south of the Rising Mill on Park Street. The Berkshire Brownfields Program administered by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has been instrumental in helping identify, assess, and remediate brownfield sites countywide.

The former New England Log Homes site on Bridge Street in downtown Great Barrington is the site of a proposed commercial-residential mixed use development. Plans to remediate the pollutants, including dioxins and pentachlorophenols (PCPs) are in the final phase of development. The site is expected to be redeveloped by 2016.

More information on land use, zoning, and development constraints can be found in the Land Use chapter.

Additional demographic, employment, and wage data can be found in the first section of this Appendix.

Housing

Housing Characteristics

Housing characteristics have changed significantly since the 1997 Master Plan. Great Barrington's population is more seasonal, and the housing is significantly more expensive than it was two decades ago. The housing stock is also very old, other housing costs such as heating and property taxes are increasingly expensive, and, as discussed in the Land Use chapter, more housing units are built in rural areas than in village centers within reasonable distance of where people work, shop, or play.

The 1997 Plan noted the following statistics and concerns:

- Great Barrington was predominately a year-round community, with only five percent of the housing units being seasonal units. *(As of 2010, that percentage had grown to 11 percent.)*
- Great Barrington households with incomes below 80 percent of median income would not be able to afford to purchase a home at the 1994 median price of \$105,000. *(In 2010, the median sales price was roughly \$325,000, making it affordable only to household earning 68 percent more than the area median household income of \$52,800.)*
- Rental housing comprised a third of Great Barrington's housing units, with the median rent in 1990 being \$478. *(The median rent in 2010 was estimated to be \$848.)*

An overview of selected housing characteristics is presented in Table 18.

Table 18: Summary of Selected Housing Characteristics

Subject	Housatonic CDP	Great Barrington CDP	Town of Great Barrington	Berkshire County	Barnstable (Cape Cod)	Massachusetts	United States
Occupancy and Tenure							
Occupied housing units	84.8%	83.3%	84.5%	81.4%	61.8%	90.2%	87.8%
Owner-occupied	57.3%	45.8%	63.5%	68.9%	80.4%	64.0%	66.6%
Renter-occupied	42.7%	54.2%	36.5%	31.1%	19.6%	36.0%	33.4%
Vacant housing units	15.2%	16.7%	15.5%	18.6%	38.2%	9.8%	12.2%
Units in Structure							
1-unit, detached	38.1%	36.7%	56.6%	64.2%	83.3%	52.5%	61.6%
1-unit, attached	2.1%	3.9%	4.2%	2.7%	3.0%	4.9%	5.7%
2 units	45.7%	13.2%	16.8%	10.0%	2.9%	10.6%	3.9%
3 or 4 units	6.1%	22.6%	11.5%	9.5%	3.2%	10.9%	4.5%
5 to 9 units	7.9%	7.6%	4.9%	4.2%	3.1%	6.1%	4.8%
10 to 19 units	0.0%	1.6%	0.6%	2.8%	1.5%	4.3%	4.5%
20 or more units	0.0%	14.4%	5.4%	4.2%	2.4%	9.8%	8.2%
Year Structure Built							
Built 2005 or later (< 8 yrs old)	0.0%	1.5%	0.5%	1.1%	1.1%	2.0%	4.1%
Built 2000 to 2004	0.0%	1.1%	3.1%	2.9%	5.2%	4.1%	8.7%
Built 1990 to 1999	6.1%	9.5%	8.0%	5.0%	10.5%	7.4%	14.1%
Built 1980 to 1989	10.1%	5.4%	10.6%	10.0%	21.5%	10.9%	14.2%
Built 1970 to 1979	6.2%	4.5%	7.9%	10.6%	21.1%	11.8%	16.4%
Built 1960 to 1969	0.6%	3.8%	4.8%	10.0%	13.1%	10.5%	11.4%
Built 1950 to 1959	1.5%	5.1%	7.3%	12.9%	10.6%	11.4%	11.3%
Built 1940 to 1949	0.0%	5.5%	5.5%	8.0%	4.3%	6.1%	5.8%
Built 1939 or earlier (> 70 yrs old)	75.5%	63.5%	52.3%	39.4%	12.6%	35.8%	14.1%
House Heating Fuel of occupied units							
Utility gas	5.6%	29.2%	18.1%	34.7%	54.7%	47.5%	49.9%
Bottled, tank, or LP gas (propane)	12.8%	3.8%	6.7%	6.0%	3.2%	2.6%	5.4%
Electricity	13.0%	11.3%	10.2%	8.3%	9.2%	13.3%	34.2%
Fuel oil, kerosene, etc.	62.6%	49.9%	59.7%	44.7%	30.9%	34.6%	7.1%
Coal or coke	6.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%
Wood	0.0%	5.7%	4.0%	4.9%	1.3%	1.3%	2.0%
Solar, other, and no fuel	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	4.0%	0.7%	1.3%
Value of owner-occupied units							
Less than \$50,000	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	4.0%	1.0%	1.4%	8.2%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.8%	0.8%	1.4%	14.9%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	19.9%	3.0%	5.3%	15.2%	1.1%	3.7%	15.5%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	10.7%	9.3%	6.4%	22.0%	2.8%	7.5%	14.3%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	46.9%	33.2%	31.7%	22.1%	16.7%	22.8%	17.8%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	19.2%	38.2%	30.7%	20.0%	45.7%	40.4%	16.9%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	3.3%	16.3%	20.2%	7.7%	25.7%	19.3%	10.1%
\$1,000,000 or more	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%	2.3%	6.2%	3.6%	2.4%
Mortgage Status							
Housing units with a mortgage	64.5%	88.9%	62.4%	64.1%	64.9%	72.2%	67.9%
Housing units without a mortgage	35.5%	11.1%	37.6%	35.9%	35.1%	27.8%	32.1%
Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income (Units with a Mortgage)							
Less than 20.0 percent	18.4%	21.5%	24.2%	33.8%	24.1%	29.4%	33.9%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	4.8%	22.6%	11.5%	15.3%	13.7%	16.1%	16.0%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	29.0%	7.5%	16.1%	12.7%	12.5%	13.7%	12.5%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	0.0%	20.4%	13.0%	9.1%	9.4%	9.8%	9.0%
35.0 percent or more	47.8%	28.1%	35.2%	29.1%	40.3%	31.0%	28.6%
Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income (Occupied rental units)							
Less than 15.0 percent	4.5%	7.5%	8.1%	14.0%	8.3%	11.8%	12.3%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	14.3%	9.0%	12.5%	10.5%	10.3%	12.1%	12.4%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	0.0%	10.6%	7.0%	13.2%	10.3%	12.6%	12.8%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	0.0%	13.3%	11.5%	12.8%	12.6%	13.1%	11.7%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	0.0%	5.5%	6.5%	9.7%	12.6%	10.1%	9.1%
35.0 percent or more	81.2%	54.2%	54.5%	39.9%	45.8%	40.4%	41.7%

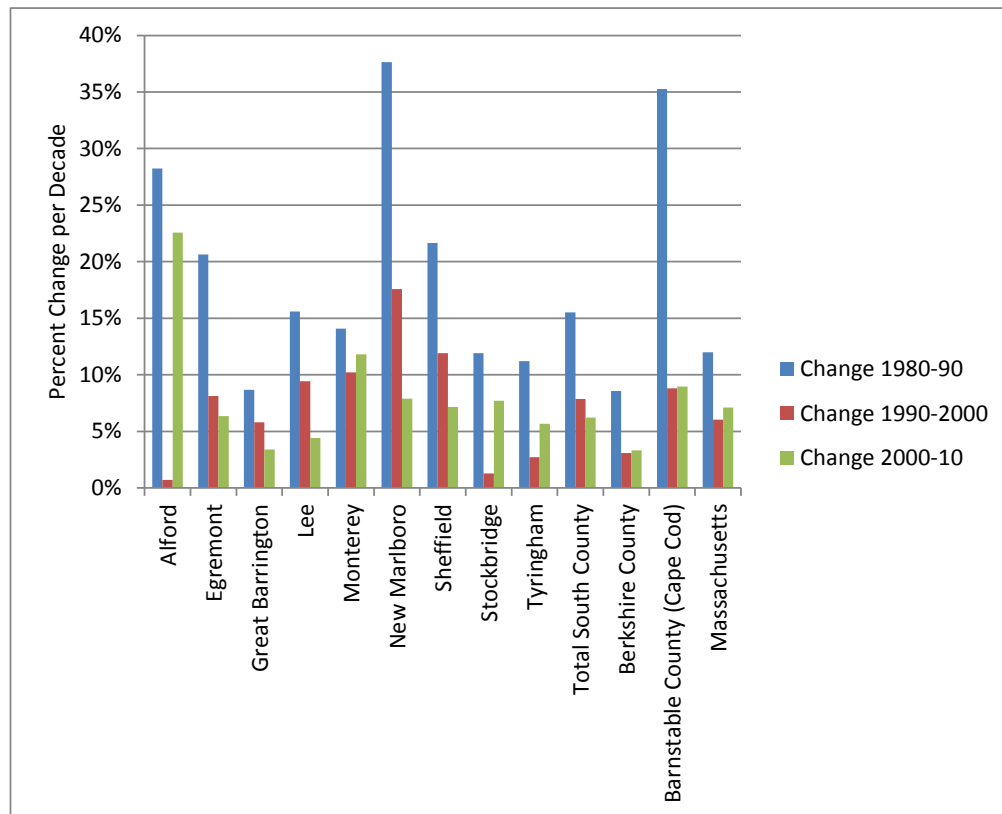
Source: US Census 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP-04

Housing Stock

Over the last two decades, the number of new housing units—residential growth—has been fairly constant while our population has decreased. The town's population has declined by 400 people since 2000, but we have gained housing units—about 100 over the last ten years. The US Census counted 3,168, 3,352, and 3,466 total housing units in 1990, 2000, and 2010, respectively. This is a 20-year increase of 298 units, or a 20-year annual average of about 15 units per year. Data from the

Building Inspector is consistent with the Census figures. The fastest rate of increase was between 1980 and 1990. Great Barrington's increase has been low compared to the rest of South County (see Figure 46).

Figure 46: Housing Unit Growth per Decade



Source: US Census

Most housing units are single family homes. According to the 2010 Census, 57 percent of Great Barrington's 3,730 housing units are single family detached homes. Single family detached homes are pricier than multi-unit dwellings, and are generally more expensive per unit to heat and maintain.

Housing types other than single family homes are more likely to be offered in either downtown or Housatonic village. Only 37 percent of units within the Great Barrington CDP and 38 percent of units within the Housatonic CDP are single family detached homes. Two-family homes make up approximately 17 percent of all units in Great Barrington, 13 percent of units in the Great Barrington CDP, and 46 percent of units in the Housatonic CDP. Approximately 22 percent of units in the town are in structures of three or more units, while 46 percent of units within the Great Barrington CDP and 28 percent of units within the Housatonic CDP are in structures of three or more units.

Our housing stock is very old—most of the homes in our town are 70 years old or more. Homes in our historic village centers, where our town originally developed, are the oldest. In Housatonic, 76 percent are more than 70 years old. In Great Barrington, 61 percent are more than 70 years old. Table 18 above compares our housing stock to the County and the state; we have some of the oldest housing in the area. While older homes add historic character to our town, this can be an expensive character to maintain and heat. As population shrinks, there is limited local demand for new homes to replace the old homes.

Housing Occupancy and Tenure

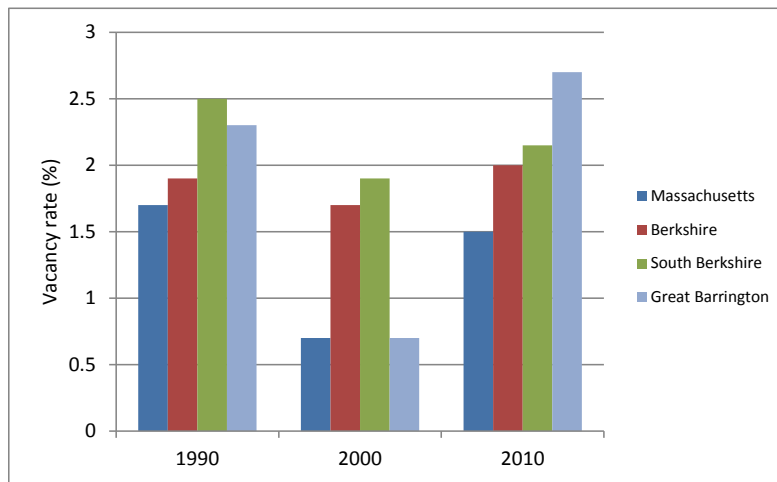
Table 19 below summarizes and compares housing occupancy and tenure data from the 2010 Census for Great Barrington. Just over 83 percent of our town's 3,466 housing units were occupied. Of those occupied units approximately two-thirds were owner-occupied, and one-third was renter occupied. The percentage of renter-occupied is much greater in downtown and in Housatonic than in the town as a whole (or indeed than in the County, State, or country). The percentage of seasonal units is noted in the "for seasonal recreational or occasional use" line.

Overall occupancy percentages have been decreasing and vacancy rates increasing over the last several decades. This is due in part to the declining population and the increase in seasonal units and second homes. Figure 47 compares these rates over time. In contrast, rental vacancy rates for Housatonic, downtown, and the town as a whole are quite low compared to the county. This points to a relatively high demand for a relatively limited supply of rental housing units.

Table 19: Housing Occupancy and Tenure Data

Subject	Housatonic CDP		Great Barrington CDP		Great Barrington town		Berkshire County		Barnstable County (Cape Cod)		Massachusetts		United States	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
HOUSING OCCUPANCY														
Total housing units	571	100%	1,240	100%	3,466	100%	68,508	100%	160,281	100%	2,808,254	100%	131,704,730	100%
Occupied housing units	500	87.6%	1,087	87.7%	2,879	83.1%	56,091	81.9%	95,755	59.7%	2,547,075	90.7%	116,716,292	88.6%
Vacant housing units	71	12.4%	153	12.3%	587	16.9%	12,417	18.1%	64,526	40.3%	261,179	9.3%	14,988,438	11.4%
For rent	14	2.5%	31	2.5%	67	1.9%	1,776	2.6%	3,102	1.9%	66,673	2.4%	4,137,567	3.1%
Rented, not occupied	0	0.0%	1	0.1%	2	0.1%	65	0.1%	241	0.2%	3,822	0.1%	206,825	0.2%
For sale only	12	2.1%	7	0.6%	50	1.4%	788	1.2%	1,963	1.2%	25,038	0.9%	1,896,796	1.4%
Sold, not occupied	0	0.0%	2	0.2%	5	0.1%	190	0.3%	361	0.2%	6,408	0.2%	421,032	0.3%
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	24	4.2%	83	6.7%	394	11.4%	7,894	11.5%	56,863	35.5%	115,630	4.1%	4,649,298	3.5%
All other vacants	21	3.7%	29	2.3%	69	2.0%	1,704	2.5%	1,996	1.2%	43,608	1.6%	3,676,920	2.8%
Homeowner vacancy rate (percent)	3.8	(X)	1.4	(X)	2.7	(X)	2	(X)	2.6	(X)	1.5	(X)	2.4	(X)
Rental vacancy rate (percent)	6.6	(X)	5.1	(X)	5.8	(X)	8.8	(X)	12.4	(X)	6.5	(X)	9.2	(X)
HOUSING TENURE														
Occupied housing units	500	100.0%	1,087	100.0%	2,879	100.0%	56,091	100.0%	95,755	100.0%	2,547,075	100.0%	116,716,292	100.0%
Owner-occupied housing units	301	60.2%	508	46.7%	1,800	62.5%	37,770	67.3%	74,110	77.4%	1,587,158	62.3%	75,986,074	65.1%
Population in owner-occupied housing units	700	(X)	1,167	(X)	4,276	(X)	89,495	(X)	167,595	(X)	4,214,212	(X)	201,278,493	(X)
Average household size of owner-occupied units	2.33	(X)	2.3	(X)	2.38	(X)	2.37	(X)	2.26	(X)	2.66	(X)	2.65	(X)
Renter-occupied housing units	199	39.8%	579	53.3%	1,079	37.5%	18,321	32.7%	21,645	22.6%	959,917	37.7%	40,730,218	34.9%
Population in renter-occupied housing units	405	(X)	1,043	(X)	2,062	(X)	35,565	(X)	44,332	(X)	2,094,535	(X)	99,479,722	(X)
Average household size of renter-occupied units	2.04	(X)	1.8	(X)	1.91	(X)	1.94	(X)	2.05	(X)	2.18	(X)	2.44	(X)

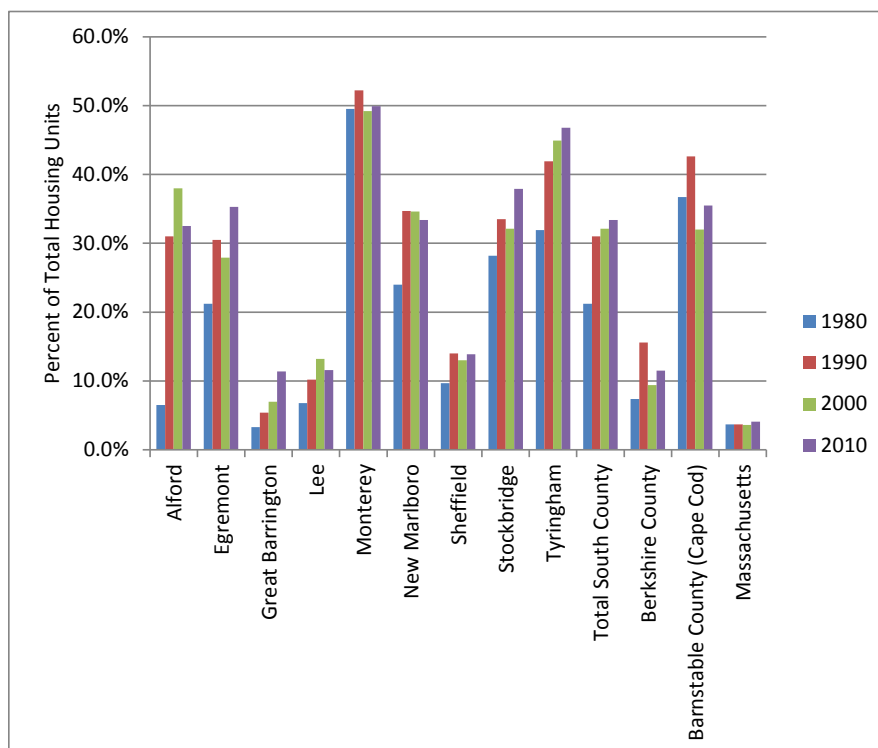
Figure 47: Homeowner Vacancy Rate



Source: US Census

Data for seasonal vacant units is used to approximate the number of second homes. Great Barrington has fewer second homes as a percent of its housing, about 11 percent. The Great Barrington Assessor estimates that roughly 300 homes, or 14 percent of single-family and condominium units, are second homes. This percentage has been growing every year for the past few decades. (Our southern neighbor Sheffield has the same percentage as us. Alford, Egremont, and Stockbridge each have percentages of 28% or more.) See Figure 48. It is true that second home sales tend to drive up home prices in general. On the other hand, second homes can have a significant positive fiscal impact: they contribute substantial tax revenues to our town coffers while demanding comparatively fewer services like schools, water, or sewer.

Figure 48: Seasonal Vacant Units, as Percent of Total Units



Source: US Census

Housing Costs and Affordability

Housing in Great Barrington is becoming more and more difficult to afford. Even after the recession that began in 2007-2008, the median price of a moderately sized house in Great Barrington has more than doubled since the time of the last Master Plan, in 1997. Incomes are not keeping pace with housing prices. While there has been some growth in highly skilled, well-paying jobs in administration, construction, finance, and professional management the overall share of jobs continues to shift from relatively high paying sectors to relatively lower paying education, health care, hospitality, retail trade, and tourism sectors. At the same time, energy and heating costs and property taxes continue to strain budgets more than ever before.

The average single family home is well out of reach of the typical Great Barrington household. The median sales price of a single family home in Great Barrington in 2010 was about \$325,000. To be able to afford that house with a conventional mortgage at 28% of your income, assuming a 20% down payment of \$65,000, a 30 year mortgage at 6% interest, taxes at \$12.16 per \$1000, and homeowners insurance, you would need an annual income of about \$89,000. That is about \$36,200 per year more than the estimated 2010 Great Barrington median household income of \$52,800.

Renting is much more affordable than buying, but it is still difficult for many. Recent data indicates that the median monthly rent in 2010 for a 2-bedroom residence in our town was approximately \$840. In order not to spend more than 30% of your income on this residence (the typical affordability standard), you would need to earn at least \$32,040 per year, or \$15.40/hour. That is less than the Great Barrington median household income, and in line with moderate salaries of service sector jobs, but households with few employment opportunities or heavy debts will find it difficult to afford the typical rental unit.

Building a home is not an affordable option. Vacant building lots less than five acres in size have sold for a median price of \$120,000 in recent years. To build a modest 1,400 square foot home on that lot at current prices could cost another \$280,000. The total price of a small, newly built starter home would total \$400,000 in this scenario.

Affordability is not improving, despite the sluggish housing market and declining assessed values. Inflation-adjusted sales price data is presented in Table 20.

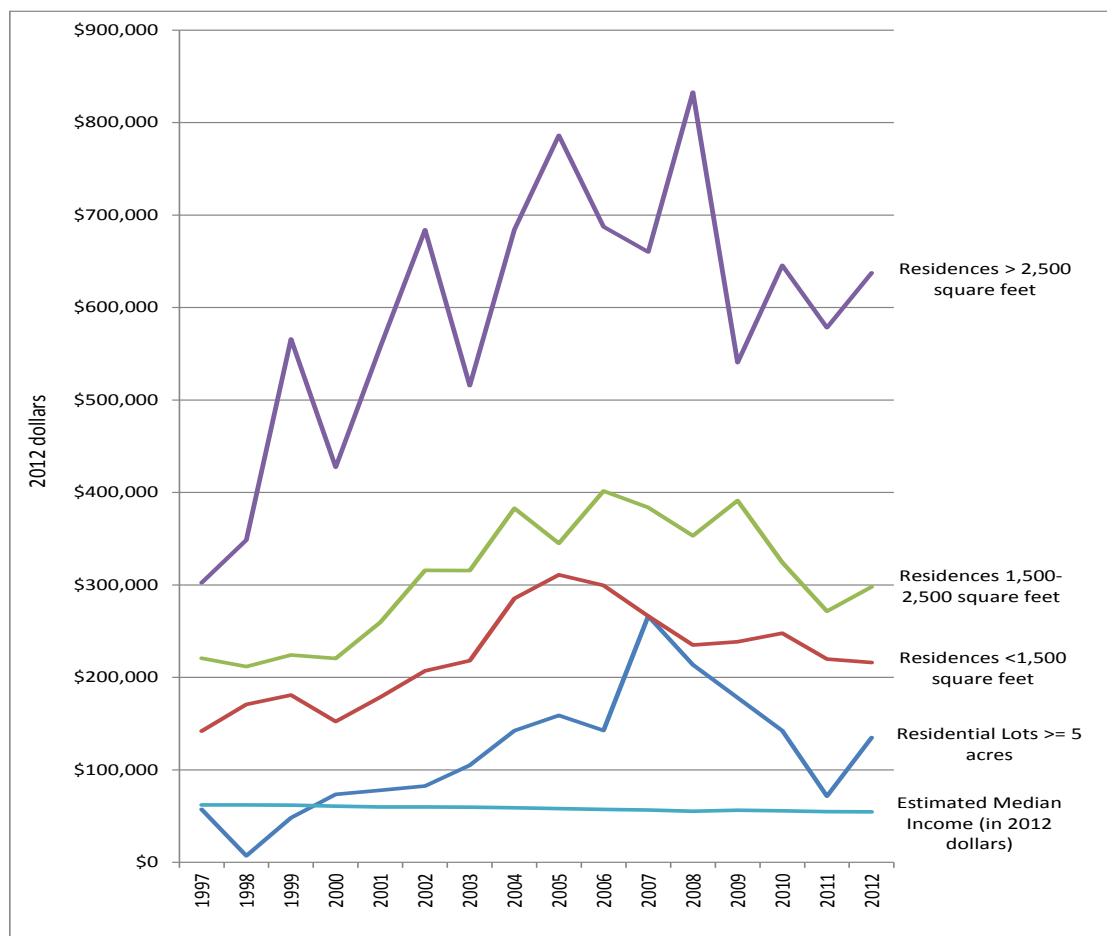
Home prices are increasing as incomes are decreasing. Inflation adjusted sales price data is presented alongside inflation-adjusted income in Figure 49.

Table 20: Sales and Prices of Residences in Great Barrington, 1997-2012

	Residential Lots <= 5 acres		Residences <1,500 square feet		Residences 1,500-2,500 square feet		Residences > 2,500 square feet	
	Number	Median	Number	Median	Number	Median	Number	Median
1997	4	\$57,300	11	\$141,900	29	\$220,700	6	\$302,400
1998	5	\$7,100	20	\$170,700	33	\$211,700	22	\$348,500
1999	5	\$48,300	22	\$180,900	51	\$224,300	10	\$566,000
2000	5	\$73,500	16	\$152,300	47	\$220,400	15	\$427,400
2001	7	\$77,900	15	\$178,600	27	\$259,700	12	\$557,500
2002	10	\$82,500	20	\$207,100	38	\$315,800	15	\$684,000
2003	5	\$105,000	16	\$218,100	39	\$315,600	18	\$515,600
2004	6	\$142,500	22	\$285,500	50	\$382,900	19	\$684,300
2005	3	\$159,000	26	\$310,900	34	\$345,100	22	\$786,100
2006	7	\$142,600	13	\$299,500	35	\$401,600	24	\$687,400
2007	1	\$266,200	26	\$266,200	24	\$383,800	10	\$660,000
2008	1	\$213,700	26	\$235,000	20	\$353,100	12	\$832,700
2009	0		19	\$238,500	21	\$391,300	14	\$540,300
2010	2	\$142,400	14	\$247,900	23	\$324,300	16	\$645,500
2011	1	\$71,600	11	\$219,800	32	\$271,500	17	\$578,200
2012	2	\$135,000	22	\$211,500	21	\$290,000	16	\$631,300

Source: Berkshire County MLS raw data, compiled by FRIDAY & Co. Real Estate, 2012. All figures adjusted to 2012 dollars.

Figure 49: Residential Sales Prices and Median Income in Great Barrington, 1997-2012



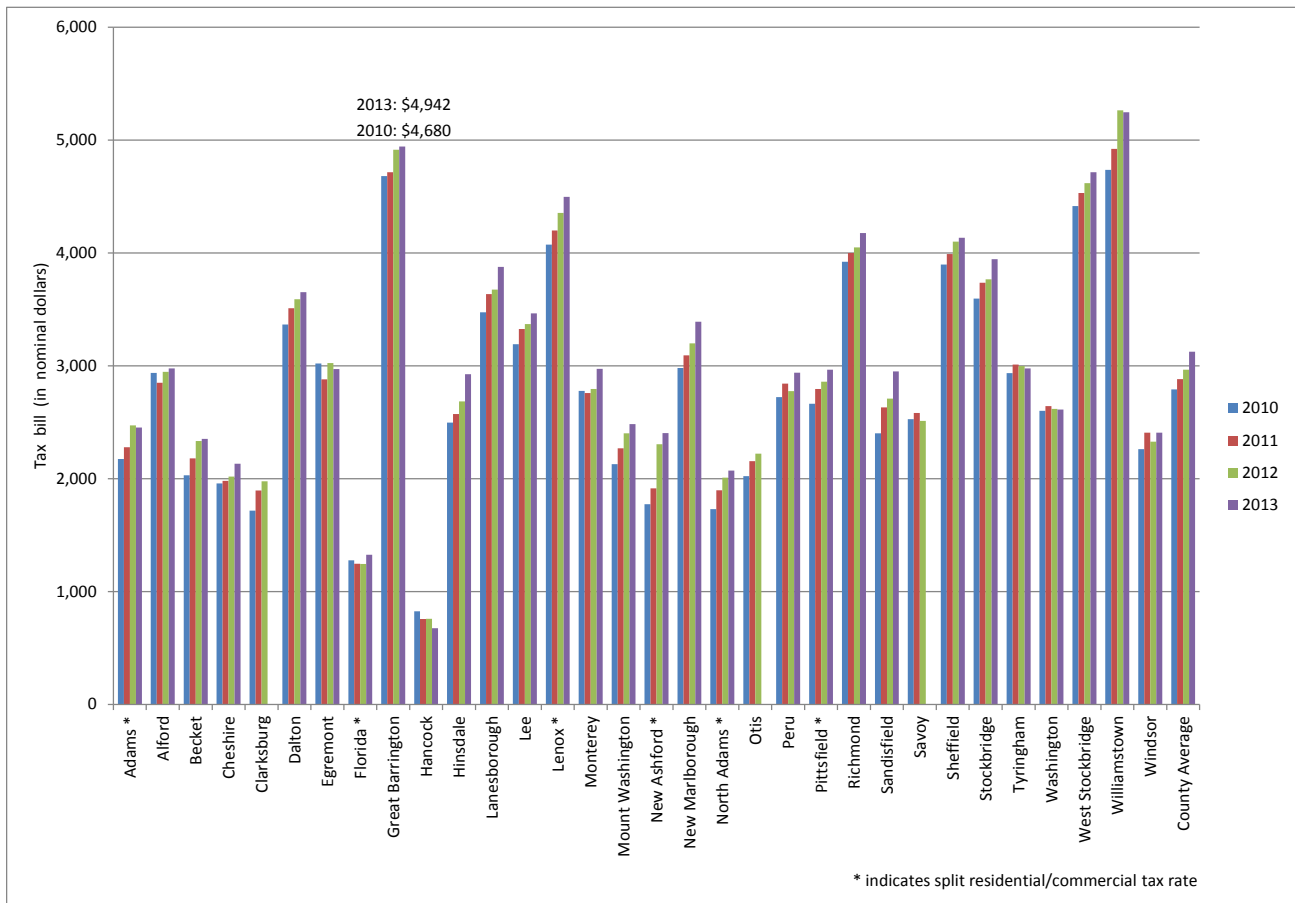
Source: Berkshire County MLS raw data, compiled by FRIDAY & Co. Real Estate, 2012, and US Census, 2000, 2010, imputed.
All figures adjusted to 2012 dollars.

Nearly half of all homeowners and almost two-thirds of all renters in Great Barrington spend more than 30 percent of their household incomes on housing costs. A generally accepted metric of measuring whether housing is “affordable” is if a household spends not more than 30 percent of their household income on housing costs (leaving other income available for other things like food, transportation, education, savings, entertainment, and so on). By that definition, much of Great Barrington’s housing is unaffordable. Census data for 2006-2010 estimates that 48 percent of owners with mortgages spend more than 30 percent of their household income on housing costs, and 61 percent of renter households spend more than 30 percent of their household income on rent. These figures have increased dramatically since 2000, when just 23 percent of owner households and 37 percent of renter households spent more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing costs.

Other costs add to the increasing housing affordability problem, particularly for those for whom limited and fixed incomes cannot be met to meet ever increasing prices and steep price shocks. Nearly 60 percent of Great Barrington homes are heated with fuel oil, whose cost is volatile and ever increasing. Add to this the fact that most homes in Great Barrington are over 70 years old and are likely to be poorly insulated, and it is no surprise that some homes pay \$2,500 or more to heat their homes in winter.

Also, property tax bills continue to rise. Since 2003, assessed values have increased dramatically as real estate demand peaked. In 2003 average assessed value of a single family residence was \$193,496. That increased by 49 percent by fiscal year 2013, for an average assessed value of \$376,078. Average tax bills in Great Barrington have increased accordingly by about 39 percent, from \$3,022 in 2003 to \$4,942 in 2013. By comparison, the average single family tax bill in the County is FY 2013 is \$3,125. Out of Berkshire County’s 32 municipalities, only Williamstown has a higher average single family tax bill. Figure 50 compares the average single family tax bill in Berkshire County over the past four fiscal years.

Figure 50: Average Single Family Tax Bill, 2010 - 2013



Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

Agriculture

Figure 51: Land Use Map, showing agricultural and crop lands in yellow

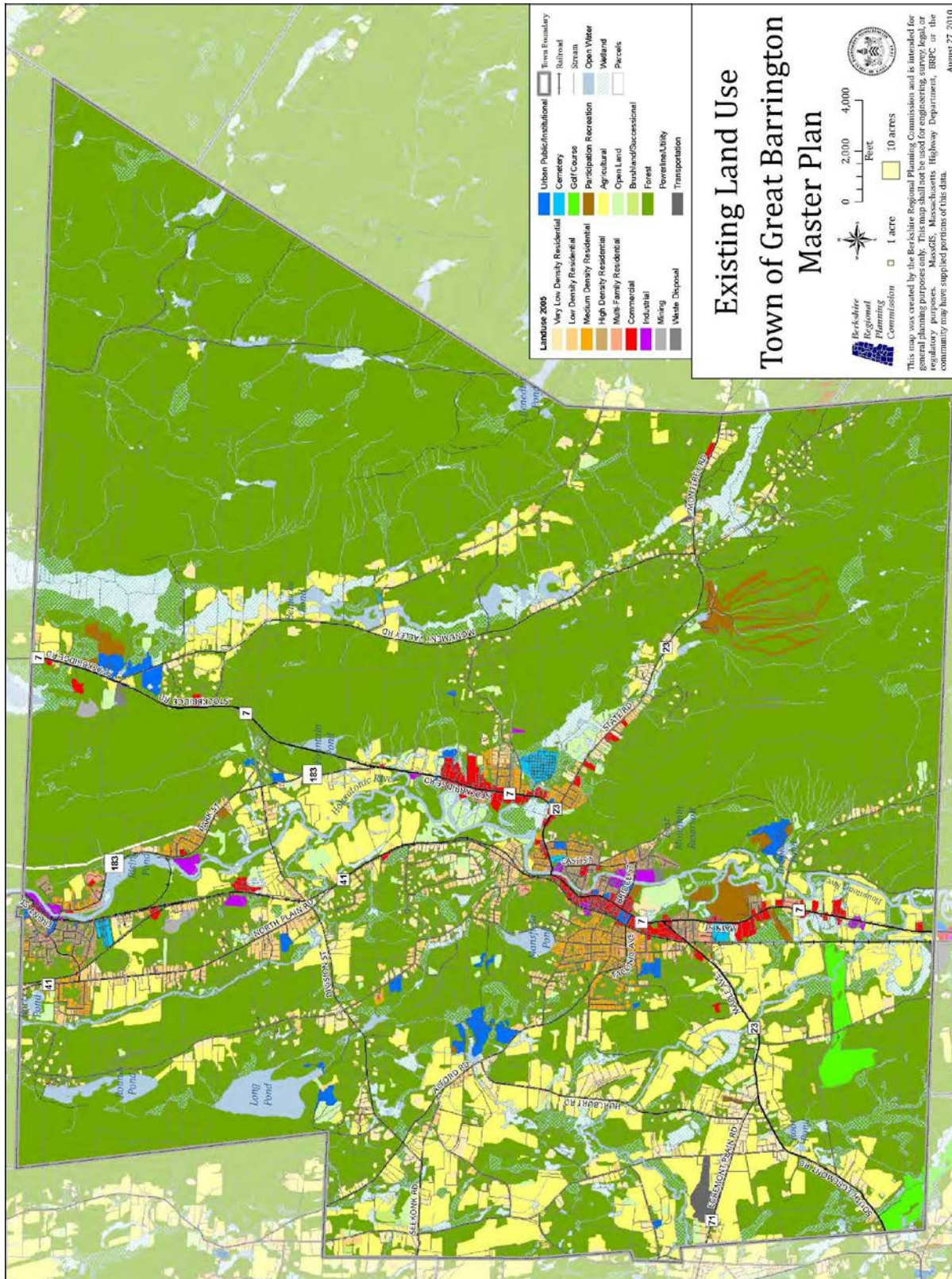
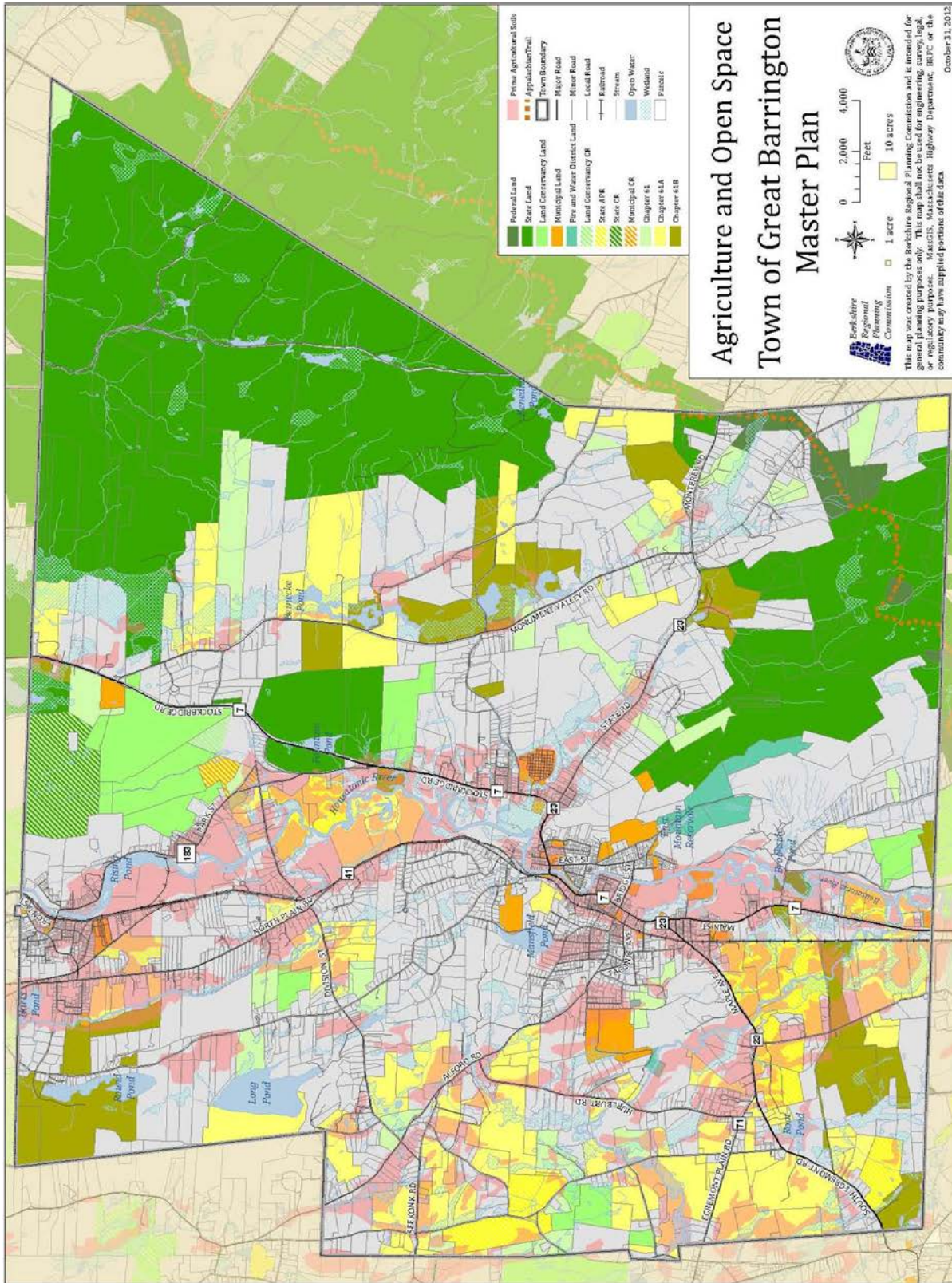
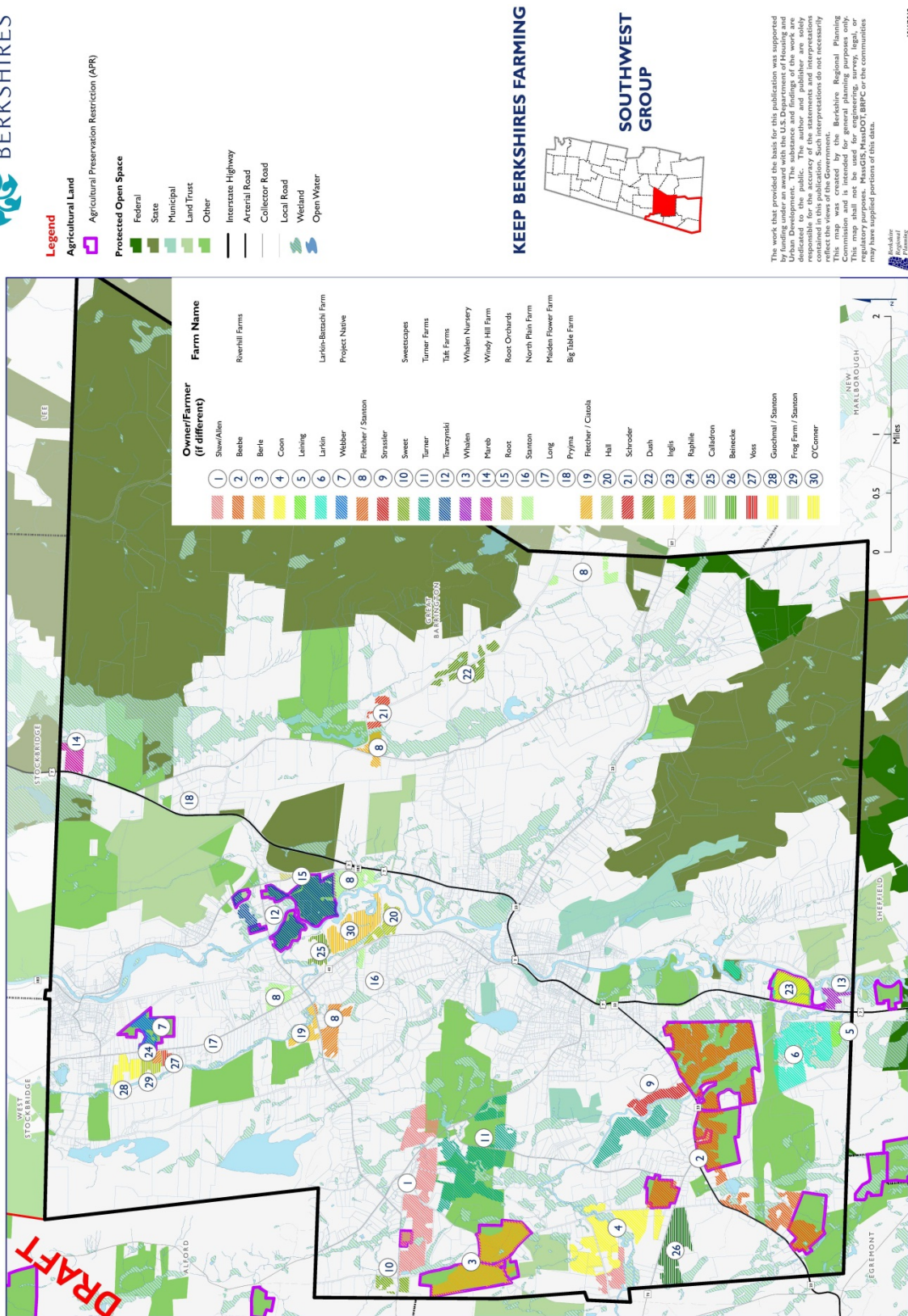


Figure 52: Agricultural Land, Showing Agricultural Soils in Pink





Historical and Cultural Resources

Inventory of Historic Sites and Cultural Resources

Historic sites contribute to our community identity and are also, by their nature, cultural resources. Some sites are also venues for the performing arts and fine arts, what some might think of when they hear the word “culture.” For example, the First Congregational Church, the Mahaiwe Theater, the Mason and Ramsdell Libraries, and the Trinity Church aka the Guthrie Center are historical buildings as well as cultural venues. St. James Church, with renovation now underway, will join them soon. Several arts-related sites are listed here; additional emphasis on the creative economy including the performing arts and culture is given in the economic development chapter.

A handful of our town’s historically significant buildings and sites are formally designated. Some are protected, but many are not. In Housatonic, at least ten sites, including the multi-building Monument Mill complex, were listed on the National Register in 1980. Only three of these nominations have been completed. In downtown Great Barrington, over 30 sites or blocks of buildings were similarly recognized, and at least 30 other sites town-wide were recognized.

The town boasts a considerable inventory of historic and cultural sites. Sites in Local Historic Districts A, B, and C are all protected. Changes to these buildings must first be approved by the Local Historic District Commission. Sites that are listed on the National Register (as landmarks, districts, or properties) are protected from alteration only if federal funds are involved in the project. All other sites have no protections against alteration or demolition.

The following list represents high profile resources that should be preserved and protected. There are other sites that will emerge with the updating of the historic survey. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive listing; rather, it is a sampler of the town’s prominent architectural heritage. Selected sites are indicated on Figure 54, and include the following:

Housatonic village

- All Saints Church
- Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Church
- Congregational Church (National Register individual property, 2002)
- Freight passenger station
- Housatonic Grammar School, 1907
- Mill housing (labor and management)
- Monument Mills Complex, including the office on Main Street (c. early-late 19th century Mills on Park and Front Streets, National Register District, 1983)
- Railroad passenger station
- Ramsdell Library (National Register nomination form completed in 2013)
- Rising Paper Mill (1873, National Register individual property, 1975)

Downtown Great Barrington

- Local Historic District A (1995):
 - Town Hall, 1875
 - Winged Victory monument, 1876
 - Memorial Stone (marking site of first Court House in Berkshire County and act of open resistance to British rule, 1890, replaced in 2004)

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.

Listing in the National Register:

- recognizes that a building, site, or area is important to the history of a community, state, or the nation;
- allows owners of income-producing properties certain federal tax incentives for rehabilitation;
- and provides limited protection from adverse effects of any federal or state projects.

Unless federal funds, permits or tax incentives are involved, listing does NOT in any way limit the owner's handling of the property.

- Fire Station, 1899
- Mahaiwe Block and Mahaiwe Theater, 1905 (National Register individual property, 2008)
- Parks Block, 312 Main Street
- Sumner Block, 306 Main Street
- City Block, 304 Main Street, and City Block Annex, 7 Railroad Street
- Russell House, 54 Castle Street
- Railroad Station, 1901
- Local Historic District B (1995):
 - Kellogg Terrace (Searles Castle), 1885-1888
- Local Historic District C (1995):
 - Congregational Church and Manse, 1883 (National Register individual property, 1992)
 - Mason Library, 1913 (including the Laura Ingersoll house marker)
 - U.S. Post Office, 1936 (National Register individual property, 1976)
 - First National property, 271 Main Street
- Berkshire Courier Building, 1870
- Bryant School, 1889
- Castle Street Buildings, Central Business District, c. late 19th- early 20th centuries
- Christian Science Church / Collins House (Indianola Place), 1851
- Clinton A.M.E. Zion Church, 1887 (National Register, 2008)
- Dwight [William Cullen Bryant] House (National Register individual property 1976 and National Register Historic District (Taconic and West Avenue), 1998)
- Macedonia Baptist Church, c. 1870
- Main Street Buildings, Central Business District, c. mid-19th – early 20th centuries
- Methodist Church, 1845
- Railroad Street Buildings, Central Business District, c. mid-19th – early 20th centuries
- Railroad Tunnel Overstructure c. 1920
- Rubber Mill, site of William Stanley experiments
- St. James Church, 1857-58; Rectory, 1893-95; Parish House, 1911
- St. Peters Roman Catholic Church, 1911
- Taylor Hill, 1815
- Searles High School, 1896-98
- Upper Bridge Street Buildings, Central Business District, c. mid- 19th – early 20th centuries

Other Areas of Town

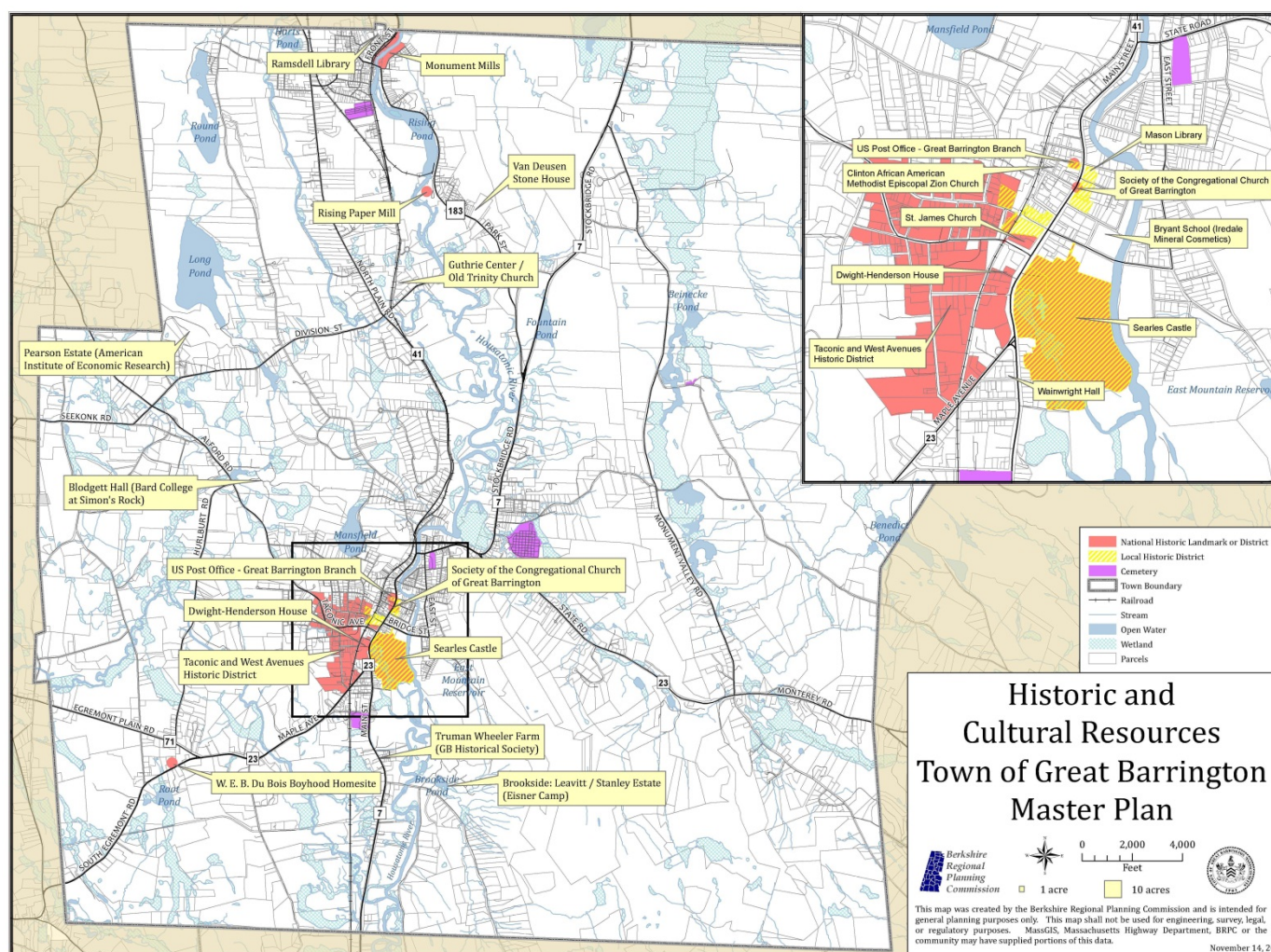
- Ahavath Sholom Synagogue, 1879
- Belcher Square and trolley stop, c. 1900
- The Clockmaker's house (Castle Street)
- Cove Lanes neon sign
- Dewey School, 1907 (Southern Berkshire District Court)
- Fair Grounds, 1841
- Former tavern, Route 23 and Lake Buel Rd
- Major Talcott Indian Battle Monument 1859-62
- Manhattan Pizza / Trotta's building, c. 1929 (early to mid-20th century auto dealership and garage)
- Monument Mountain and Squaw Peak
- Newsboy Fountain, 1895
- Pearson Estate (American Institute of Economic Research)
- Pope House ("Brightside"), West Avenue and Copper Beech Lane
- Old Stone House [Stone Fort], 1771
- Richmond Iron Works office and mill site, Van Deusenville (North Plain Road)
- Russell House, 1822
- Taconic and West Ave. Neighborhood (National Register Historic District, 1998)
- Trinity Episcopal Church, Van Deusenville, 1866 (Guthrie Center)
- Wainwright Hall, 1768

- W.E.B. Du Bois Homesite, 1868 National Historic Landmark and National Register, 1976
- Wheeler House and farmstead, 1771 (National Register, 2011)
- Whiting House
- William Stanley Estate ("Brookside")

Cemeteries

- Elmwood (including Avath Shalom and St. Peters)
- Greenlawn (including St. Bridget's)
- Mahaiwe
- Peltonbrook
- Stony Brook
- Water Street

Figure 54: Historic and Cultural Resources

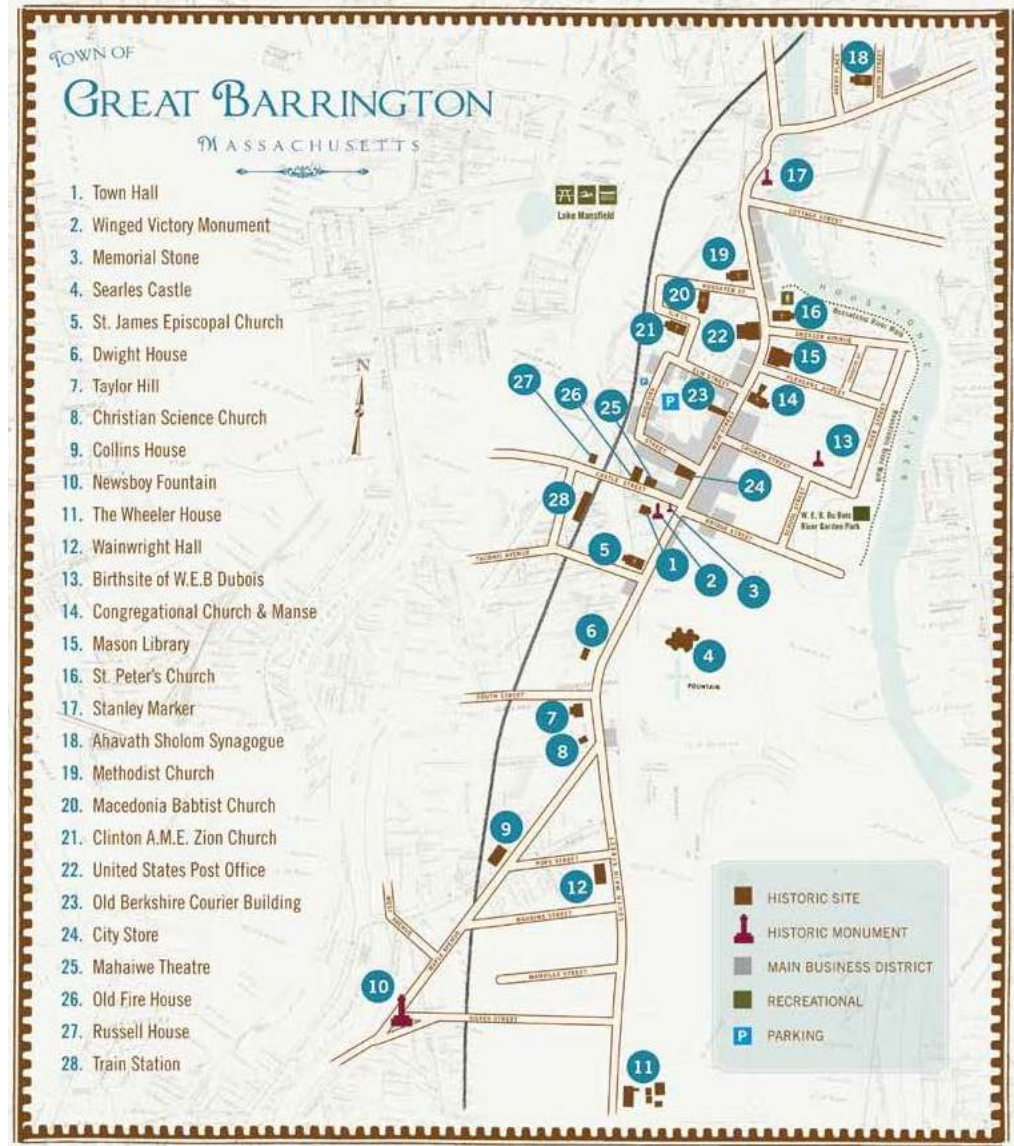


Preservation Organizations and Partnerships

The fact that so much of Great Barrington's rich history has survived to the present is attributable in part to the efforts of individual stewards and organizations dedicated to protecting and promoting the town's legacy.

The Great Barrington Historical Commission, an official body of town government, was established in 1975 and is responsible for local historic preservation planning. The Commission consists of seven members, many of whom are also part of the Historic District Commission and the Historical Society. Recent successes of the Historical Commission include the implementation of a \$5,000 grant from the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (UHVNHA) for a smartphone walking tour. The application is a narrated guided walking tour with accompanying photos and information. The “app” can be downloaded for free on smartphones; just access the appropriate links by [clicking here](#).

The Commission has also developed a walking tour brochure, a full color hard copy tour of downtown’s historic sites. It can be picked up at Town Hall or the Mason Library (see photo and map on this page). It is also posted and available for free download from the town website; it can be accessed by [clicking here](#).



The Historic District Commission (HDC) was established by Town Meeting in 1989 to oversee and administer the Local Historic Districts. No building or structure in a Local Historic District may be constructed, altered, or razed in any way that affects the exterior architectural features as visible from a public way unless the five-member HDC issues the project a certificate of appropriateness, non-applicability, or hardship. Chapter 113 of the Town Code contains the official description of the District, the makeup of Commission, and criteria and guidelines.

The Great Barrington Historical Society is a non-profit, entirely volunteer group organized in 1977. It has been focused on collecting and preserving material pertinent to our town’s history, and disseminating it to stimulate awareness of local history

now and for future generations. Recent efforts by the Historical Society include the purchase of the Truman Wheeler farm (c. 1733; National Register designation in 2011) on South Main Street for preservation and for renovation into the Society's museum. The property's association with Captain Truman Wheeler (1741-1815), an important figure in the Revolutionary War and early town government, as well as for the Dutch Colonial and postmedieval English framing methods employed in its construction, gives it particular historic and architectural significance. Currently, the Society's papers and artifacts are in storage on the second floor of Ramsdell Library in Housatonic. One of the Society's most popular events has been the Saturday morning walking tours of downtown Great Barrington, guided by David Rutstein between 2006 and 2012. The tours focused on the people and places of downtown whose legacies have shaped the nation and the world, including Du Bois and Stanley.

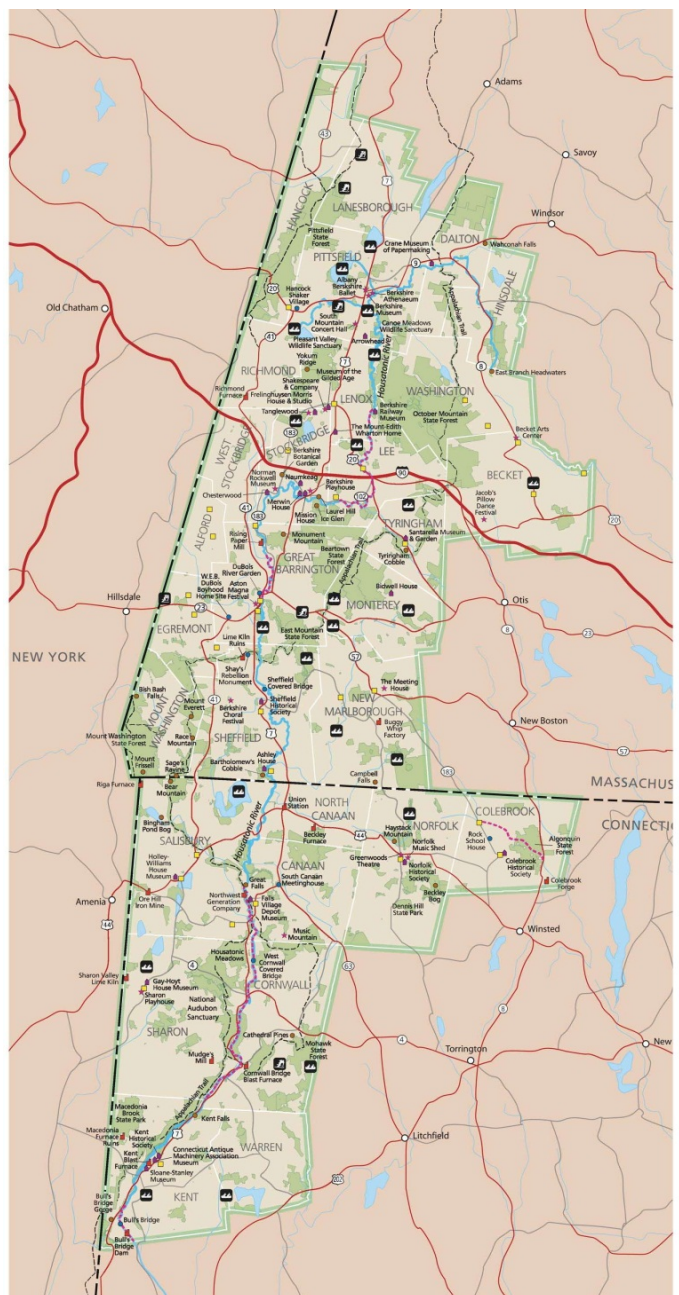
The Great Barrington Cultural Council is a town government body that awards grants for programs in the arts and humanities, in association with the Massachusetts Cultural Council. The Council receives state grants and donations, which it in turn grants to local individuals and organizations in Great Barrington.

The Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (Housatonic Heritage) was designated by the United States Congress in 2006 to heighten appreciation of the Upper Housatonic region, preserve its natural and historical resources, and improve the quality of life and economy of the area. A partnership with the National Park Service, Housatonic Heritage provides an organizational framework and the resources enabling the close collaboration of all levels of government and the private sector to conserve the region's heritage and pursue compatible economic opportunities. The area covers 964 square miles and includes most of central and southern Berkshire County as well as Connecticut's Litchfield County.

The Housatonic Heritage sponsors numerous local historical preservation and promotion efforts, including providing the grant for the Historical Commission's smartphone walking tour, and grants for interpretive trails throughout the region including recently published bicycling maps of southern Berkshire towns including Great Barrington. Trails and events include the **Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail**, which celebrates African Americans in the region who played pivotal roles in key national and international events, as well as ordinary people of achievement. Sites on the trail include those in Great Barrington associated with W.E.B. Du Bois.

The Friends of the Du Bois Homesite is a community-based organization that supports the restoration, maintenance, stewardship and awareness of the W.E.B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite on Route 23 as a public memorial to the Great Barrington native who became a leading scholar and activist in the civil rights movement in the United States and around the world. The Homesite is a **National Historic Landmark** owned and maintained by the W.E.B. Du Bois Center of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. The Friends worked with the university to steward the Homesite and in 2009, the group published *A Plan for Heritage Conservation and Interpretation*. Goals of the plan include educational, interpretive, and organizational efforts to create a national

Figure 55: Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area



memorial and cultural center appropriate to Du Bois's global significance. Continued stewardship of the Homesite, a Downtown Great Barrington Heritage Trail, and Interpretive Center to be located downtown are other key goals of the plan.

The Great Barrington Land Conservancy is dedicated to the preservation of our town's natural resources and distinctive character. Its special stewardship projects include sites like the Housatonic River Walk and the Lake Mansfield Alliance. The River Walk interpretive trail links the natural environment with historical people and events like William Stanley and Du Bois. The Lake Mansfield Alliance has researched the conservation, development, and recreational history of the lake, including its ties to Searles' Castle and the town's water supply.

The Trustees of the Reservations, a statewide nonprofit, preserves scenic, historical, and ecologically significant properties for public use and enjoyment. The Trustees own and steward numerous sites in Berkshire County, including Monument Mountain in Great Barrington which the organization acquired in 1899. The reservation is over 500 acres and borders Flag Rock on the west and Route 7 on the east. Together with Agawam Swamp wilderness area on its north, the habitat is unique, relatively vast and largely undisturbed. The Trustees estimate that over 20,000 visitors explore the mountain every year, as have artists, writers, hikers, and nature lovers for centuries. Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne famously picnicked here in 1850.

Literature, Archival and Photographic Resources

For histories of Great Barrington, interested readers are not at a loss for material. Following is a selected list—many local authors and photographers, past and contemporary, have been and still are chronicling our town. A consultation with the helpful librarians at Mason and Ramsdell Libraries is the best place to begin one's journey into our past.

Particularly comprehensive works are Charles James Taylor's History of Great Barrington, originally published in 1882 and revised in 1928 by George Edwin MacLean in collaboration with Ralph Wainwright Pope. Bernard A. Drew's Great Barrington: Great Town Great History, published by the Historical Society in 1999, ably brings both of these previous histories up to the turn of the 21st century. The nomination report for the Taconic and West Avenues National Historic District is a comprehensive listing of 176 significant buildings and sites.

Pictorial histories include the 1961 Bicentennial Book, the 2011 250th Anniversary Book, and *Around Great Barrington*, Gary Leveille's 2011 collection of postcards and photos. There are well-researched and in-depth narratives and photographic accounts of prominent local sites. Donna Drew wrote a history of Monument Mills. Lila S. Parrish wrote an account of Searles Castle. Bernard Drew has also written accounts of local luminaries such as electrical pioneer William Stanley and W.E.B. Du Bois. These resources document a great many sites and experiences that might otherwise be forgotten.

The libraries also house an impressive collection of local newspapers as well as genealogical resource for those interested in tracing family histories and the legacies of prominent citizens of Great Barrington's past.

The Historical Society and Historical Commission both manage and care for sizable collections of photographs, diaries, letters, objects, ephemera and other museum and archival materials relating to Great Barrington history. Inventorying and cataloguing these resources and making them readily accessible for public use are priority programs of both organizations.

Challenges and Opportunities

Many of Great Barrington's historic and cultural resources face uncertain futures. While there was consensus that prominent sites like the Fairgrounds and the Housatonic mills should be protected and if possible reused, sites like the ***Housatonic School*** have been more problematic. The school has been the subject of numerous task forces and studies, since the school district vacated the building in 2005. At present, the cultural nonprofit BRIDGE occupies a small portion of the first floor on a barter arrangement with the town, which owns the building. Maintenance and upkeep costs are approximately \$50,000 annually. Estimated costs to rehabilitate the building range from \$2 million to almost \$4 million.

The 2011 Housatonic School Campus Task Force recommended three options to the Board of Selectmen, with a strong recommendation that the site was not appropriate for housing. The options included (1) a community partnership with the town using the building, (2) a public private partnership with the building leased for small businesses and business

incubators, and (3), a campus revision including demolition of the building if the first two options cannot be realized within three years (i.e., by the end of 2014). As of this writing, neither a long term use nor a buyer has been found, and the building's status remains in limbo. As such it is a significant unresolved question mark in the center of Housatonic village. For the good of the village, the Board of Selectmen should provide a clear path to a resolution.

Restoration and reuse of the mills is a top priority of our town. Recent efforts to rezone the properties to encourage adaptive reuse were successful, but a brief influx of energy from prospective developers was stymied by issues of fragmented ownership, cost, and economic challenges. More recently, the owner of the Monument Mills has sought allocations of Historic Tax Credits from the Massachusetts Historical Commission to finance renovation efforts. Two allocations have been received to date, a testament to the historic significance of the buildings. Many of the remaining mill buildings remain in at least partial use, for manufacturing, storage, arts, and, more recently, private residences. Constraints to redevelopment are high, but the town recognizes this as a critical opportunity to preserve historic legacy while improving the tax base in already developed locations.

The constraints to preservation and reuse of sites like the mills are likely staggering to any one individual, but recent efforts have yielded some notable progress. The town created an overlay zone for the mill district in 2011 to allow for adaptive reuse of the buildings, either on a building-by-building basis or as part of a larger master planned development. Ongoing efforts of several owners include planning and feasibility studies for the Monument Mills, renovation and reuse of the Rubin Mill, and preservation and conversion of the former Barbieri Mill. Others are promoting a connection between the mills and the Housatonic River with Flag Rock and Monument Mountain, in order to establish a unique cultural-historical-recreational-scenic resource. The town should continue its efforts to promote cooperative redevelopment of the mill properties.

Restoration and conservation of the Fairgrounds is a top priority of Great Barrington residents. At nearly every public meeting in the course of this Master Plan process residents have called for the Fairgrounds to be used for open space and recreational purposes for the benefit of all residents. The same floodplain, wetlands, riverfront, and endangered species habitat issues that limit conventional development add value as open space. The new owners have the expressed interest in developing the property as an agricultural, housing, open space, and recreational asset for the community. The owners will be seeking public participation to help shape, and to help fund, the redevelopment plan.

For its size, Great Barrington can boast an impressive array of cultural venues and programs that range from music and film festivals to outdoor sculpture to performing arts centers and libraries. Other important cultural sites and events include the Aston Magna festival, the Berkshire International Film Festival, the Berkshire Bach Society, the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, and two local radio stations. Additional resources are located at Bard College at Simons Rock (Daniel Arts Center, Library, and McConnell Theater).

Cultural resources are an important aspect of the regional economy. The Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center in downtown Great Barrington, opened in 1905, and subsequently renovated, restored, and reopened in 2005, estimates that it spends \$5 million in the local economy and draws 40,000 people to Great Barrington annually.

Cultural resources are widely regarded and well respected in Great Barrington. The fact that the town welcomed the installation of inventive sculptured recycling bins in the Main Street area reflects the supportive climate in the community for artistic expression. These are valuable assets that contribute to a vibrant community and thriving local economy as well as enrich the artistic sensibilities and educational opportunities of both residents and visitors. The challenge is to support existing programs and encourage other artistic and cultural endeavors while maintaining a high level of quality.

Education, organization, and promotion are needed if our town's historic and cultural resources are to inspire future generations. Numerous organizations, many hundreds of stewards, and countless volunteer hours are all focused on promoting Great Barrington's historic and cultural legacies. Recent successes like the 250th Anniversary, Bryant School renovations, and the adoption of the Community Preservation Act are inspirations for everyone in this effort.

The number of organizations can be complex and jurisdictions confusing, but the amount of cross over in the membership of these groups (and with open space and recreational advocacy groups) is astonishing and bodes well for future collaborative efforts. Working together, the Historical Commission, Historic District Commission and Society, along with partners like Housatonic Heritage need to develop programs that enhance the history and preservation literacy of the town—to the point where proposed historic districts and other preservation regulations are regularly supported by the

majority of the public. Residents need to be encouraged to look at the beauty around them and boost their sensitivity to the town's built environment. Programs need to instill a preservation ethic, rather than a tear-it-down, mindset.

Framework of an Historic Preservation Plan

Lacking in past town plans, and clearly needed for the success of this current edition, is an action plan with assigned priorities, responsible parties, timelines, goals and specific objectives to guide recommendations to fruition. The Great Barrington Historical Commission, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), local committees and organizations, including cultural organizations should undertake a long range, three-phase program to identify, evaluate and protect the town's historic resources. The Plan should follow three principal steps:

1. Identification: update existing inventory of historic and archaeological places on MHC Inventory forms (Area, Buildings, Objects, Prehistoric and Archaeological Sites, Structures, Parks and Landscapes). The purpose of the inventory is to identify, describe and document the historic resources in the town. It creates the big picture, a context for considering which sites are the most significant.
2. Evaluation of Properties for the National Register of Historic Places: The National Register is the federal government's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation. Buildings, districts, structures, sites and objects can be listed, either through individual nomination or, if appropriate, through National Register District nominations.
3. Protection of Historic Resources: the Historical and Historic District Commissions, Historical Society and other pertinent town boards should undertake a program of protecting historic resources.

1. Identification: update existing inventory of historic and archaeological places on MHC Inventory forms (Area, Buildings, Objects, Prehistoric and Archaeological Sites, Structures, Parks and Landscapes). The purpose of the inventory is to identify, describe and document the historic resources in the town. It creates the big picture, a context for considering which sites are the most significant. The approach for this step is outlined in a Historic Property Survey Plan prepared by the GBHC.

The completed forms are used by MHC as a basis for mitigating the adverse effects of state and federal involved projects. At the town level they are used to educate the public, to advocate for particular properties, administer demolition delay bylaws and plan for how best to protect significant historic resources. Because of the complexity, scope and amount of time required for this project, the town, with complementary preservation act funds or a matching grant from MHC, should contract with professional preservation consultants to complete this step.

In general, the Massachusetts Historical Commission will not consider any properties for the National Register unless a comprehensive inventory has already been completed for the community. Note: submission of completed Inventory forms does not place a property on the State or National Register of Historic Places.

2. Evaluation of Properties for the National Register of Historic Places:

The National Register is the federal government's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation. Buildings, districts, structures, sites and objects can be listed, either through individual nomination or, if appropriate, through National Register District nominations. In order to be eligible for National Register, historic properties must be significant. They must have integrity, that is, retain enough of their historic character to convey that significance.

Historic properties can be significant because of their association with events or with aspects of history including national, state or local history. Historic properties can be associated with important people. They can also be significant because of their architecture, design or because they hold information potential.

Listing in the National Register provides national recognition of the importance of a particular resource and assures limited review of state or federal involved projects that might adversely affect the character of that resource. National Register listing does not guarantee that historic properties will be preserved forever. In fact, it is primarily an honorary designation.

One of the National Register's best uses is as an educational and informational tool. Listings are a valuable opportunity for the Historical Commission to generate positive publicity for preservation and for the listed property, and to educate the general public about community history.

Sites must meet four criteria for listing on the National Register:

- a. Association with events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of our history; or
- b. Association with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- c. Embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- d. Can or may be likely to yield information important to prehistory or history.

Once the updated survey is completed, the Historical Commission determines priorities for the town and submits requests to MHC for evaluation of eligibility. On approval, either the Historical Commission or a professional preservation consultant prepares the nomination form. The latter is hired to complete most nominations. The process includes public meetings and property owner notifications.

MHC staff review and edit the form and submit it to the State Review Board for a vote. Approved nominations are forwarded to the National Park Service which makes the final decision for listing.

3. Protection of Historic Resources: the Historical and Historic District Commissions, Historical Society and other pertinent town boards should undertake a program of protecting Great Barrington's historic resources by adopting appropriate passive and regulatory measures. Some of the tools that should be considered include:

Public Education: through such means as articles, lectures, brochures, walking tours, homeowner handbooks, historical maps, markers, exhibits and school education programs, increase the public's awareness about the value of historic preservation in general and about the significance of Great Barrington's resources in particular. In addition, the public needs to be informed about available preservation tools, such as investment tax credits.

Federal and State Programs: The Massachusetts Historical Commission reviews the potential impacts to historic and archaeological properties that require funding, licenses or permits from any state or federal governmental agencies.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (1966): This law requires that any projects that require funding, licenses or permits from federal agencies (i.e. Community Development Block Grants, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Communication Commission) must be reviewed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission to determine the effect of their actions on historic properties. If there is an adverse effect, a consultative process is set up between all parties to discuss alternatives that minimize the impact.

State Review: the MHC reviews state-funded, licensed or permitted projects for adverse impact on historic properties.

MEPA Review: as part of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act, the MHC participates in the process of reviewing the effects of state agencies' actions on the environment, including historic properties.

Historical Commission Participation in Reviews: the Historical Commission is regularly requested to comment on the impact of state or federal projects in the town.

Town Specific Programs

Local Bylaws and Ordinances

(1) Demolition Delay Bylaw: delays the demolition of a historically significant building while alternatives to the destruction of the building are explored

(2) Local Historic Districts: proposed changes to all exterior architectural features and all new construction visible from a public way are reviewed by the Historic District Commission. Approval must be secured before a building permit is issued. This measure is already in place for four districts in Great Barrington. The Historic District Commission should undertake to expand the number of districts in town. The great benefit is that they can prevent demolitions and inappropriate alterations permanently.

(3) Community Preservation Act: the town adopted this act in 2012, which will provide a local and state funding mechanism (from a local property tax surcharge and a statewide CPA Trust Fund) that can be used for acquisition and preservation of historic buildings and landscapes.

(4) Certified Local Government: Pursue “Certified Local Government” status to secure priority for certain grant funds and special standing in some review processes.

Preservation Restrictions: under the same state law for protecting agricultural land through agricultural preservation restrictions, MGL, Chapter 184, the MHC approves restrictions to alterations to building exteriors and interiors, changes in use, encroachment on a significant landscape or investigation of an archaeological site to which the property owner has agreed.

Federal and State Investment Tax Credits: at the national level, a tax credit, consisting of 20% of the cost of rehabilitation, is available to commercial, income-producing properties listed or eligible for the National Register. In Massachusetts a certified rehabilitation project on an income-producing property is eligible to receive up to 20% of the cost of certified rehabilitation expenditures in state tax credits.

Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund: the Historical Commission should encourage the town and nonprofit organizations to take advantage of this state funded 50% reimbursable matching grant program that supports the preservation of properties, landscapes and sites listed in the State Register of Historic Places. In exchange for the grant the town or nonprofit owner agrees to place a preservation restriction on the property, assuring its protection into the future.

Active Participation of the Historical Commission in Town Deliberations: although advisory, the Historical Commission should take a leading role as the official advocate and agent of town government responsible for historic preservation planning and actively work with the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Historic District Commission or any other board or department that is likely to have an influence on the physical character of Great Barrington.

Energy and Climate

Energy Use and Costs

We all use energy for electricity, for heating, for production of goods, and for transportation (for ourselves and for the goods and services on which we rely). In each of these uses, we rely primarily on fossil fuels—energy sources that are nonrenewable and contribute greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. In Berkshire County and in Massachusetts, most of our electricity is generated by the burning of natural gas. Other electricity sources include coal, oil, nuclear, and renewables such as wind and solar. In terms of heating, the most prominent heat source for Great Barrington households is fuel oil, followed by natural gas and propane, and finally, wood and renewables. With the exception of the latter two, all of these are fossil fuels, and with the exception of the last one, all contribute pollutants and unhealthy particulates into the atmosphere. Finally, for transportation we rely of course on another fossil fuel, petroleum, in the form of gasoline and diesel.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts estimates that the typical Massachusetts household spent an average of \$5,200 on energy in 2008 (\$1,300 for electricity, \$1,700 for heating, \$2,200 for gasoline). Most of this money is not invested in our region—it is paid to service providers elsewhere. And of course most suppliers, particularly for petroleum, are outside of the country.

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC), in its 2011 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), indicates that the Berkshires experience some of the highest electricity costs in New England. These high costs are typically the result of various factors including high energy generation and transmission costs, users operating inefficient equipment and distribution costs. These costs can be burdensome on everyone, particularly for large commercial users who see profits reduced by high costs. A reliable low cost electricity source and generation network could increase the region's business competitiveness.

The BRPC CEDS recommends that a comprehensive Regional Energy Plan and Strategy be developed, to create a robust program to maximize energy conservation and generation measures in the County, examine the distribution network and recommend improvements, and develop competitive local renewable energy sources to lower fossil fuel emissions and create local employment. The Sustainable Berkshires plan, the regional plan for the Berkshires being developed by BRPC at the same time as this Master Plan, includes a major focus on energy conservation and renewable energy generation as a way to increase economic competitiveness, create jobs, and lower fossil fuel emissions.

Energy and the provision of energy at the local level, is becoming more important than ever before. In an era of increasing and volatile energy prices, insecure fossil fuel supplies, expensive gasoline, high heating oil costs, and global climate change, the public is beginning to demand alternatives to fossil fuels. New technologies are steadily becoming more available, cost effective, and scalable. Financial and regulatory incentives are making it economically attractive.

Yet the land intensiveness of energy production, and the need to locate housing, businesses, and open space and recreational uses within our finite geographic area, can lead to vociferous confrontations and heated debates about land use and energy policy. Opponents demand energy production facilities not be located in their backyard, raising concerns about aesthetics, compensation, property values, property rights, public health, and safety. A balance must be struck between these concerns and realizing potential benefits to the property owner, to the tax base, and the possibility of meeting regional energy needs

Climate Change

The correlation between greenhouse gases and increased average temperature is direct, dramatic, and beyond dispute.

The increasing amount of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, in the atmosphere is contributing to a changing global climate. The generation and amount of greenhouse gases has increased dramatically over the last century, and average global temperatures have increased as a result. In its 2007 report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) wrote the "warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations in global

average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global average sea level.”¹³ Local impacts of climate change will include increased heat waves, evaporation and precipitation, and a greater intensity of droughts, floods, and storms.

The only remaining debate about climate change is about the rate and extent climate change will occur and how increasing global temperatures will affect regional and local weather patterns. The BPRC, referring to data reported in the Massachusetts Climate Change Adaption Report of 2011, notes that within a generation Massachusetts climate will be more like Pennsylvania, and could be as warm as Virginia, depending on what actions are taken today to curb greenhouse gas emissions. Average annual temperatures in Massachusetts increased 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit from 1970 to 2000, a rate of 0.5 degrees Fahrenheit per decade. Winter temperatures have been rising much faster, at a rate of 1.3 degrees Fahrenheit per decade. These changes are consistent with those expected to be caused by global warming.

Seasonal temperature and weather patterns, the four seasons so indicative of New England, could be very different just a few decades from now. Predictions for the next century indicate that average summer temperatures will increase another 6-14 degrees Fahrenheit, and average winter temperatures will increase another 8-12 degrees. At direct risk are the natural resources—plants, animals, water resources and agriculture—and the economic sectors—tourism and agriculture in particular—that depend on these seasonal rhythms. Potential impacts could include:

- **Agriculture:** Longer growing season but strained crops and animals from increased drought and heat, and erratic precipitation.
- **Energy:** Higher summer cooling costs, which might be offset by lower winter heating costs. Storms could impact electricity lines and the grid.
- **Human Health:** More frequent and severe storms could impact health and safety. Heat related illnesses might be especially challenging to seniors and young children.
- **Natural Resource:** Warmer temperatures will favor invasive species, leading to a loss of biodiversity and stressed ecosystems.
- **Transportation:** More frequent and severe storms could damage roads and bridges. Bridges and culverts will need to handle larger volumes of runoff. Transportation costs may be forced higher.
- **Tourism:** Warmer, rainy winters could eliminate low-altitude, low-latitude ski resorts like Butternut, and placing more emphasis on summer activities.
- **Water Resources:** There will be more rain and less snow in winter. Water supply and quality could be impacted by warming, drought, and precipitation changes.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is setting important standards and establishing strong programs to help its municipalities combat and adapt to climate change and its impacts. A statewide Climate Change Adaptation Report, the Green Jobs Act, the Global Warming Solutions Act, which set an aggressive Renewable Portfolio Standard, the 2020 Clean Energy and Climate Plan¹⁴, and the Green Communities Act have established policies and aggressive programs and incentives for the state and its municipalities to reduce fossil fuel usage and increase renewables.

Toward a Resilient Great Barrington

In the course of this Master Plan, Great Barrington citizens have insisted that the town reduce its energy use, install renewable energy sources, adapt to climate change, and take advantage of the opportunities of a clean energy future. The Town’s Energy Committee, established in 2010, has been developing plans and strategies to reduce municipal energy use and promote energy efficiency in town operations, and to recommend programs to increase energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy throughout town. Last year, in 2012, the work of the Energy Committee led to Great Barrington being designated a **Green Community** under the Green Communities Act. As a Green Community, new construction must meet the Stretch Code and the town adopted a plan in 2012 to reduce municipal energy use by 20 percent in five years. As a result of its designation, Great Barrington received a \$142,700 grant to fund clean energy and energy conservation projects in town.

¹³ IPCC. Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis. 2007. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Solomon, S., D. Qin, M. Manning, Z. Chen, M. Marquis, K. B. Avery, M. Tignor, and H. L. Miller (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, and New York, 996 pp.

¹⁴ Goals of the Clean Energy and Climate Plan include the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 25% from 1990 levels by 2020, to increase solar photovoltaic installations, wind energy installations, create 4,500 jobs in clean energy, and save \$6 billion through energy efficiency measures.

Local climate change and energy reduction strategies will help our town mitigate and adapt to climate change, improve our quality of life, and support our local economy. Conservation, when compared to other strategies, is the fastest and least expensive option. Homes and buildings in Great Barrington are old, and many have poor insulation. Increasing insulation in buildings, and air sealing around doors and windows can have dramatic energy savings. The Stretch Code now mandates such measures in new construction. Higher efficiency appliances, light bulbs, and vehicles may also be options to help reduce energy use.

Increased walking, bicycling, and public transit would reduce fossil fuel used for transportation. Changing consumption habits like buying local products would reduce fossil fuel used to ship goods, and would support the local economy. Likewise, increasing local food production and consumption would reduce reliance on fossil fuels for shipping, and could boost the local agricultural, restaurant, and tourism sector while preserving open space resources.

Using renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and geothermal would reduce fossil fuel use and better insulate consumers from high and volatile energy prices. The town should investigate how and whether other alternative energy sources, like waste digesters that break down compostable materials and animal manure into usable gas, could be used for local energy production and to add income opportunities for farmers.

Hydroelectric power is not likely to be viable in Great Barrington. While water power was essential to the mills throughout town, today water power is too unreliable and too expensive to develop, relative to other energy sources. It may be nostalgic, but it is not practical given current technology and regulations. Run-of-the-river hydroelectric, which uses river flows and not a reservoir, is so unreliable as to be infeasible, particularly as global warming changes precipitation patterns. So-called low-flow hydroelectric power, where a small dam and reservoir provide reliable water power, takes a decade or more of design, engineering, and permitting at all levels of government. There are local examples of municipally sponsored low-flow hydroelectric power projects, notably in West Stockbridge, but there is no compelling reason at this time for the town to undertake such a scheme. Unless circumstances change significantly, time and funds would be more effectively spent on energy conservation measures than on small scale hydro power.

Commercial-scale wind energy is not likely to occur in Great Barrington. There are few areas in Great Barrington that have sufficient wind speeds for commercial sized turbines, and these are located in protected areas of Beartown State Forest, East Mountain State Forest, and Monument Mountain. Indeed, the higher elevations of both state forests have been designated as “reserve” areas where development of any kind, including wind turbines, is prohibited. (This includes the top of Ski Butternut, which is actually owned by the state as part of East Mountain.) Rooftop wind turbines for residential use are more likely and could be an option for homes and businesses with favorable winds and few obstacles. The town should ensure its regulations do not prohibit rooftop-scale wind. The town could revise regulations and establish siting standards in order to permit small-scale wind turbines on larger lots.

Commercial-scale solar energy could occur in Great Barrington, but even that has practical limitations. Commercial solar developers search for large sites of 20 acres or more, where there are few or no constraints such as wetlands and floodplains, and, of course, on flat or south-facing slopes favorable for capturing sunshine even in winter. There are numerous sites in Great Barrington where commercial-scale solar energy systems could be located. None of these sites are public land, so commercial scale solar will only be possible by private initiative. It should be noted that current Massachusetts General Law exempts solar energy systems from local zoning regulations. Indeed, some homeowners in Great Barrington have installed solar panels on their rooftops for domestic use. But the fact there is not yet commercial scale solar in Great Barrington has less to do with regulation and much more to do with economic feasibility and landowner participation. On a smaller scale, the Energy Committee and DPW are considering the feasibility of the town buildings for small solar panel arrays.

If solar is to be promoted in Great Barrington, the town must be ready to address the inevitable tradeoffs. Achieving a balance between agriculture and solar energy, for example, which both need sunny, flat land, will be difficult. Guidelines will be needed to help balance land uses and public and private interests.

Transportation

Roads

There are over 95 miles of roads in Great Barrington and each road has a different function and role in the transportation system. Some roads are designed for long, fast trips out of town; other roads are designed for short trips between neighborhoods. All roads are classified according to function, and each road classification can help guide design, dimensional (width), and zoning standards for the roads and the areas they serve. The classifications are determined according to the National Functional Classification System (NFCS), and they consist of principal arterials, minor arterials, collectors (major and minor), and local roads and streets.¹⁵ Tables 21 and 22 and Figures 56 and 57 summarize this information.

Table 21: Road Miles in Great Barrington by Functional Classification and Jurisdiction

Functional Classification	Miles	Jurisdiction	Miles
Principal Arterial	9	MassDOT	13
Urban Minor Arterial	8	Town	78
Rural Minor Arterial	3	State Park/Forest	4
Urban Collector	7	Unaccepted by Town	0
Rural Major Collector	5	Total	95
Rural Minor Collector	8		
Local	57		
Total	95		

Source: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Massachusetts DOT

¹⁵ Standards are set by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), a nonprofit association of highway and transportation officials.

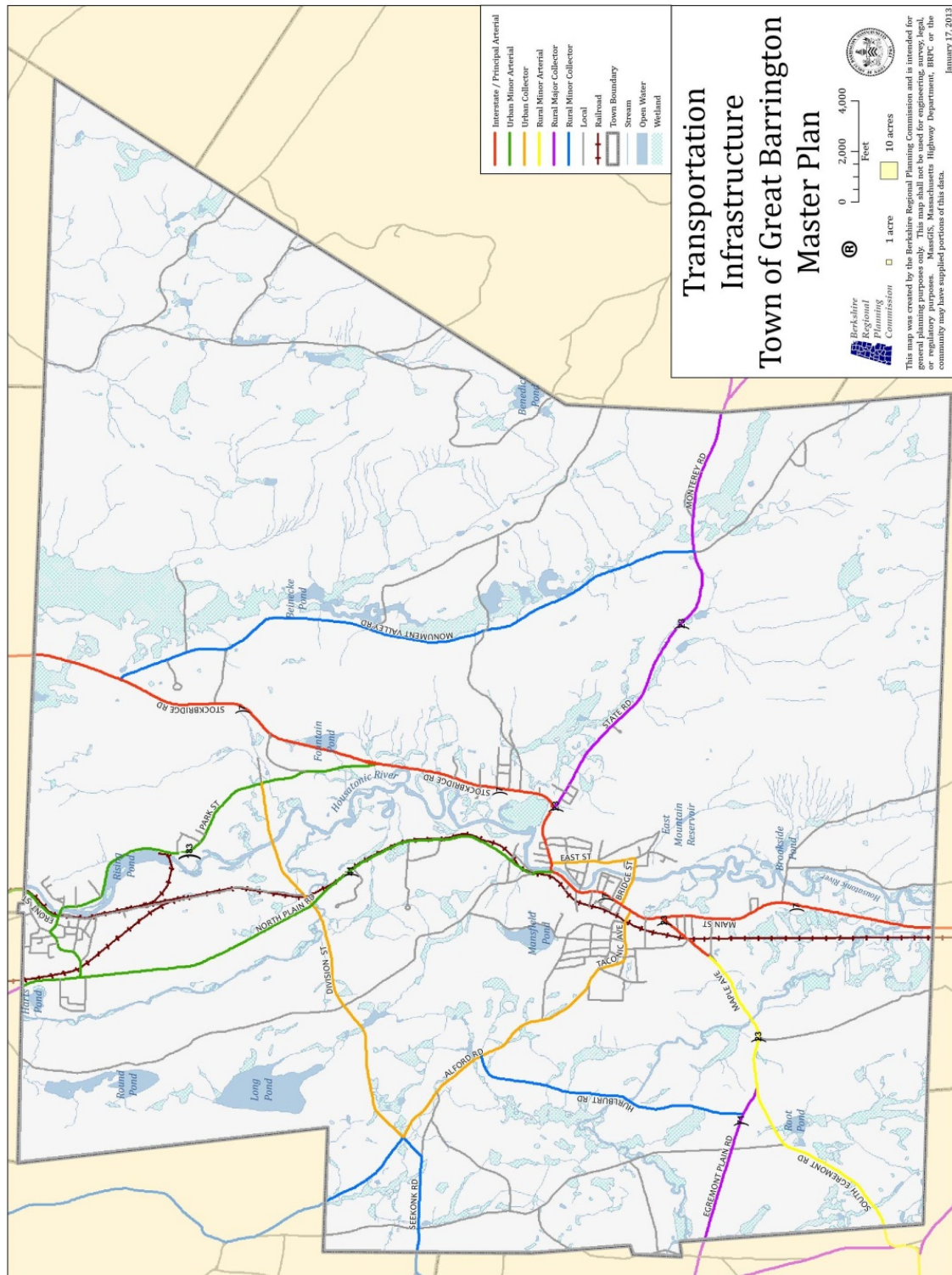
Table 22: Road Miles in Berkshire County, by Town

Community	Roads (miles)	Size (Square miles)	Population	Miles of Roads per Square Mile	People per Road Mile
MOUNT WASHINGTON	17.41	22.39	167	0.78	9.59
ALFORD	17.41	11.53	494	1.51	28.37
NEW ASHFORD	17.83	13.47	228	1.32	12.79
CLARKSBURG	20.05	12.79	1,702	1.57	84.88
TYRINGHAM	26.68	18.86	327	1.41	12.26
HANCOCK	28.08	35.74	717	0.79	25.54
PERU	38.58	26.04	847	1.48	21.95
HINSDALE	42.44	21.69	2,032	1.96	47.88
EGREMONT	43.28	18.88	1,225	2.29	28.30
FLORIDA	46.63	24.60	752	1.90	16.13
RICHMOND	47.23	19.03	1,475	2.48	31.23
DALTON	47.28	21.87	6,756	2.16	142.88
WEST STOCKBRIDGE	48.28	18.68	1,306	2.58	27.05
WASHINGTON	49.29	38.82	538	1.27	10.92
SAVOY	54.39	36.03	692	1.51	12.72
CHESHIRE	56.40	27.52	3,235	2.05	57.36
MONTEREY	57.69	27.40	961	2.11	16.66
STOCKBRIDGE	59.58	23.68	1,947	2.52	32.68
LANESBOROUGH	63.81	29.58	3,091	2.16	48.44
ADAMS	64.37	22.96	8,485	2.80	131.81
OTIS	65.72	38.05	1,612	1.73	24.53
LENOX	68.46	21.67	5,025	3.16	73.40
WINDSOR	75.88	35.16	899	2.16	11.85
WILLIAMSTOWN	76.07	46.85	7,754	1.62	101.94
LEE	81.83	27.01	5,943	3.03	72.62
NEW MARLBOROUGH	85.54	47.90	1,509	1.79	17.64
NORTH ADAMS	86.00	20.61	13,708	4.17	159.39
BECKET	91.43	47.79	1,779	1.91	19.46
SANDISFIELD	92.41	52.95	915	1.75	9.90
GREAT BARRINGTON	95.42	45.77	7,104	2.08	74.45
SHEFFIELD	100.83	48.54	3,257	2.08	32.30
PITTSFIELD	235.89	42.47	44,737	5.55	189.65
Median	57.05	26.52	1560.50	2.00	28.34
Average	39.92	23.28	1,411	1.76	34.40

Source: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Massachusetts DOT

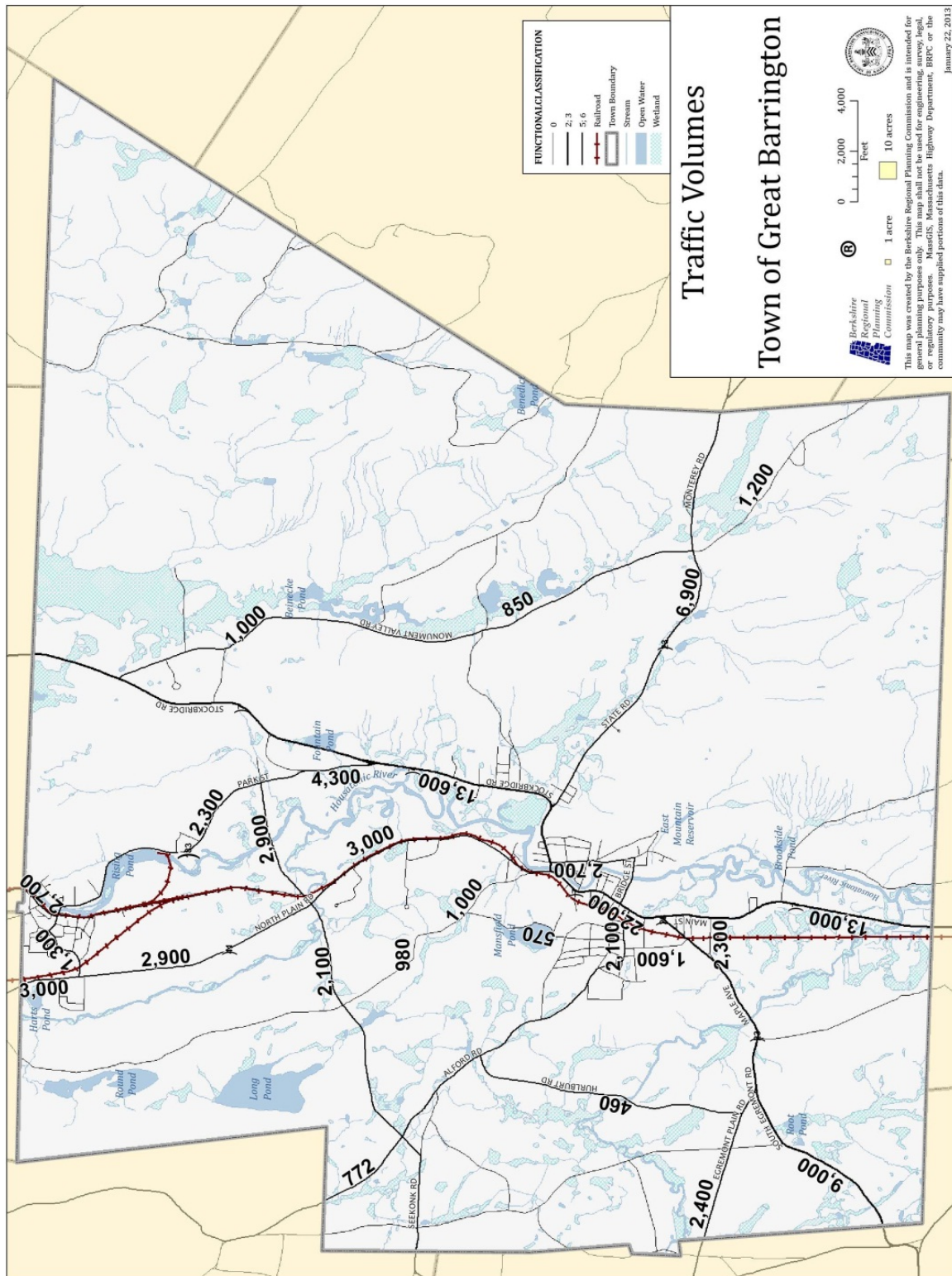
According to this data, Great Barrington has the third most road miles in the county, after Pittsfield and Sheffield, and the seventh most people per road mile. For our town's size, Great Barrington's road mileage just about the median for the county, 2.00, and just over the average for the county of 1.76.

Figure 56: Great Barrington Road Classifications



Source: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Massachusetts DOT

Figure 57: Great Barrington Average Daily Traffic Volumes



Source: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Massachusetts DOT, 2009-2012

Principal Arterials: Principal arterials are high capacity roads that serve major activity centers. They are designed to move many vehicles quickly, conveying regional passenger and freight traffic throughout the region. They are roads for long distance trips between cities and employment centers, and, in towns, are usually the primary business artery, serving regional shopping destinations. They have the most traffic, have moderate to high speeds, and have wide widths and shoulders. Table 23 summarizes these characteristics.

Table 23: General Design Elements of Arterial Roads

Number of lanes	2 – 6
Lane width	11 – 12 feet
Travel speed	30 – 55 miles per hour
Pedestrian accommodations (if any)	Paved sidewalks, 6 – 12 feet wide
Bicycle accommodations (if any)	5 – 6 feet
Parking (if any)	On-street, 8 feet wide
Buffer zones between road and sidewalk (if any)	6 –12 feet
ADT Range (vehicles per day)	10,000 – 40,000
Trucks	Unrestricted
Access	Limited-moderate

Route 7 (Main Street and Stockbridge Road), the only principal arterial in Great Barrington, carries on average 22,000 vehicles per day through downtown and 13,000 on Stockbridge Road.¹⁶ Traffic is at its peak in the summer, particularly on Friday afternoons when commuters leaving work and tourists arriving for the weekend add to the normal through traffic. Traffic bottleneck points include the lane drop on Main Street, where traffic exits Elm Street, the Bridge Street and Main Street intersection, at all crosswalks, and the St. James Place and Main Street intersection. Route 7 is owned and maintained by the Town of Great Barrington within downtown, but by the State north of the Great Bridge (the Brown Bridge) and south of the Senior Center. However, since Main Street is also US Route 7, which is a National Highway System route, major projects, such as the upcoming 2014 reconstruction project, are eligible for federal funding.

Historically, arterials have not been designed with the safety of other travelers like pedestrians and bicyclists in mind. They may not have sufficient and safe accommodations for other modes of travel like walking and bicycling (though some have wide shoulders ranging from two to ten feet in width). Policies have been changing, however, and when Mass DOT performs road repair or reconstruction efforts it is required to plan for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. In Great Barrington, this would mean including a wide shoulder on all of Route 7 for bicycles (only State Road has a wide shoulder currently). It would also include sidewalks and crosswalks where appropriate.

Stockbridge Road is dominated by motor vehicles. As part of Route 7, this is the major north-south route in the region. The businesses here—hotels, restaurants, and shopping centers—are heavily vehicle-dependent. The volume of traffic is no higher than downtown, but the speeds are higher, increasing the potential for accidents, particularly when making left turns across traffic. Furthermore, there is no shoulder to safely accommodate bicyclists, and the sidewalk serves only the east side of the corridor. The town desires a sidewalk on both sides of the road from the Holiday Inn and south, and safe pedestrian crosswalks at major points. There have been fatalities and pedestrian accidents on this car-dominated stretch of road. Also, if and when the brown bridge is redesigned, sidewalks and bicycle accommodations, including crosswalks, should be included on both sides of the road.

Minor Arterials: In Great Barrington these include North Plain Road (Route 41), Park Street (Route 183), both maintained by the town, and Maple Avenue (Route 23), maintained by the State. Traffic counts on these roads range between 3,000 and 9,000 vehicles per day. These serve some businesses and connect towns and villages, carry traffic shorter distances, and are lesser traffic generators than principal arterials. They can be moderate to high speed, but they are usually narrower than and not as straight as principal arterials.

¹⁶ For reference, 1,440 vehicles per day would equal one vehicle every minute. In practice, traffic levels are not constant around the clock or year round. There are peak hours (usually commuting times), peak seasons and peak days. Traffic counts therefore are usually averaged and expressed as AADT, or Average Annual Daily Traffic. Figures used here are AADT unless otherwise noted.

These roads generally do not provide safe accommodations for other travelers, such as sidewalks, bike lanes or wide shoulders. The combination of speed, narrow road, curves, and multiple intersections can lead to traffic conflicts and accidents. Dangerous intersections in Great Barrington include North Plain Road at Main Street (Housatonic), North Plain Road at Division Street, and North Plain Road at Christian Hill Road and the railroad overpass. Each intersection should be studied for possible safety improvements, for the benefit of motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists.

Collector roads connect arterials to local streets, and provide access to individual residential properties rather than simply providing a route through town (though they may connect rural areas to one another). Collectors vary in design, speed, and width. In Great Barrington, the largest-volume collector road is State Road, which carries about 6,000 vehicles per day and is maintained by the State. Other collector roads include Alford Road and Taconic Avenue, Division Street, East Street, Egremont Plain Road, Hurlburt Road, and Monument Valley Road. Each of these streets carries between 1,000 and 3,000 vehicles per day. They are all maintained by the town.

Collector roads in Great Barrington also generally do not provide safe accommodations for other travelers, such as sidewalks, bike lanes or wide shoulders. Many of these roads are popular “back roads” used by bicyclists. Some of them are even marked on maps and with signage as bike routes. But safety improvements for all users should be sought on all of these roads whenever improvements are made by the town or the State. It is noted that sidewalks are present in some areas such as Taconic Avenue and East Street. However, even these are not ideal for pedestrians because they are not separated from the high speed frequent vehicle traffic. Future sidewalk repairs and installations must include buffers, grass or landscaping of some sort, to visually and psychologically separate pedestrians from motor vehicles. (This also helps with walkability in winter—buffered sidewalks are less likely to be piled with snow and slush pushed up by snow plows on the road, and more easily traversed.)

Local roads and streets are primarily residential streets and country roads that are shorter in length, have slower speeds, and provide access to residential properties. Traffic volumes on local roads range from less than one hundred to perhaps several thousand daily. Most are between 18 and 22 feet wide. There are a few roads that are nine to thirteen feet wide, but carry two-way traffic. Posted speed limits range from 15 to 50 miles per hour.¹⁷

Most local roads are maintained by the town, and most of these roadways are paved.¹⁸ Private roads are maintained by homeowners associations. However the town does perform winter maintenance (plowing and sanding) of approximately 4.1 miles of private roads, a responsibility which was accepted by Town Meeting in 1995. These are listed in Table 24.

¹⁷ If there is not a posted speed, Massachusetts Chapter 90-17 prescribes speed limits of 20 miles per hour in a school zone, 30 miles per hour in a thickly settled or business district for a distance of 1/8 of a mile, 40 miles per hour on an undivided highway outside of a thickly settled or business district for a distance of 1/4 of a mile, and 50 miles per hour on a divided highway outside of a thickly settled or business district for a distance of 1/4 of a mile.

¹⁸ Only three town roads are unpaved: Alcott Road, Division Street extension (east of Park Street), and a portion of Seekonk Cross Road (between Round Hill Road and Seekonk Road).

Table 24: Town DPW Winter Maintenance of Private Roads

Street Name	Gravel	Asphalt
Bridle Path Lane	0.15	
Brookside Court	0.2	
Button Down	0.0.3	
Copper Beech		0.2
Crimson Lane	0.1	
Deer Trail Lane	0.2	
Dehon Road	0.3	
East Mountain Road		0.6
Fern Hill	0.2	
Grant Lane	0.1	
Kaliste Hill		1.0
Lakeview Road	0.2	
Omega Road		0.1
Spruce Street	0.1	
Walnut Street	0.1	
Wright Lane	0.25	
Mileage by Type	2.2	1.9
Total Mileage	4.1 miles	

Where roads have sidewalks or shoulders, conditions vary greatly. They are two-lane roadways with minimal to no shoulder width. Given low speeds and generally low traffic volumes, local streets are often a safe and comfortable environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. This is not always the case however, particularly on narrow roads where there are not sidewalks, areas of limited sight distance, and sections that are not lit at night. Lake Mansfield Road is one such local road where pedestrians, fishermen, and beach goers particularly need safety improvements.

Traffic Calming

Slowing traffic and increasing safety of pedestrians and bicyclists is a major concern of Great Barrington residents. Some streets are particularly bad, whether by design speed, lack of enforcement, or that it is a “by pass” around downtown congestion. Successful traffic calming maintains connectivity for vehicles and access to homes and businesses, but mitigates the effects of excessive traffic speed, noise, and volume. This is especially important as there is a desire in both village centers and rural areas for more recreational walking and bicycling opportunities. Rural roads in particular can be scenic walking and bicycling routes. Traffic calming techniques are designed depending on the specific location and need, but generally include interventions that physically slow traffic, or give drivers a psychological cue that they should be driving slower.

Traffic Congestion

Traffic congestion is a periodic problem that needs managing, but it does not require expensive new roads. At the time of the 1973 Master Plan, the State was considering options for a bypass road to move cars around downtown, rather than through it, to alleviate summer congestion problems. Thankfully for our downtown, this bypass never came to pass, and our business district continues to be a busy regional destination. Unfortunately, the seasonal congestion issue has never been solved. In peak traffic periods, almost 24,000 vehicles travel on Main Street through downtown; this is several thousand more than the yearly average traffic volume. Many thousands of vehicles actually avoid downtown altogether, travelling Bridge Street and East Street, usually at speeds unsafe for residential areas, trying to beat the gridlock.

The Main Street Reconstruction Project will mitigate the long-term issue. To be sure, construction period impacts will be major, and must be dealt with by the State, Contractor, and the town with the business community. But the project, which is

improving lane width, timing of traffic lights, and adding a traffic light at Elm Street, should help traffic move more smoothly while alleviating bottlenecked intersections.

Bridges

Bridges are critical to travel, shipping, and our entire economic and service structure. There are 17 bridges in Great Barrington, 10 of which are the responsibility of the town, and seven of which are the responsibility of Mass DOT.¹⁹ Mass DOT inspects all bridges, regardless of jurisdiction, on a regular basis and rates their condition with a score up to 100 points. In the 2010 bridge inspection report for Great Barrington, the median score for all 17 bridges was relatively good 77.9. The bridge report also notes deficiencies, if any, as structurally deficient (“SD”) or functionally obsolete (“FO”). A structurally deficient bridge is closed or restricted to carrying only light vehicles because of its deteriorated structural components. While not necessarily unsafe, these bridges must have limits for speed and weight. A functionally obsolete bridge has older design features, and, while it is not unsafe for all vehicles, it cannot safely accommodate current traffic volumes, and vehicle sizes and weights.

Several bridges in Great Barrington are in need of repair or restoration. The Bridge Street Bridge over the Housatonic River was one of the lowest-scoring bridges in town (it scored 55.7 and is noted as FO). Because of this score and subsequent site inspections, weight limits were posted on this bridge in 2010. The Cottage Street Bridge scored 86.5 but subsequent inspections noted rust and structural concerns. Thus this bridge was also posted for weight limits in 2010. Other low scoring town-owned bridges included were the Division Street bridge over the Housatonic River (52.6, FO) and the Division Street bridge over the Williams River (58.2, FO).

Of the State-owned bridges, the lowest scoring bridge was the Park Street (Route 183) bridge over the Housatonic River (it scored 60.4, SD); the State will bear the costs of any repair. Because of its poor condition, it has recently been restricted in travel width and weight limits. The Great Bridge, also known as the Brown Bridge, on Route 7 / State Road over the Housatonic River, was built in 1931 and is one of the oldest bridges in town. It was rated a relatively high 71.3. However, because it is such a key bridge in the arterial road network and carries so much traffic, the Mass DOT has a close eye on this bridge. Mass DOT has it in line for planning and design funds, including a possible realignment to better accommodate north-bound trucks, but its priority is low, for now.

Fixing bridges is a lengthy and expensive proposition. It was estimated recently that it could cost approximately \$2.3 million to repair the Bridge Street Bridge. Repair estimates for the Cottage Street Bridge are \$1.3 million.

Town funds are limited, and they need to be spent wisely—the town must prioritize its bridge and infrastructure funding. The Town Manager, in developing the annual and five-year Capital Improvement Plans, should direct the Department of Public Works to make a priority list of bridge repairs. Setting priorities should include determining what these bridges connect, what functions they serve or people/goods they move, available alternate routes, if any, and their role in supporting future growth that strengthens our town tax base or adds jobs. And since the money must also be spent on roads, sidewalks, and other transportation items, bridge priorities must be weighed against other desired items, whatever they may be.

For example, Bridge Street is a key bridge and it should be a high priority bridge for the town. It provides a bypass to Main Street, carrying close to 3,000 vehicles per day, and is a critical connector to residential neighborhoods. Its continued function is important to the success of the planned redevelopment of the New England Log Homes site, which will include the future location of the Berkshire Co-Op Market. It is also the alternative if the brown bridge were to be out of service for repair or replacement. Because this is a town bridge, the town will be responsible for funding the design and repair. Given the economic development potential in the Bridge Street area, Mass Works funding should be sought for repair or replacement.

Parking

Parking is an important support component to a thriving business community, particularly one that depends on tourists driving into town from elsewhere. Visitors, shoppers, theater-goers, employees, and business owners all need parking. Their

¹⁹ Mass DOT maintains all of the bridges on Route 7 and Route 23, as well as the Park Street (Rte. 183) in Housatonic over the Housatonic River, and the North Plain Road bridge over the Williams River.

needs vary in duration, in time of day, and in day of week, it is true that if they cannot park their car, then, failing other transportation options like walking or transit, they cannot patronize downtown or work downtown.

Addressing the parking issue is partly about supply, and partly about reducing demand. Other components of this chapter discuss ways to reduce parking demand—making increased walking, bicycling, and transit use more attractive, convenient, and possible, for example.

Downtown Parking

Parking is considered a problem in downtown Great Barrington, where thousands of vehicles converge daily and nightly.

The parking challenge has been an abiding theme in Great Barrington for decades.²⁰ The 1973 and 1997 Master Plans both discussed parking supply issues and made several recommendations. Few have been implemented. Parking has been added in only two places: the Taconic parking lot near the TriPlex Cinema (site of an old bowling alley and lumber yard) and on Church Street (where old houses were either relocated or demolished). But some opportunities like the privately owned lot west of the railroad tracks seem to have been missed.

Today, approximately 1,000 parking spaces exist in downtown (800 off-street spaces in public and private lots, and 200 on-street spaces). As the 2012 Parking Task Force commissioned by the Board of Selectmen discovered, only 200 off-street spaces are public spaces, available for anyone. The other 600 off-street spaces are private and reserved by employers for their employees and customers. The Main Street Reconstruction will reduce the number of on-street spaces by 26 (20 of which are north of Elm Street). Figure 58 shows parking areas in downtown.

Downtown parking spaces are generally well used, but use is highly dependent on day of the week, time of day, and season. Some events at the Mahaiwe Theater, a crucial anchor for downtown and a regional cultural attraction, draw 600 guests and fill most of the parking lots in the immediate vicinity. But these events do not occur daily. Even on a weekend in the high summer season, off-street lots are only partially occupied.

²⁰ Selected list of previous parking studies and inventories: 1973 Town Plan; 1997 Master Plan; 2005 Downtown Parking Study by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission; and the 2012 Downtown Parking Task Force.

Figure 58: Downtown Parking Map



Source: Downtown Parking Task Force and Great Barrington Planning Department

Great Barrington's parking is primarily behind buildings, off of Main Street. To the extent new parking lots can be found, this pattern should be replicated. The same is true for Housatonic village. Locating parking lots directly on the main thoroughfare not only disrupts the historic architectural patterns and the pleasant pedestrian environment, it also yields little direct economic value. Parking lots do not sell goods, employ people, or house people. Parking lots do not belong on main streets, particularly in compact, historic downtowns like Great Barrington where land is limited, valuable, and character is of utmost importance.

There are few, if any, options for new parking lots in downtown. The space behind Ried Cleaners might be useable, but parking concerns are secondary to the remediation of the contamination and reuse of the building. Spaces could be added behind the renovated St. James Church, now St. James Place, but these are likely to be few in number and most likely for office tenants of the building. In any case, this lot should be connected with the Town Hall lot, forming a logical and easy pedestrian connection to the Mahaiwe Theater and through the alley to Railroad Street. Finally, the railroad lot just west of the railroad tracks could handle a substantial number of cars. Despite an agreement between the owner and abutting property owner restricting commercial parking here, it remains the last best option of adding to the parking supply. All three of these are noted on the map above.

Parking lots are expensive to build. Parking garages are even more expensive; estimates range from \$20,000 to \$40,000 per space added, minimum. These structures do not pay for themselves unless there is continuous full occupancy and high rates. Existing lots could be reconfigured to maximize efficiency and aesthetics. These include the public lots on Castle Street and Railroad Street (see “A” and “B” on Figure 58). The lot around Town Hall could also be redesigned to add parking spaces, perhaps achieving parking on both sides of the travel aisle (double loaded parking).

Shared parking lots and clear signage can mitigate the parking problem. Past studies have shown that even on busy weekends private lots are might be only half or three-quarters occupied. These lots are conveniently located behind buildings. Unfortunately the parking restrictions have not always been clear. New signage on some of the lots may help with this issue. Also, the lots are not easy for the new visitor, who has no familiarity of our town, to find. Signage that directs motorists from Main Street to parking lots would aid in this regard. A motorist who can quickly find parking is less likely to circle the block, tying up traffic, or waste time and fuel as they idle the car. Signage would help reduce circular trips and spread parking demand across lots.

With limited parking supply, convenient “prime” spaces must be available for shoppers and tourists, and not used for employees. The Downtown Parking Task Force has taken an important step with business owners, working with them to purchase remote parking spaces for themselves and for their employees, leaving prime on-street spaces for shoppers. The Task Force work should be continued and supported by the town with staff and resources such as signage, whenever possible.

Strong partnerships are required if any of the above challenges are to be met successfully. The business community could, through the Chamber of Commerce or a Business Improvement District, raise funds to acquire land to add supply, to beautify existing lots making them more attractive to users, to add landscaping or low level security lighting were needed. The town can assist with signage and coordination of efforts, and enforcement.

Housatonic Parking

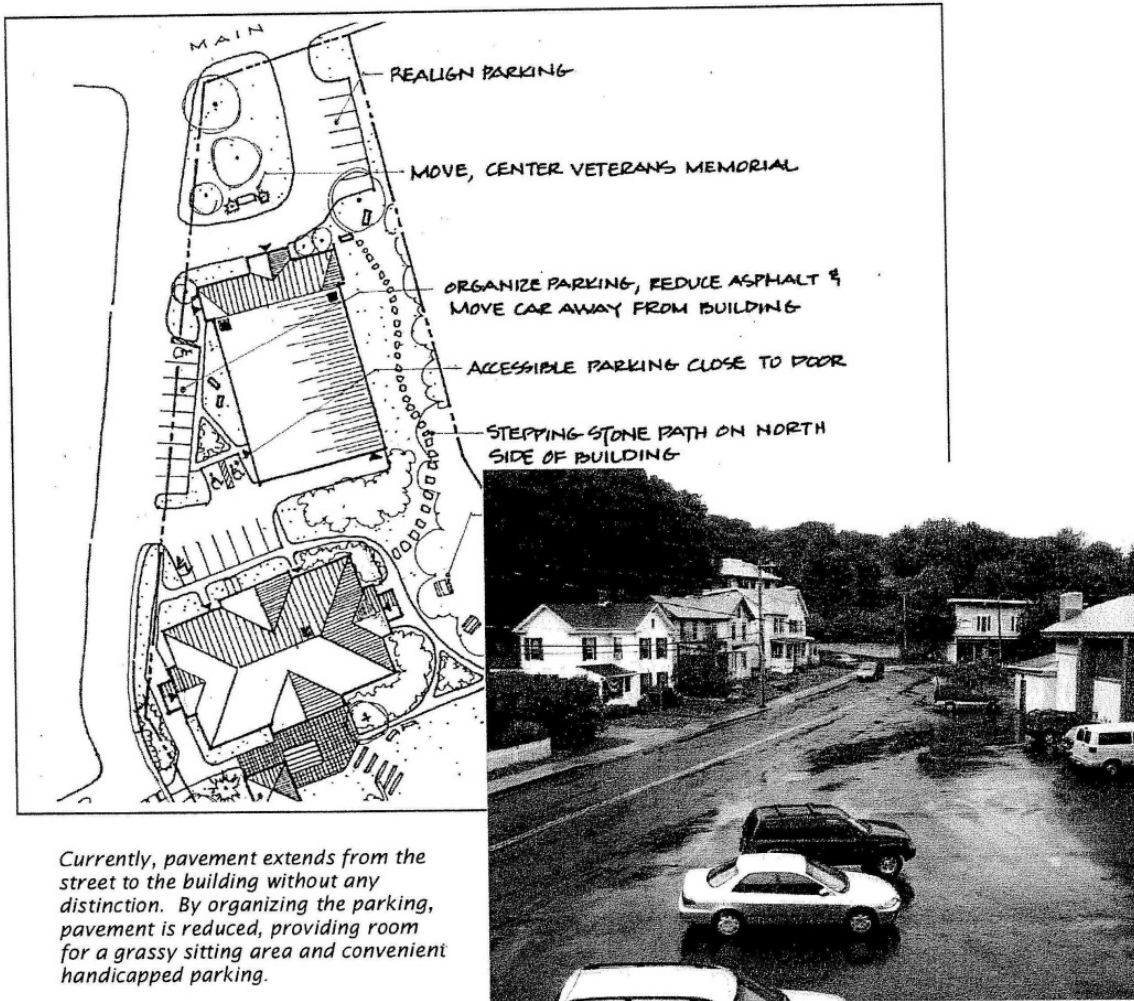
There is a very limited amount of parking in Housatonic village. While this is not surprising given its original developments were patterned to serve horses and trains, not automobiles, it is one of several serious constraints to future redevelopment of the school and the Monument Mills. Any redevelopment must take into account issues of parking supply.

Past recommendations are still valid, and should be implemented. As in downtown, many task forces and studies in Housatonic have taken into account parking in their efforts. The Housatonic Visioning effort in early 2004, begun as the school system announced plans to vacate the school, culminated in a report, “Housatonic Village Common,” in December 2004. This report included recommendations to reconfigure and landscape the parking area around the school and Community Center. See Figure 59. Implementing these recommendations would also achieve the communities land use vision for Housatonic as a vibrant, pedestrian oriented community. Of course, the ultimate configuration depends on the fate of the school building.

Figure 59: Excerpt from Housatonic Village Common report, 2004

Parking

Parking around the village area is somewhat random and informal. Changes noted above will help improve and organize parking. Redesign of the Depot/ Front Street intersection should eliminate parking directly on the corner by the post office. Parking along Pleasant Street should remain parallel, with a curb to keep cars from parking on the grass. On the east side of Front Street, cars parked along the base of the railroad embankment create a hazard, and will be eliminated by the retaining wall recommended in the block between Pleasant and Meadow Streets.



The biggest change to parking is proposed at the Community Center, where the amount of asphalt will be dramatically reduced and parking for 25 cars could include three or four designated handicapped spaces as needed.

Redevelopment efforts at the mills will face parking supply challenges. It is likely that a large portion of parking can be found on site at the mills, but this may require expensive infrastructure in the form of parking decks, or it may require demolition of obsolete buildings. Neither should be undertaken lightly or without regard to scale, pedestrian access and connectivity, cost, and historic appropriateness. The Housatonic Mill Revitalization Overlay District, a zoning district adopted in 2011, sets out some guidelines for future redevelopment efforts, including shared parking possibilities.

Sidewalks and Trails

A fairly good sidewalk network serves our town, linking residential neighborhoods with community facilities, parks and playgrounds, and businesses. As mentioned previously, sidewalks in Great Barrington are generally limited to the business centers and dense neighborhoods. In these locations they exist on one or both sides of roadways in town. They range from three feet wide to eight feet or wider along Main Street. In our densest neighborhoods, it is generally easy for able bodied people to walk for recreation (or as their means of transportation). A recent survey by the DPW shows the location and condition of all 13.5 miles of town-maintained sidewalks in Great Barrington (not counting state sidewalks on Stockbridge and State Roads, or sidewalks in private developments).

Fifty percent of our sidewalk miles are in poor condition and need attention. In other words, 6.6 miles are rated poorly by DPW. Some sidewalks are in excellent shape, particularly those in Housatonic, and recently repaired sidewalks on South Street and Hollenbeck Avenue. The following maps show the condition of the sidewalk network, noting locations of existing crosswalks and existing parks. Blue is excellent, green is good, yellow is fair, and red is poor.

Figure 60: Sidewalk Inventory & Condition, Great Barrington 2012

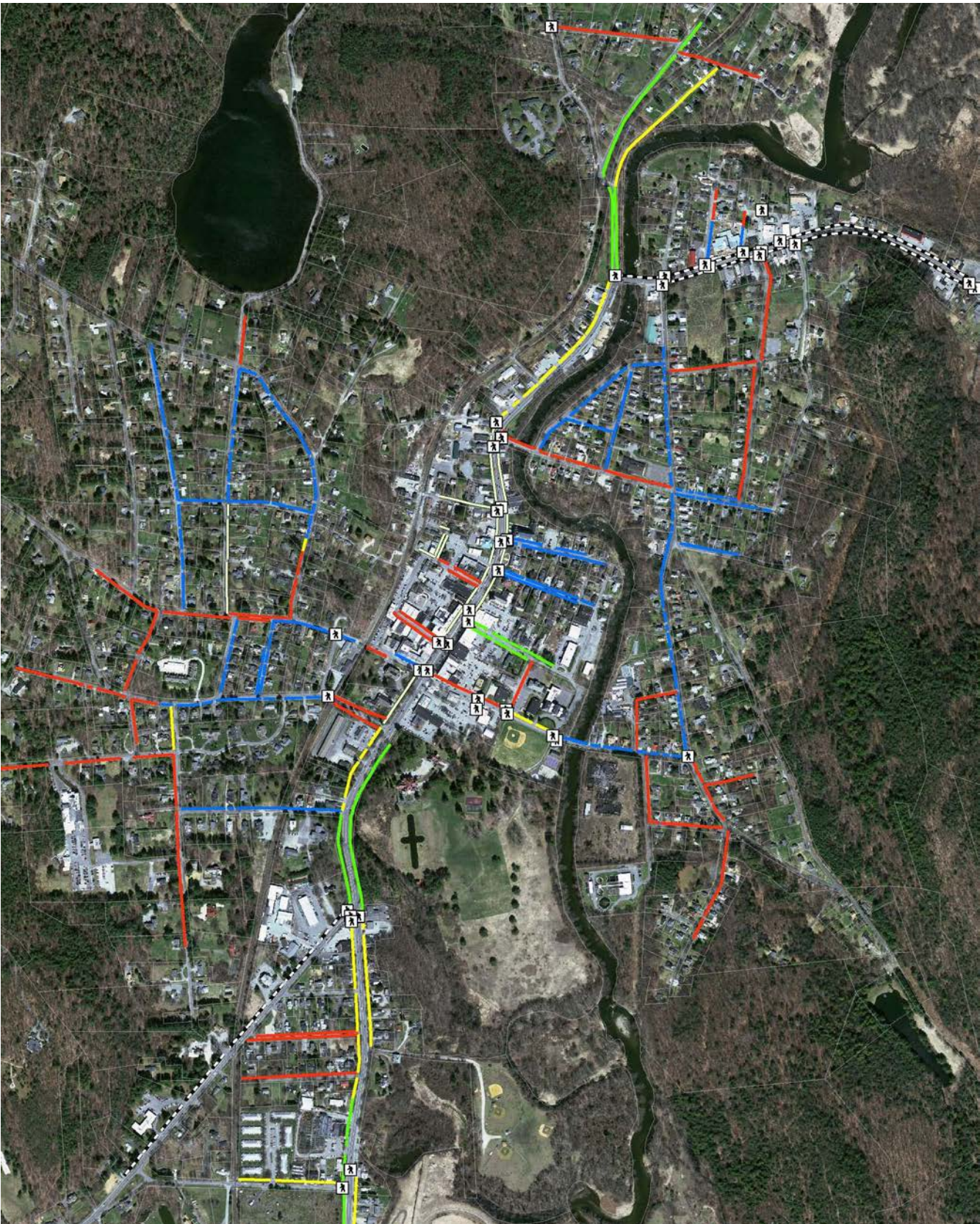
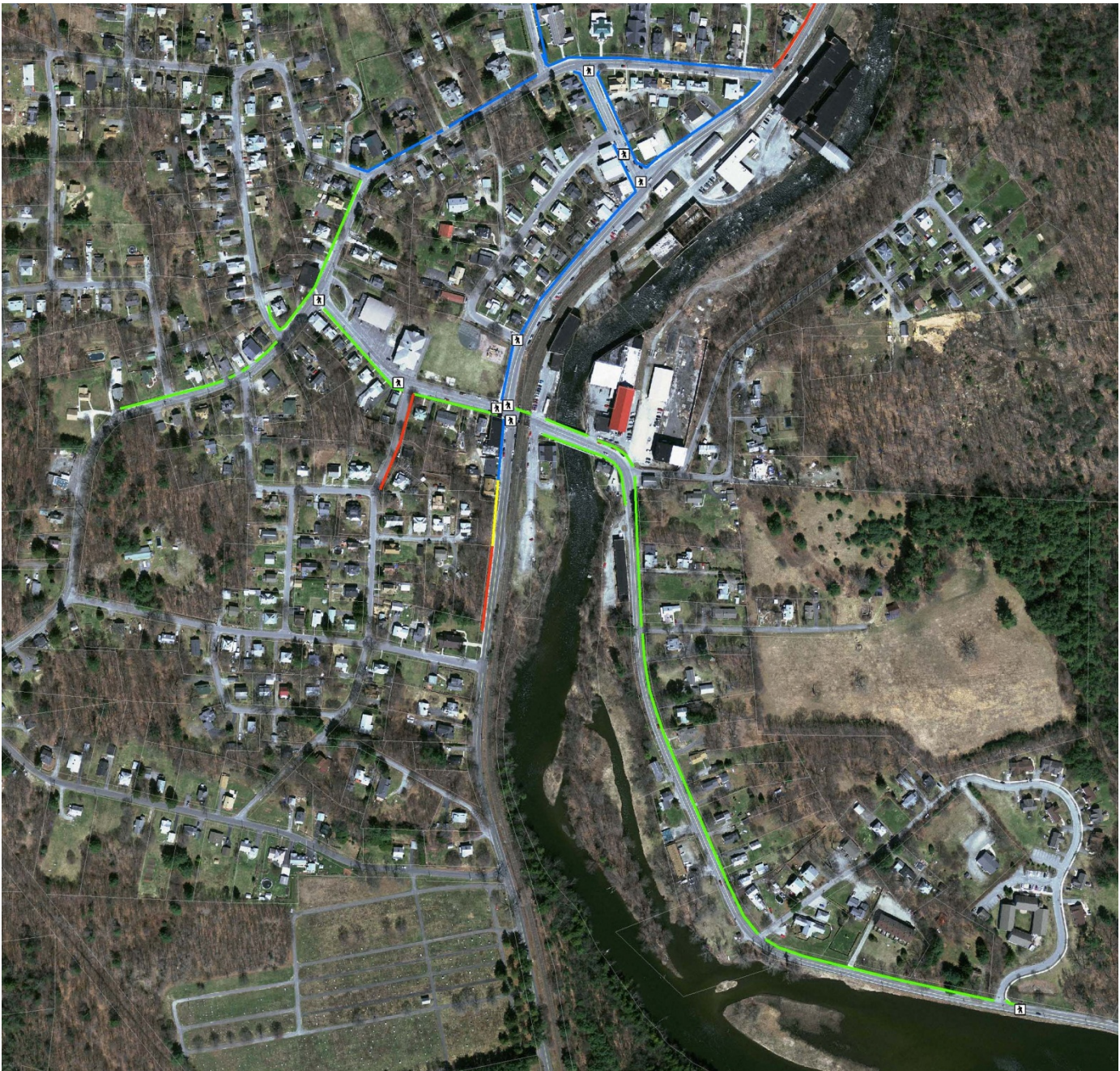


Figure 61: Sidewalk Inventory & Condition, Housatonic, 2012



Identifying and fixing the deficiencies of condition, and connection, is critical to ensuring our neighborhoods are walkable, connected, and safe for aging seniors and young families. The recently-completed *Housatonic Walkability Study*, conducted by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission under a grant through the Tri-Town Health Departments, is a good example of a comprehensive approach of identifying the challenges to mobility in our neighborhoods. With help from community volunteers and survey questionnaires, the study approached the assessment through the eyes walkers, wheelchair users, bicyclists, parents pushing strollers, and so on. It found such things as tripping hazards and crumbling pavement that are a serious obstacle to somebody pushing a stroller or unstable on their feet. It found that sidewalks are often not connected or linked with crosswalks. Some streets may sometimes be dangerous to cross. On some roadways, the location of the sidewalk changes from the north to south or east to west side on different segments of the route. Improving the ability to access and use all of the recreation assets our town offers will improve our quality of life.

If budgets stay constant it would take eleven more years to reconstruct all of the sidewalks currently rated in poor condition. That assumes, of course, that current funding levels remain constant. In 2012, the town poured about 3,000 feet of new sidewalk, on South Street and Hollenbeck Avenue, spending roughly \$90,000 of town funds to do so.²¹ That equals \$30 per linear foot to replace a four-foot wide concrete sidewalk. That is assuming no major excavation or engineering is required. And that does not make the sidewalk wide enough for town plows to maintain in winter (it must be five feet wide to accommodate the equipment).

With tight budgets and scarce resources, new sidewalks and sidewalk repairs must be done strategically and efficiently. As with bridges, priorities must be set. High priority sidewalks would include connections between dense neighborhoods and downtown, important services like the hospital and shopping destinations, and recreation areas and parks. With that in mind, as part of its 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), the DPW should specifically address how and where sidewalks and crosswalks will be improved.

One way to stretch sidewalk budgets would be to use asphalt instead of concrete. There is considerable debate about which material is aesthetically more pleasing, but many historic small towns use asphalt for their sidewalks. In any case, the clear winner in terms of cost and maintenance is asphalt. Recent estimates for sidewalks are \$29 per square yard (3 feet by 3 feet) for asphalt and \$54 per square yard for concrete. With that in mind, DPW will determine the most appropriate material as it develops the annual Street Improvement List and Capital Improvement Plan for review by the Town Manager, Board of Selectmen, and Finance Committee. DPW's goal is to use concrete in historic districts and in core neighborhoods, but asphalt outside of these areas.

Sidewalks and bike lanes are neither possible nor necessary everywhere, but shoulders and signage can help make for a complete street. Narrow residential streets with little through traffic, like Lake Avenue in Great Barrington or South Street in Housatonic, are safe enough to walk in the roadway. Many rural local roads where vehicles speeds are also low are safe enough for walking in the roadway. However collector roads and arterial roads often have speeding traffic and limited sight distance on curves and hills. These roads can be unsafe for walking in the roadway. In all cases, where possible, use of the shoulder can improve safety for non-motorists. DPW can investigate shoulder conditions, mow and trim roadside vegetation to improve visibility, and improve sweeping and plowing of shoulders in order to provide walking and biking space. Share the road signs to alert motorists to the possible presence of walkers would also improve safety on all roads.

Bicycling

Bicycling is a popular past time in the Berkshires, and Great Barrington offers a great many scenic rides for riders of all ages. It is growing in popularity for commuters as well as for recreation. Unfortunately, riding on local roads can be dangerous, even for experienced cyclists. Narrow or nonexistent shoulders offer no refuge from speeding vehicles. Limited street lighting and low visibility in bad weather effectively limits safe cycling to the warm temperatures and long days of summer.

Mass DOT has a policy to address all modes of travel when undertaking road redesign. The Town DPW should adopt a similar policy. ***For example, Great Barrington will get its first bike lane with the Main Street reconstruction.*** The lane, on both sides of the street, will stretch from Cottage Street south to St. James Place. The bike lanes could be extended north along Route 23 and Route 7, and South on Route 7.

Local bicycling groups are taking steps to achieve their vision of more and safer bicycling options. With the help of the Department of Public Works and Mass DOT, advocates had "share the road" and "bicycle route" signs posted on Route 7, Monument Valley Road, Main Street, and Route 23, all of which are popular on-road routes. Advocates have held bicycling days, with the help of a local cycle shop and the Police Department, to encourage safe bicycle riding practices. And recently, an effort funded by Housatonic Heritage produced bike route maps to connect scenic roads, historic and cultural resources, and village centers and downtowns throughout the upper Housatonic Valley.

A frequently expressed desire by participants in this Master Plan process was for a safe route to connect Housatonic with downtown Great Barrington. Such a route would increase transportation and recreation options. Numerous proposals hope to utilize the railroad corridor, which already links the downtowns. While this may not be possible given the limited right of

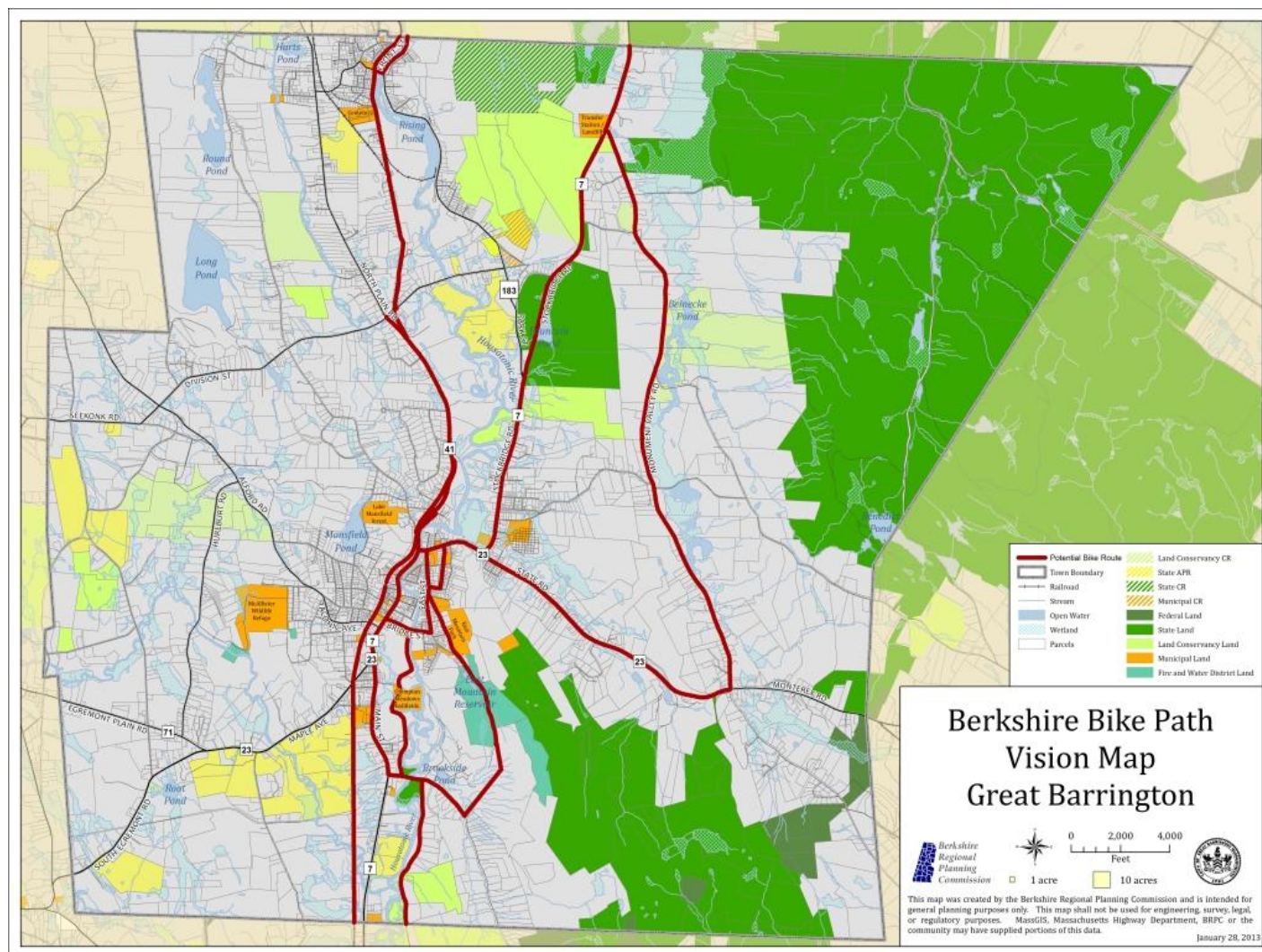
²¹ This represented about 10 percent of the town's total road improvement budget for that year.

way and other issues with the active railroad, it should remain on the table for discussion. In the meantime, on-road routes along Van Deusenville Road, North Plain Road, and Park Street should be explored.

The local routes in Great Barrington are also envisioned to be part of a longer Vermont to Connecticut multi-use recreational path of approximately 75 miles. Coordinated by the Berkshire Bike Path Council and with the steady support of BRPC and former US Congressman John Olver, the border to border trail will utilize railway corridors and related off-road bike paths, where possible, with on-road bike lanes. Great Barrington has been doing its part in this effort since 2009 when the Board of Selectmen signed a "Joint Planning Resolution" committing the town to plan cooperatively with the 10 other Berkshire County communities through which the projected Berkshire Bike Path will travel. Since then, a bike trail vision map was developed with the cooperation of our northern (Stockbridge) and southern (Sheffield) neighbors. Great Barrington should continue these efforts locally.

The bold lines on the Bike Vision Map below indicate the preferred north-south bike routes in and through Great Barrington.

Figure 62: Bike Path Vision Map



Public Transit

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority

Great Barrington's existing local public transportation system includes a Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) bus route, designated Route #21. The route operates Monday through Saturday. System wide weekday service hours are from 5:45 a.m. to 7:20 PM and Saturday service is from 7:15 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Route #21 starts from the Prime Outlets in Lee and ends at the Senior Center in Great Barrington, also serving western Lee, Stockbridge, Glendale, and Housatonic. Route # 21 inbound services to Great Barrington starts at 7:45 a.m. and operates every hour from the Lee Prime Outlets. The last trip is at 5:10 p.m. The first outbound bus from Great Barrington starts at 6:55 AM from Fairground Plaza and reaches the Prime Outlets in Lee at 7:45 a.m. There is a bus to Lee every 1 hour till 6:13 p.m., beginning at 8:45 a.m. If the rider has to go to Pittsfield he/ she can transfer to Route # 2 at the Prime Outlets, which reaches the Intermodal Center in Pittsfield 45 to 55 minutes later. There is a gap in morning service from Great Barrington, such that after 8:30 a.m. the next arrival time at Pittsfield via the Lee connection is not until 10:40 a.m. Outbound services first leave Lee at 6 a.m. and with the final trip leaving Prime outlets at 4 p.m., arriving at the Senior Center around 5:30 p.m.

BRTA Route # 21 has an express service between Great Barrington and Pittsfield twice a day northbound and once a day southbound via Stockbridge, Lenox, and southern Pittsfield. This is the only direct service between the Great Barrington and Pittsfield. Route # 21 Express starts from Fairground Plaza in Great Barrington at 6:55 a.m. and reaches the Intermodal Center in Pittsfield at 7:35 a.m. In the evening the bus starts from the Intermodal Center at 5:30 p.m. and reaches Fairground Plaza at 6:10 p.m. The same bus leaves Fairground Plaza at 6:10 p.m. and reaches the Intermodal Center at 6:45 p.m. BRTA provides for chaircar service to ADA qualified customers as an alternative to the fixed route bus. If a trip is needed away from the fixed route location or outside of operating hours, BRTA coordinates a taxi or enhanced chaircar. BRTA brokers services for MassHealth and Mass Public Health.

The 2012 BRTA 10-Year Vision Plan seeks to develop a bus service that responds to the reality of the 24 hour/7 day service economy of the Berkshires. Currently, the busiest travel days for resorts in the Berkshires are Thursdays and Sundays, and there is no bus service on Sundays. Thus people who need to get to work on Sundays cannot rely on the bus. The reality is that people sometimes cannot compete, accept, or keep a job because they cannot get to work. Not getting to work, not being able to compete for a job or keep a job, get to the hospital or drop kids at day care, is a serious material, social, emotional, and financial strain on a family.

BRTA would like to expand service, increase headways (decrease wait time between buses), and offer additional hours, particularly at night and weekends. Developing a south county satellite garage is critical to those objectives along with improving coordination and responsiveness among other transportation providers. The plan calls for a fixed public transit route in South County that would link Great Barrington, Stockbridge, Lee, and Lenox with express service every half-hour. The vision also calls for a transition to busses fueled by compressed natural gas (CNG), with a CNG station to be integrated with the railroad station in Great Barrington if passenger service is restored.

Funding is the key to convenient and widely-used public transit. BRTA currently operates on a limited budget. It must use capital funds to plug operational deficits, thereby reducing funds for expanding service or keeping existing service in good repair. With better funding, BRTA will seek to improve service, information, and add the routes discussed above. More convenient service with more route options would make public transit a much more attractive way to get around than by personal vehicle.

Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Corporation

The Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Corporation (SBETC) provides demand responsive transportation services to the able-bodied elderly, disabled elderly, and nonelderly disabled. It is a not-for-profit organization and is operated from Claire Teague Senior Center in Great Barrington. Clients are required to call 24 hours in advance to schedule a trip. The office is open Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

SBETC differs from BRTA in that SBETC offers door to door service critical to our seniors who may be less mobile. Also, the drivers are able and willing to assist passengers onto the bus or into the house. SBETC serves all of the towns in the southern Berkshires, and funding is chronically limited. Great Barrington has acted in the past to use free cash from the operational

budget to fund the SBETC. As with BRTA, continuing this vital service depends heavily on a steady infusion of adequate subsidy.

Other Services

A Greyhound / Peter Pan bus provides service to New York City and the Peter Pan bus in Lee accesses points to the east, including Boston.

A variety of other services are available, including taxi service through Rainbow Taxi and assist services through CRT Inc. Goodwill, Councils on Aging, and the Brein Center are service agency examples that provide transportation although it is not part of their core service mission.

Railroad

The Housatonic Railroad Company (HRRC) currently carries only freight trains on its route through Great Barrington and Housatonic, between Pittsfield and Connecticut. Passenger service which brought visitors from Grand Central Terminal in New York City north to the Berkshires ceased in 1971.

Passenger rail is an opportunity on the horizon. The HRRC is examining the viability of passenger rail and a commissioned economic impact study suggests that the market for passenger rail is strong and the economic benefit to the region far exceeds the costs.

The Town should prepare for passenger rail service by planning ahead for appropriate rail station services like pedestrian and bike connections, bus connections, and parking accommodations. While passenger service may be a decade or more away, and it is beyond the direct control of the town, the town should participate with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission as it studies passenger rail options and needed infrastructure.

The early stages of the BRPC rail location study has determined that the railroad prefers stations to be not less than 8 to 10 miles apart, so that trains do not have to make too many stops. The location must also be flat, straight, and, ideally, have double (paired) tracks. Based on this, it is unlikely that Housatonic would see a station in the village. But the area around Van Deusenville Road and Division Street is feasible, as is the downtown train station (currently privately owned).

Airport

The Walter J. Koladza Great Barrington Airport (GBR), elevation 739 feet, on Egremont Plain Road has been serving the southern Berkshires since the 1920s. The airport runway is over 2,500 feet in length. The airport is operated by Berkshire Aviation Enterprises and provides sales, service, flight instruction, charter flights and sightseeing tours. It is an important, though often unremarked, aspect of our economy—tourists, business people, and emergency services all use the airport.

The airport is located in the water quality protection district, upstream of the Green River water supply galleries, and it is in a residential and agricultural area. Any activity, growth, or development here must be regulated to protect the town's water supply, and to ensure uses are compatible with residential and agricultural neighbors.

Complete Streets

Our town recognizes the need for transportation planning that focuses on more than just cars and fixing potholes. Roads should be designed to enhance the safety of all users the beauty of their surrounding properties, not just for high speeds and fast travel. We want streets that are safe and attractive for everyone—for bicycles, cars, pedestrians, and traffic in general.

Because the demands on our transportation infrastructure are many, and the costs are high, improvements must be coordinated and integrated. Our aging population, who may not be able to drive themselves, still desire social and community connections and to live more active, healthy lifestyles. Planning for energy price increases and meeting the needs of our aging population will require services like shuttle buses, and safe connections by which people can walk and bicycle

safely to work and community events. Public transportation, provided by the regional bus system, is inconvenient and inefficient; indeed less than one percent of workers use public transportation. And while 80 percent of workers drive alone to work, as gas prices increase, it is possible that transportation modes other than personal vehicles will increase in importance.

Well-planned road and bridge improvements that include, as a matter of course, accommodations like sidewalks and crosswalks for the safety and comfort of other uses, will help us meet these 21st Century challenges. Such a “*complete street*” system will help us rely less on cars for daily transportation needs, allowing us to live healthier, more active lifestyles, interact more with our neighbors, reduce our dependency on high gasoline prices, and curb fossil fuel emissions.

A complete street is designed and operated to safely accommodate everyone: motorists, freight, pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation, and people of all ages and abilities. It recognizes the need for flexibility: that all streets are different and user needs should be balanced and the design should fit in with the context of the community. A complete street provides users with a variety of modal options which is beneficial to those non-vehicular travelers and may reduce the stress often caused by conflicts between modes. A complete street is comprised of many different elements; these elements may include, but are not limited to: sidewalks and pedestrian facilities, bike lanes, crosswalks, wide shoulders, medians, and bus pullouts. Where major roads travel through neighborhoods, landscaping, road width, and signage all help calm traffic—reducing speeds and accidents and increasing overall safety.

Key Features of Complete Streets

Complete Streets are an aesthetically pleasing, connected, convenient and safe transportation network that:

- Balance the needs and concerns of motorists, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists;
- Calm traffic speeds on all roads—arterials, collectors, and local roads—for the safety of all users;
- Help business districts and neighborhoods thrive;
- Improve access to education, employment, health care, recreation, and services for all users;
- Provide healthy living and social interaction opportunities for people of all ages, including children and seniors;
- Are sensitive to historic, rural and small town contexts.

Local examples of Complete Streets already exist, and other improvements are planned. The Main Street Reconstruction project will help mitigate congestion issues, and includes improvements for pedestrian and bicycle safety. The Main Street Reconstruction project includes improvements to pedestrian crosswalks, accessible wheelchair ramps, and a bicycle lane.

Achieving a “complete street” on Route 7 outside of downtown, like on Stockbridge Road, is more difficult. However, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Mass DOT) has adopted a policy to plan and implement “complete street” improvements on roads it maintains. Pursuant to this, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission may use state funds to undertake an access study for Stockbridge Road in the near future, aimed at controlling the number and spacing of driveways and crosswalks in order to reduce conflict points for all road users, including pedestrians on sidewalks and bicyclists. Every effort should be made to consolidate or eliminate existing driveways.

Visions and recommendations in the Open Space and Recreation element of this Master Plan are a part of our Complete Streets approach. These include adding or improving sidewalk and trail connections between parks and recreational areas.

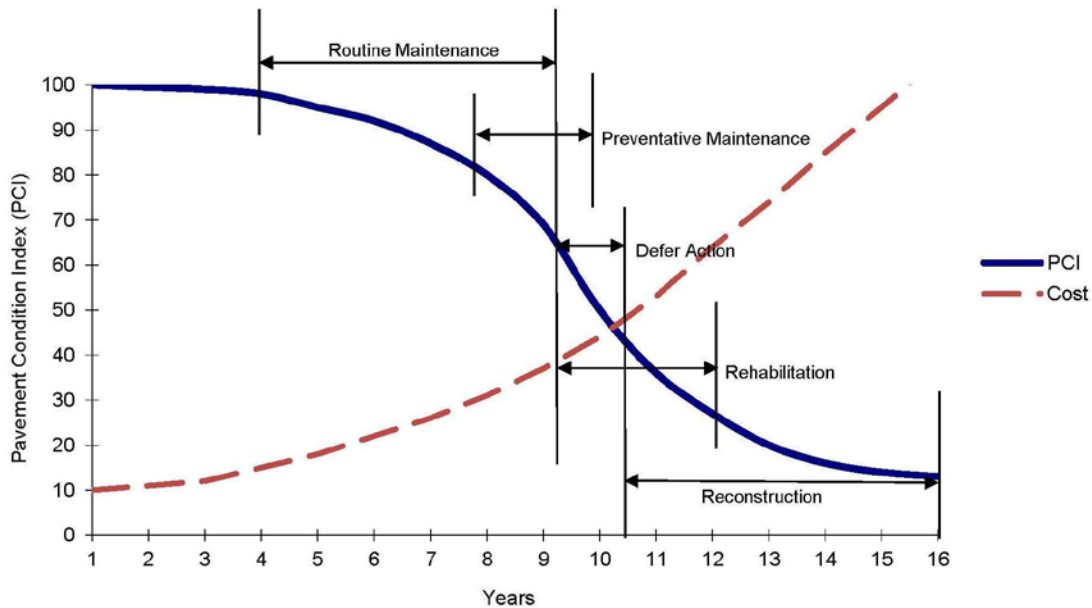
Planning Our Transportation Investments

Transportation improvement funds are limited relative to the amount of work that is needed, so a strategic, well-considered improvement plan is needed. The DPW has begun to develop such a plan over the last several fiscal years, detailing a list of needed road, bridge, sidewalk, drainage, and other improvements that are needed, and the estimated cost for each project. To accomplish this work, the DPW relies on a combination of town funds including bond issues and state-allocated Chapter 90 funds. In recent years, the total budget has been in the range of \$800,000 to \$900,000.

However paradoxical it might seem, DPW analysis has revealed that it is more efficient to spend smaller amounts of money to keep good roads in good condition rather than spend large amounts of money on major reconstruction projects. Routine and preventative maintenance and small repairs of good roads, including drainage controls, crack sealing, micropaving, and oil/stone overlays, all cost comparatively little. Moreover, many can be accomplished as part of DPW staff’s regular

maintenance activities. If routine and preventative maintenance is deferring, as roads get older and in worse condition, rehabilitation and reconstruction costs increase exponentially.²² Figure 63 below illustrates this concept.

Figure 63: Road Maintenance Strategies, Timing, and Relative Costs



DPW's Capital Improvement Plan should thus focus on routine maintenance and preventative maintenance whenever possible. Large scale reconstruction projects can be undertaken as funding and timing allow. And, of course, when they occur, the Complete Streets approach should be taken. This strategic approach could help free up some funds for much needed bridge repairs and much desired traffic calming measures.

²² It currently costs about \$80,000 to \$90,000 for an overlay paving course on one mile of roadway.

Services and Facilities

Form of Government

Understanding the variety of entities in Great Barrington that deliver services and manage facilities is important to understanding how local services are provided. Each entity has its own governing body, governing laws, budgetary considerations and revenue sources.

The Town of Great Barrington operates according to the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is also governed by local bylaws and regulations that are adopted by Town Meeting or by the town's various boards and commissions. Town Meeting is the town's legislative branch of government, and it convenes at least once annually, in May. Town Meeting approves operational budgets for the Town and the School District, approves capital borrowing and bond issuances, and enacts local laws such as zoning and other regulations. Town funds are derived from property taxes, capital borrowing, reserves, local fees, and state aid. Different classes of property—residential, commercial, and industrial—are assessed at the same property tax rate.

The five-member elected Board of Selectmen shares executive branch and policy making duties of local government with other elected Boards such as the Planning Board **is the chief policy-making body for town. In recent years, the Selectmen have held strategic planning sessions, at which they discuss future policy directions, long term initiatives, and legislative actions to be considered by future Town Meetings. One result of these sessions has been the Selectmen's green initiatives, including their appointment of an Energy Committee. Because policy-making duties are also the purview of other town boards, particularly the Finance Committee and Planning Board, the Selectmen will continue to work closely with these boards in order to coordinate policy and implementing actions.** The Board of Selectmen also carries out, through the Town Manager, general supervisory responsibilities over the town and some boards and commissions. In 1992 the town approved, and the Commonwealth enacted, a new Town Charter which established the Board of Selectmen / Town Manager form of government. The Town Manager form of government, which was still in its infancy when the 1997 Master Plan was being developed, has helped professionalize the delivery of town services over the last two decades.

In Great Barrington, according to the Town Charter, the Town Manager is the chief administrative, financial, and procurement officer of the town, negotiates contracts for the town, and represents the town's interests at local, regional, and state levels. The Town Manager also has the power to appoint staff. With the advice and consent of the Board of Selectmen, the Town Manager also appoints members of various boards and commissions.

State legislation in the late 1990s abolished county governments in Massachusetts; Berkshire County was abolished as of July 2000. As a result, regional services are provided today not a centralized agency, but rather by ad-hoc aggregations of Towns. Examples are the Tri-Town Health Department and Berkshire Board of Health, with which Great Barrington collaborates, and mutual aid agreements, which link and support the region's Fire and Police Departments. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) provides planning and development services to all towns in Berkshire County. This includes Great Barrington, where BRPC is a supplement to the in-house expertise of the Town Planner. Traditionally regional services like industrial, economic, and community development agencies do not exist in Berkshire County. Thus Towns often seek the advice of BRPC and must have direct interaction with State agencies.

Town Services

In terms of the services it provides, the Town of Great Barrington is more like a small city than a small town, and its budget reflects that fact. The town provides a wide range of services not only to its residents and business owners, but also to the thousands of shoppers, tourists, and nonresidents that visit Great Barrington each year. The total town budget for the current fiscal year 2014 is over \$27 million. Approximately \$15 million, or 56 percent, is spent on town services. The other \$12 million, of 44 percent, is allocated to the Berkshire Hills Regional School District for education services.

Figure 64: Uses of Town Funds, Fiscal Year 2014

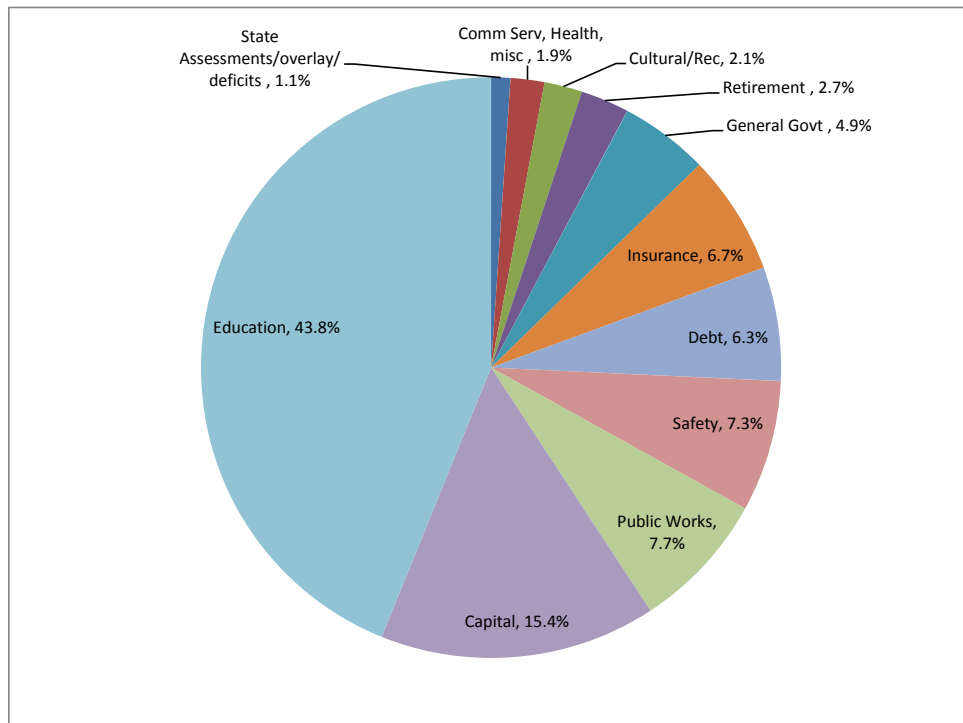
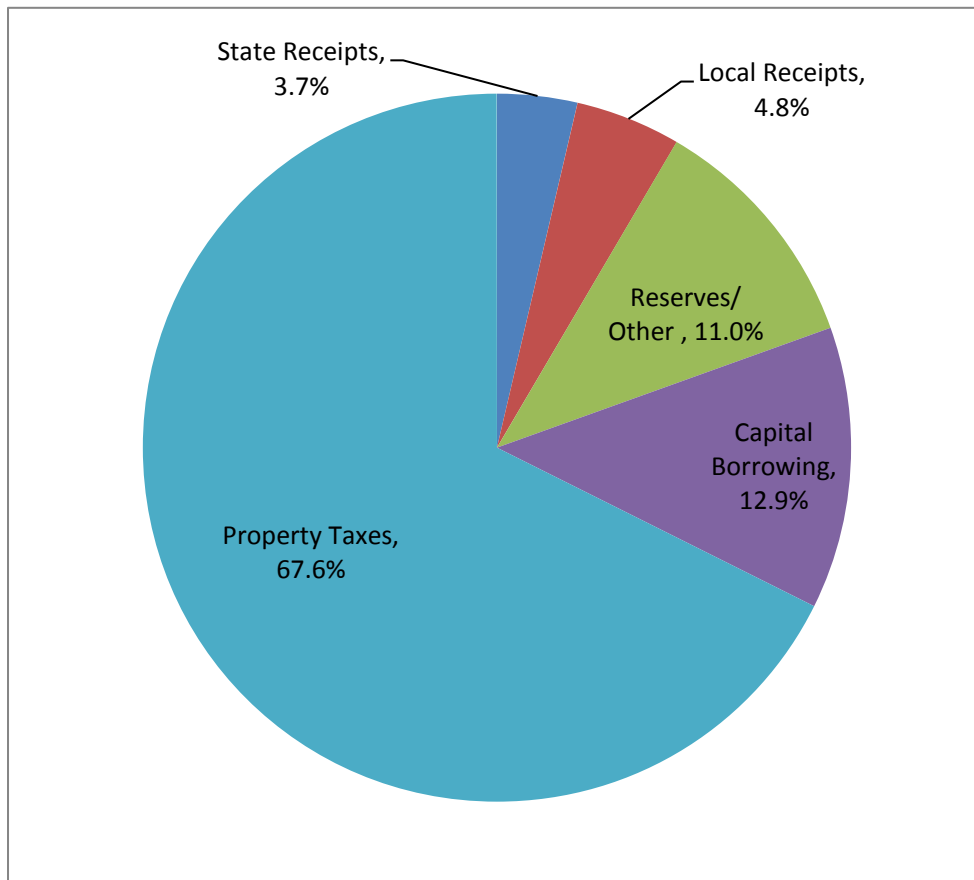


Figure 65: Sources of Town Funds, Fiscal Year 2014



The scope of town services is summarized by this list of principal offices, bodies, and officials. The responsibilities, challenges and future needs of each department are discussed in more detail below. The location of town buildings and facilities is shown in Figure 66.

- General Government Services including:
 - Agricultural Commission
 - Assessor's Office
 - Conservation Commission
 - Historical Commission
 - Planning, Zoning, and Community Development
 - Town Accountant / Financial Coordinator
 - Town Clerk and Registrar
 - Town Manager and Board of Selectmen
 - Treasurer and Revenue Collections
- Public Safety and Public Health including:
 - Animal Control and Inspections
 - Building Inspections
 - Communications and Emergency Management
 - Fire Department
 - Health Inspections
 - Police
- Community, Cultural, and Recreation Services including:
 - Senior services (Council on Aging)
 - Grants and aid
 - Libraries
 - Parks
 - Veteran's Affairs
- Public Works including
 - Highways (including drainage, roads, sidewalks, and winter maintenance)
 - Public Buildings
 - Transfer Station and Recycling
 - Cemeteries/Parks maintenance
 - Wastewater Treatment

Town Boards and Committees

The Town is served by a number of Boards and Committees. Some, like the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, and Finance Committee, provide policy guidance and are vested with regulatory powers. Others function in more of an advisory capacity. Board and Committees include:

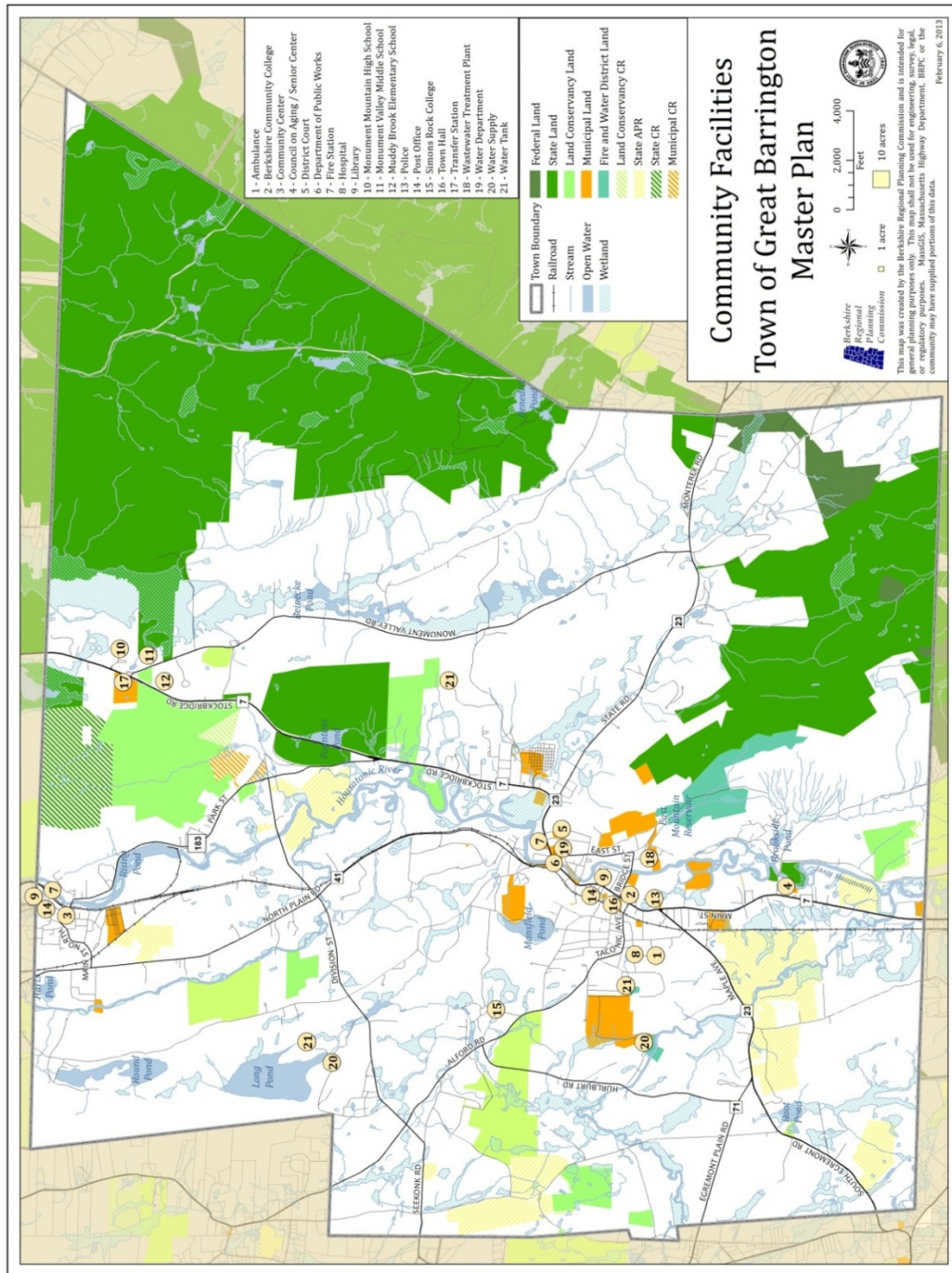
Elected:

Board of Selectmen	Planning Board
Finance Committee	Board of Health
Housing Authority	Library Trustees
Zoning Board of Appeals	School Committee (the three member towns elect representatives)
Great Barrington Fire District Prudential Committee (water district)	

Appointed:

Agricultural Commission	Board of Assessors
Board of Registrars	Cable Television Advisory Committee
Cemetery Commissioners	Conservation Commission
Council on Aging	Cultural Council
Design Advisory Committee	Energy Committee
Historical Commission	Historic District Commission
Master Plan Committee	Parks Commissioners
Tree Committee	Community Preservation Committee

Figure 66: Community Facilities in Great Barrington



General Government Services

Agricultural Commission & Historical Commission

Given the Town's Vision established by this Master Plan, the work of the Agricultural Commission and the Historical Commission is likely to expand in the future. These are advisory bodies established by the Board of Selectmen to guide policy and carry out certain agricultural and historical initiatives. While neither commission has a substantial budget currently, both are destined to play a more active role in town affairs. The ***Agricultural Commission*** will be a key resource for existing and future farmers, promoting agriculture in general, linking farmers with land resources, and, with nonprofits like Berkshire Grown, promoting agricultural and local food as a fundamental component of the regional economy. Likewise, the ***Historical Commission*** will be busy updating the town's historic inventory and, with the Historic District Commission, implementing the goals of the historical and cultural resources component of this Master Plan. Strong consideration should be given to increase the budgets for both commissions.

Assessor

The Assessor's office has the critical task of valuing real and personal property in Great Barrington. Obtaining timely certification of the town's values from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue is important as it ensures the town's ability to expeditiously generate tax bills and maintain a consistent and reliable cash flow to meet ongoing expenses. The Principal Assessor, working in collaboration with the Assessor's Clerk and a three person appointed Board of Assessors, strives to ensure all real and personal property within the town is fairly and equitably assessed so that each property owner pays only their fair share of the tax levy. During fiscal year 2013 (FY) the Assessor's office was responsible for valuing 3,226 residential parcels, 334 commercial and industrial parcels, 69 mixed use parcels, 200 parcels designated as chapter land and 757 personal property accounts which total 4,586 taxable parcels valued at \$1,360,863,527.

The Assessor's office is well positioned to meet the town's future needs. In calendar year 2013 the Assessor's office retained the services of Real Estate Research Consultants (RRC) to perform a full discovery and listing of town wide commercial and industrial personal property. The results of their efforts will positively impact FY 2014 new growth values by listing and valuing property not previously discovered. The Assessor's office is also looking to upgrade to their present Computer Aided Mass Appraisal (CAMA) system, is the foundation tool for valuing property. The conversion is likely to take place in the later part of 2013 for an implementation in FY 2014. The Assessor is charged with calculating the three percent (3%) property tax surcharge, and applicable senior citizen and low income family exemptions, authorized when the town adopted the Community Preservation Act in 2012.

Coordination of and access to property information is now more available than ever, which benefits town staff, property owners, and applicants alike. The work within the Assessor's office of setting the annual tax rate, billing for real and personal property, as well as excise tax requires close collaboration with the Financial Coordinator and the Tax Collector's office. Internal customers such as the Building and Health departments, Town Clerk, Town Planner and the Town Manager's office regularly rely on the data the Assessor's office maintains. External customers such as the property owners, professional offices and the like are also reliant upon the Assessor's office to provide them with timely and accurate information as it pertains to their needs and profession. The posting of the Assessor's database online through the town's website is seen as a great convenience and a ready source of information. In addition to the database being online, so too, are the town tax maps. Working in conjunction with the Town Planner, property maps have been digitized and are readily available through a free, interactive, online program that offers a multitude of attributes from owner information, parcel ID, acreage, zoning and wetlands information, to name a few.

Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission enforces state wetlands and riverfront laws on the local level, and is charged with planning and management of certain town-owned conservation lands. These lands include Lake Mansfield, Lake Mansfield Forest, and the McAllister Wildlife Refuge. The Commission also enforces the Scenic Mountains Act (SMA). Future projects for the Commission will include clarifying local wetland bylaws and the SMA regulations, which currently confuse the Commission and applicants alike. The Commission has begun to survey and evaluate the McAllister property, using small amounts of funds derived from permitting fees. If the town conserves new lands, in accordance with the goals set forth in the Open Space chapter of this Master Plan, budget increases may be necessary for the Commission. It is hoped, however, that new conservation projects will be partnerships with non-profit land trusts and the state, and will not require a substantial expansion of the Commission's duties.

The Commission is now more supported than it ever has been in order to carry out its mission. It is assisted by a part-time Conservation Agent, and, since its creation in 2009, by the Planning Department. Having wetland, rivers, and Scenic Mountains maps available digitally with property maps has benefitted staff and applicants enormously. In addition, the Commission benefits from the time and experience of circuit rider staff person from Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. The circuit rider position is under constant threat of funding cuts at the state budget level; the town should continue its efforts to lobby its elected officials to keep the circuit rider position.

Planning and Development

Planning and development activities will grow over the coming years as the town works to implement the goals and strategies of this Master Plan. Traditionally, the Planning Board has been focused on crafting zoning and subdivision regulations to shape development according to past town plans. In recent years however the Board, working with the Town Planner, has been embracing a more future oriented planning role. It established the committee to write this Master Plan, and has aggressively sought new regulatory techniques to spur redevelopment in downtown Great Barrington and of the Housatonic mills. ***The Planning Board has adopted development regulations that help conserve open space and agricultural land, and has investigated new planning and zoning approaches that encourage smart growth, infill development, and mixed use in the town's centers.*** Great Barrington is among the few small towns to have professional planning staff, and implementation of the economic development and housing strategies of this Master Plan is sure to occupy the lion's share of the Town Planner's and the Planning Board's efforts.

The Town Planner coordinates planning and development activities with other town departments and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC). The town recently established a Development Review Team (DRT) of key inspections and permitting staff to review applications and streamline the permitting process. The DRT is chaired by the Town Planner and includes the Building Inspector, Conservation Agent, Fire Chief, Health Agent, Police Chief, and Superintendent of Public Works, as well as the Town Manager as an ex-officio member. The Town Planner coordinates development and capital planning with the DPW. The Town Planner also represents the town to the BRPC and its various subcommittees, including the Berkshire Brownfields Committee and Regional Issues Committee.

The Town Planner will play a vital role in implementing the Community Preservation Act. The CPA, established by Massachusetts General Law and accepted by the town in 2012, will raise funds for affordable housing, conservation and recreation, and historic preservation purposes. The town's contributions to the CPA will be supplemented by funds from the State. Local projects will be screened by a Community Preservation Committee, with appropriations ultimately approved by Town Meeting.

Town Accountant/Financial Coordinator & Treasurer/Collector

The Town Accountant/Financial Coordinator and Treasurer/Collector departments have helped the town receive an excellent AA credit rating, which translates into lower borrowing costs for the town's many capital projects. These departments are, by law, separate departments, but they work in close concert on a daily basis. The Town Accountant/Financial Coordinator is responsible for oversight of fiscal compliance with all local, state, and federal statutes, regulations, and other mandates, and adherence to accounting principles and auditing standards. Other responsibilities include coordination of the Tax Rate setting process, preparation of the town audit, reporting and certification of funds available, free cash, and of all unauthorized, issued, and outstanding debt and debt service, processing of all vendor payments, budget preparation and monitoring, and grant and contract administration.

The Treasurer/Collector department prints and sends town tax bills, sewer bills, and other bills, including the Fire District, receives and pays out town funds, processes employee payroll, and coordinates pension and health benefits for employees and retirees. The Financial Coordinator also oversees the town computer systems.

The town is in an excellent financial position. Over the past several years, the Town Accountant/Financial Coordinator and Town Manager have helped the town receive an AA+ credit rating that helps to keep borrowing costs low. The town has excess capacity under the State-mandated debt limit. Approaching Fiscal Year 2014, the town is projected to be \$1.6 million under its levy limit. Importantly, many of the town's upcoming capital projects, including the school renovations, fire trucks, and wastewater treatment plant upgrades, can be excluded from and not be counted against the debt limit.

Town Clerk

The Town Clerk is not only the official record-keeper of the town, but also the clerk of the Town Meeting and the chief elections officer and registrar of the town. The Clerk posts meeting notices and agendas, and keeps records of permit applications and other records. The Clerk also tracks vital statistics and coordinates the annual town census, helping to keep an accurate count of residents and businesses in Great Barrington. The Town Clerk relies heavily on one and one-half staff as well as election workers, and senior citizens who are able to work down portions of their tax bills.

Town Manager

As described above, the Town Manager is the chief administrative officer of the town and works under the direction of the Board of Selectmen to oversee all town staff and operations. The Town Manager's office is staffed with two administrative staff whose duties are multi-faceted. One of the office's growing responsibilities has been public relations, including not only day-to-day in-person and phone interaction with the public, but also advertising and the management of the town website and town news.

The Town Manager is responsible for developing and submitting a budget to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee. The Town Manager works with the heads of all town departments, particularly the Town Accountant, as well as with town boards and commissions, to develop the proposed budget. The budget is debated and refined; the Finance Committee's recommended budget is then forwarded to Town Meeting for ultimate approval.

The Town Manager is the town's de facto public relations and communications officer. The importance of efficient production of accurate information and the dissemination of the information over the website and social media will only grow in the coming decade. The town should give serious consideration of how to better manage and organize the website. There is a general desire by the public that the town better publicize town and community events, host ride-share and service-share listings, and be a general bulletin board for other information for citizens and tourists. It is unlikely given current staff levels that this can occur. The town will have to either increase reliance on its web service, or explore some public private partnership, perhaps with the Chamber of Commerce.

Public Safety and Public Health Services

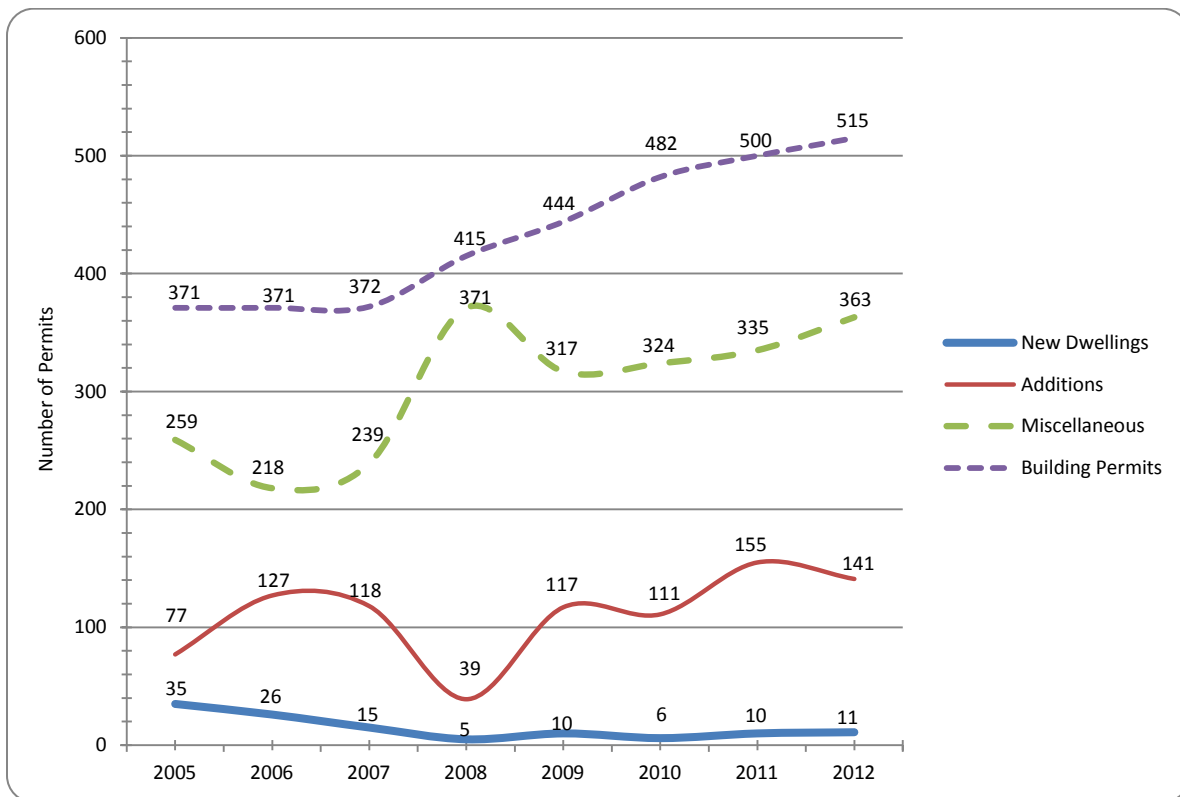
Building and Health Inspections

The Inspections office performs vital functions. The Inspections Office consists of the Health Agent and Building Inspector, who work regularly with the Fire Chief in processing building applications and inspecting schools, restaurants, hotels, and other businesses and institutions in our town. Keeping these businesses and institutions current and up to code is critical to keeping these businesses open and serving our citizens and tourists.

The Building Inspector, with a part time assistant inspector, electrical inspector, and plumbing inspector, issued over 500 building permits in 2012 (though only 11 permits for new dwellings). The Health Agent works with the Board of Health and conducts food, septic, lodging, pool, and camp inspections. The Health Agent is also the local Inspector of Animals, ensuring compliance with State Health and Agricultural regulations. The Inspections officers work regularly with the Town Planner in evaluating and processing development applications.

The Building and Health offices may need to move from their current location in the near future. The office is now housed in the Castle Street Fire House, which the town is in the process of selling for a historic rehabilitation. If in the future office space is not available in the redeveloped Fire House, it is vital that a location for Inspections staff be convenient to the public and to the staff with whom they work. It goes without saying that the town can ill-afford a new building to house these departments.

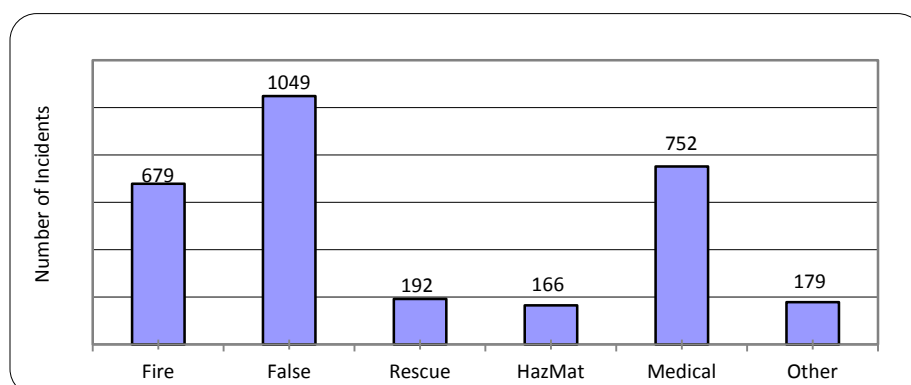
Figure 67: Building Permits, 2005-2012



Fire Department

The calls for service at the Great Barrington Fire Department have increased, but the number of volunteer Firefighters has dropped in the last ten years. There are now 42 volunteers, 20 fewer than just a decade ago, and they are not as readily available, particularly during the work day. Fortunately, the volunteers receive constant training and professional management thanks to the efforts of the current and past Fire Chiefs. Weekly training keeps the Department in tip top shape. In addition to performing inspections and monitoring compliance with the state and national fire regulations, the Chief is responsible for maintaining equipment and coordinating responses to a variety of incident types, shown in Figure 68 below. The department is part of mutual aid agreements and relies heavily on surrounding towns for equipment and manpower. The Chief is also working on more joint training with area departments to ensure all firefighters are trained to the same standards and can work seamlessly together.

Figure 68: Fire Department Total Calls by Incident Type, 2006-2012



The new Fire Station on State Road was opened in 2009 and will serve the town's needs well into the future. It is a 16,200 square-foot facility that includes a six-door apparatus bay, hose drying tower, offices, kitchen, fitness gym, and bunking and locker facilities for firefighters. The facility is on standby 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There is a 10 kilowatt solar array on the roof. A display of the Fire company's historical collection, including equipment, gear, and a timeline of notable fire events, is in the lobby. Many community meetings are held in the meeting room. It has previously been considered as the new location for all Inspectional staff, but office space is limited.

The Housatonic Fire Station at 172 Front Street is a small branch station. It has two apparatus bays, a meeting room, and lounge area. The facility is on standby 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The station is about 50 years old. Its bays are small for modern equipment. Its meeting room is not handicapped accessible. While it is conveniently located within the village, its proximity to the railroad and the mills may pose challenges to the redevelopment of those areas. If, in the course of mill redevelopment it becomes desirable to relocate the fire station, in order to make room for mill or railroad access, it should be considered. Its cost however should be integrated into the overall cost of the redevelopment, and preferably, should not be borne by the taxpayers.

The Fire Department has been one of the more capital-intensive departments in the last decade, and its needs are not yet met. The new Fire Station on State Road and new apparatus and vehicles ensure the department is able to quickly respond to incidents wherever they occur. Two trucks are now past their generally accepted service life of 25 years. The ladder truck, critical to fighting fires in a multi-story downtown blocks, mill buildings, and dense neighborhoods, is scheduled for replacement in 2013 at a cost of over \$1 million. Engine 6, housed in Housatonic, is 29 years old and is getting more difficult and expensive to maintain each year. Its replacement cost is estimated at nearly \$700,000. Should it fail a considerable amount of money will need to be spend repairing the old engines in Housatonic to try to extend their lives. That will not change the fact they will still be old, plagued with maintenance and reliability issues, and need to be replaced.

The Southern Berkshire Volunteer Ambulance Service is described below in Health and Hospital services.

Police Department and Emergency Management

The Great Barrington Police Department is fully staffed with 17 officers and is one of the smallest certified police departments in the Commonwealth. The Police Department logs over 7,000 calls per year. It provides services to all of town, and houses emergency dispatch services. The department maintains peaceful public order, controls and expedites traffic, works with youth and tourists, responds to victims of crime, and cooperates closely with neighboring law enforcement agencies. Recent improvements to the department include a new computer system and a K-9 unit. The Department is working towards full accreditation, a voluntary self-initiated evaluation process that recognizes the achievement of the highest standards of the law enforcement profession.

The Police Department's goals for coming years include continuing the downtown bike patrol and foot patrols that include both the River Walk and the Skate Park at Memorial Field. Other goals include greater downtown presence particularly during the upcoming Main Street Reconstruction project, continued training with the Berkshire County Drug Task Force, continued development of the K-9 unit, and coordination with the School District to include security measures in their plans for renovations of the High School.

The Police Department is also the Emergency Management and Communications Agency for Great Barrington. This includes special coordination with Massachusetts and Federal

Summary of Emergency Management / Risk Assessment

Local officials judge Great Barrington to be at high risk for blizzards, hurricanes and other types of severe storms which carry high winds, heavy precipitation and extreme temperatures, and also at high risk for the power outages which often accompany these storms. Great Barrington's location on Rtes. 7, 41, 23, 71, 183, and a rail line puts the town at moderately high risk for both hazmat related and non-hazmat related highway and rail accidents. The community rates the potential for hazardous materials accidents at fixed sites as a low/moderate risk. Due to a history of serious tornado activity in the town itself and also in western Massachusetts, Great Barrington is at high risk for tornado occurrence. The airport in Great Barrington and the town's proximity to other western Massachusetts and northern Connecticut airports create a risk for air crash occurrence. The town's one high hazard- rated and one medium-hazard rated dams (Rising Dam and East Mountain Reservoir) put Great Barrington at moderately high risk for dam failure. Like the rest of Massachusetts, Great Barrington is at moderate risk for earthquake occurrence and impact. The town has significant amounts of wooded land, and so is at moderate risk for forest fire. The town has areas containing older buildings in close proximity to each other supporting a moderate risk for urban fire. The amount of low-lying land in Great Barrington supports a low/moderate risk rating for flood vulnerability. Based on past incidents and their knowledge of the town, local officials assign a low/moderate risk rating for water contamination. Great Barrington is at low risk for drought, nuclear incident, rioting, and terrorism.

(from the Great Barrington Emergency Management Plan, 2012)

Emergency Management Agencies for all major critical incidents. These services are sure to grow in coming decades as storm events—ice storms and blizzards, hurricanes and tropical storms, and storms and floods become more severe. The town adopted an Emergency Management Plan (EMP) in 2012. The EMP fully coordinates all town departments, state departments, includes special consideration of vulnerable areas of town and vulnerable populations like the hospital, nursing homes, and senior housing. The EMP lists protocols, people, media outlets and alert centers, special needs populations and vulnerable populations and places, facilities vulnerable to emergency events, and equipment capabilities. The town’s “reverse 911” or CTY phone system allows for both mass communication and targeted communication by phone or email to the public.

Community, Cultural, and Recreational Services

Senior Center / Council on Aging

The Claire Teague Senior Center (CTSC) of Great Barrington serves as a social outlet, as well as a health, information, cultural and recreational resource to seniors in Great Barrington and South Berkshire communities. The CTSC provides a range of daily activities at relatively low cost to the users and to the taxpayer. Activities include daily exercise classes, programs in the arts, computer access, writing, acting, and personal health, as well as health care services and clinics, counseling in health insurance, tax assistance, social events, and daily hot lunches. A summary of these services is provided in Table 25.

Table 25: Summary of Annual Services Provided by the Claire Teague Senior Center

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Unit of Measure</i>	<i>Actual 2012</i>	<i>Forecast 2013</i>	<i>Planned 2014</i>
Elder Nutrition	# meals served through Elder Services	8,300 @ CTSC 6,200 @ home	8,400 @ CTSC 6,200 @ home	8,500 @ CTSC 6,300 @ home
Brown Bag	# food bags distributed	960	1,000	1,100
Exercise	# exercise participants	4,100	4,100	4,100
Health Clinics	# clinic participants	1,475	1,500	1,550
Support Groups	# group participants	12,500	12,500	12,600
Education	# participants in educational programs	1,200	1,250	1,300
Social	# participants	12,000	12,100	12,200
Health Insurance Counseling	#one-on-one insurance counseling sessions	400	425	460

The number of seniors and their needs are projected to increase in the coming two decades. According to the 2010 US Census Great Barrington had 1,875 residents age 60 and over. This represents 26 percent of a total population of 7,100.²³ According to the State Office of Elderly Affairs, the senior population will increase over the next several years both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total population of the town. This senior population is projected to reach 2,653 by 2020.

Reaching and serving an increasing number of seniors will necessitate some combination of more service partnerships, more funding, and more staff. Currently, the CTSC has a full time Director, a part time Assistant, and a Custodian. The total operating cost (i.e., salaries and expenses) for the CTSC in Fiscal Year 13 is budgeted at \$130,729. The Senior Center also relies on 4,000 volunteer hours per year. This is difficult to sustain without proactive outreach and partnerships. Providing more services and more flexible hours is almost impossible without more staff.

The town spends an estimated \$15.10 per town resident for senior services. In 2012, in order to better understand the costs and operations of the CTSC, the town engaged the services of the Edward J. Collins Center for Public Management. The Collins Center determined that \$15.10 per resident is in the mid-range of per-capita costs to the General Fund for similar-sized towns for which the Collins Center could find data. Different towns provide different senior services, thus a direct apples-to-apples comparison was not possible, but the Collins Center did note that the CTSC provides many of its services only because it has been such an effective recruiter of volunteer services and partnerships. Budgetary limitations have forced Great Barrington’s Council on Aging to be creative in both their menu of services and the methods by which the services are delivered.

²³ The State Office of Elderly Affairs estimated that there were nearly 2,083 seniors in Great Barrington in 2010, significantly higher than the Census figure of 1,875.

The town, through the CTSC, provides services to seniors throughout South County. The Collins Center, using Based data collected by the CTSC, estimated that at least 25 percent of the CTSC users are from outside of Great Barrington. Applying this percentage to the total operating cost of the CTSC (but not including capital costs), the Collins Center estimated that the town is providing services to non-residents valued at approximately \$32,159. The Collins Center recommended that Great Barrington consider assessing some portion of the costs associated with operating the CTSC to the towns in the region with seniors who utilize the CTSC.

Transportation is a key service for seniors. Many seniors are transported to the CTSC as well as to various other locations in the region and through on-call van services provided by the Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Corporation (SBETC) on a fee-for-service basis. Though more expensive (\$7.00 per round trip to Housatonic with \$2.00 for each additional stop) SBETC is a more flexible route than the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority bus. It also provides door-to-door service, so seniors do not have to worry about getting from their house to the bus stop.

Great Barrington must assess how best to continue senior transportation service. Currently the town heavily subsidizes the SBETC, though Great Barrington riders represent about 75 percent of the 12,500 riders each year. The town also commits over \$71,000 per year to SBETC, or just under the 75 percent of the total cost. The town's funding is provided from three sources, as follows: \$45,000 general fund, \$11,700 from a formula grant, and \$15,000 from an incentive grant. The Collins Center did estimate the potential costs and benefits of the town providing its own transportation service, but the cost analysis was inconclusive. Depending on the data included in the calculation, the analysis could support either in-house town-specific transportation, or continued outsourcing to SBETC. The town should continue to work closely with SBETC to determine how best to continue transportation service. The Council on Aging should also work to formalize its network of volunteer drivers to provide free trips for seniors within established guidelines.

The CTSC is a small building by state standards, but expansion is not recommended at this time. The Massachusetts State Department of Elder Affairs recommends that senior facilities be constructed to accommodate a benchmark of six square feet per senior. At this rate, with over 2,000 seniors (residents age 60 and older), the town would need a 12,000 square foot facility. The existing CTSC is only 5,800 square feet, and some of that space is occupied by SBETC. Neither the Council on Aging nor the town recommends expanding the building at this time. Rather, improvements and efficiencies can help maximize the existing space. Partnerships with other facilities like the regional schools, hospitals, and health centers can help maximize program delivery without significant costs to the existing facility.

Nevertheless, there are some desired improvements to the CTSC. The town is now looking to enlarge and install automatic doors on the entries and the bathrooms for seniors with ambulatory issues. New flooring is desired in the entry halls, and an awning over the entry is desired. Leveling and repaving of the parking lot is needed. The door and paving is included in the upcoming budget. Rooftop solar to offset some energy use is also being considered on the sunny, south-facing roof. The Energy Committee, with DPW, is weighing this option and investigating grant funds to pay for it.

Improvements to the grounds are also desired. When the parking lot is improved, strong consideration should be given to making the entry from South Main Street more inviting. This could include relocating the winter salt/sand pit, installing shade trees and landscaping, and decorative lighting. It should be noted that small garden plots have been installed, and will be improved to handicapped accessibility, with the use of small amounts of grant funds (secured by dedicated volunteer grant writers). The CTSC would be a natural southern terminus of the Housatonic River Greenway, the extension of the River Walk from downtown through the Searles Castle property, Olympian Meadows, and the Fairgrounds (using or paralleling the existing sewer easement. Landscaping and a kiosk would be installed at the CTSC for this purpose. Also, future access to the river bank should be explored. Seniors would like to be able to sit near the river for relaxation, bird watching, painting, or other passive recreation.

Libraries

Great Barrington's libraries are a popular and extremely well regarded resource. Over 4,010 residents hold library cards, and the libraries' circulation is approximately 138,000 materials (including books, tapes, newspapers and magazines) annually and growing every year. The library collections are extensive with over 80,000 items and the library provides 500 programs per year. On average, 9,000-13,000 patrons visit Mason Library each month. Only 700-800 visit Ramsdell each month. The Great Barrington libraries are a member of the CWMARS (Central/Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing) inter-library loan system. A total of 155 member libraries in the CWMARS system circulate over nine million items annually. This consortium also provides an online computer system for cataloging and information sharing with technical support.

The libraries are well-equipped and offer comprehensive programs. The libraries provide adult and children's programs throughout the year. There is an increase in the use of the computers, the use of wireless internet, and the private study rooms. Music, classes, talks, and films are offered throughout the year at both libraries. Mason Library holds extensive historical and genealogical collections, and both are in historic buildings. Mason Library is designated in the Local Historic District. Ramsdell, the first building dedicated as a library in Great Barrington, is not yet officially designated but its National Register nomination form was completed in 2013.

The Mason Library is a central hub of activity and information. The building is approximately 10,000 square feet and was renovated in 2005. It is accessible and has modern facilities including meeting and study rooms. Judging by its visitation statistics, its importance and popularity is obvious. It serves as a cultural and information center for all of Great Barrington and for many surrounding towns who have smaller facilities. As a downtown fixture, it is a frequent stop for tourists seeking information about the town, the town's services, as well as activities, businesses, and events in town. It is open longer hours and on Saturdays at times convenient to working families (more hours, in fact, than is required by the state).

The future of Ramsdell Library deserves serious debate. Based on the visitation statistics, it is hard to justify keeping the building open as a stand-alone library. Closing Ramsdell could save approximately \$140,000 of the library budget, \$37,000 in annual building operational costs, and allow staff to concentrate efforts and funds on Mason to offer more programs. However, Ramsdell is much loved by the dedicated patrons who use its services, allows for a larger overall collection in town, serves as a public meeting space, and is a historical fixture in Housatonic.

Ramsdell should be retained for community use. It is 8,200 square feet and is an architectural gem, opened in 1908. However, building and program improvements are needed to allow it to be used by a wider audience and make the building viable in the long term. The library could be transformed to include space for a café, meeting rooms, performances, or office spaces. A strategic planning session is needed, and it should include village and town residents, the Library Board, the Historical Commission, and the Historical Society. A good strategic plan will be crucial to the town's competitiveness for receiving grant funds for renovating the library.

Ramsdell is not handicapped accessible, but renovation plans are at the ready. Currently, there is no handicapped ramp, and the front doors are too narrow. The second floor of Ramsdell is a wonderful space that has an old stage and performance space, but it is not accessible. As a result it now only serves as a storage room for the historical society's collection. However, in 2010, the town utilized a portion of Community Development Block Grant to develop a construction-ready set of plans to make the library handicapped accessible. The plans call for the addition of an elevator to the north east corner of the building, new restrooms, and improved interior layout including wide aisles. It also included full access to both the basement and the second floor. The building would become a tremendous community resource if these plans could be accomplished. The plans are projected to cost over \$2 million, and it is not programmed until 2016. It is hoped the state will pay for a portion of the costs. The town should continue to plan for the improvements and seek funds to complete the work.

A discussion of the future of Ramsdell Library should include consideration of the Housatonic School as well. At this time, ***the former Housatonic School costs the town approximately \$50,000 annually and full renovations are expected to cost between \$2 and \$4 million.*** The full building is still being conditioned to house one tenant, a non-profit organization that uses two ground floor classrooms. The status of the 21,700-square foot building is discussed in more detail in the Historical Resources section of this plan. This Master Plan recommends rehabilitation and reuse of the building; however, this plan also recognizes that the town can ill-afford to keep its surplus buildings for too much longer.

This Master Plan recommends that the status of the School and Ramsdell Library be determined not later than the end of 2014. Continued use of town funds for surplus buildings can be justified for only so much longer. If both can be saved and reused, then the village and the town will be spared a difficult and emotional decision. However, the town must be prepared to dispose of or demolish one or the other if new use scenarios are not feasible.

Parks and Recreation

More than half of Great Barrington's residents live within one-half mile, a ten minute walk, to a park or recreational resource. These resources include parks with swing sets and playgrounds, baseball fields, ball courts, and benches and picnic tables. The Parks Commission oversees most of these resources, and the Department of Public Works is responsible for maintaining them. The Parks Commission, through an annual contract with Berkshire South Community Center, provides monitors in the summer at the Memorial Field Skate Park and Housatonic Playground, as well as lifeguards and swimming lessons at Lake Mansfield.

The Housatonic Community Center is the only indoor recreation facility owned and maintained by the town. It has a basketball court, concessions area, a small meeting room, and restrooms. It has minimal and poorly organized parking on Pleasant Street. The Community Center (a.k.a. the “Housy Dome”) was built to serve the former school next door. The original facility dates from the 1960’s and totals about 8,600 square feet. It is used for basketball programs in the winter, and several camps use the facility on rainy weekend days during the summer. Energy efficiency improvements are planned in the coming several years. However, the parking area also needs to be reconfigured and landscaping, including trees, could be added.

The Parks Commission is planning approximately \$115,000 over the next five years to upgrade its parks and playgrounds. This includes replacing aging equipment and installing restrooms at Memorial Field and Olympian Meadows. More information about Parks and Recreation is in the Open Space and Recreation Chapter of this Master Plan.

Public Works Services

There are 22 employees in the Department of Public Works. The Superintendent of Public Works and one administrative employee in Town Hall are supplemented by employees in five divisions, as follows.

Highway Division

The Department of Public Works is responsible for the infrastructure that citizens and businesses use on a daily basis. The DPW Highway Division provides safe and well-maintained roads, sidewalks, and drainage systems throughout town. It is responsible for approximately 78 miles of roads in Great Barrington. This includes everything in the right-of-way, such as curbs, storm drains, road signs, traffic lights and trees (street lights are owned by National Grid but the town pays for the electricity). Its 9 employees are well equipped for maintenance and small repairs. Construction tasks are subcontracted out and are paid for with town capital funds and Chapter 90 funds transferred from the State on a formula basis.

Importantly, the DPW keeps town roads clear in the winter and after storm events, ensuring access for emergency vehicles and residents. DPW estimates its winter maintenance budget at almost \$500,000 for the five months of November through March each year, inclusive of salaries, overtime and material (salt and sand) costs.

The DPW is also responsible for all trees in the town right-of-way. Consideration that an average tree costs roughly \$2,000 for the town to remove, the current budget is extremely limited and does not allow for much tree maintenance, care, or planting. DPW has accomplished tree planting in public parks recently with by using reimbursement funds from National Grid, and has removed storm damaged trees using FEMA hazard mitigation funds. The DPW works with the Tree Committee and Tree Warden to review tree needs, assess tree health, and determine appropriate tree species for new planting, depending on location. Serious consideration should be given to increasing its budget for tree services.

DPW equipment is housed in three scattered locations—the Highway Garage on East Street, the transfer station on Stockbridge Road, and the ground floor of the soon-to-be-sold Castle Street Fire Station. When the old Fire House on Castle Street is sold and rehabilitated, DPW equipment stored on the ground floor will need to be relocated. Since space at the Highway Garage is already limited, and the equipment needs to be in an efficient location (i.e., not remote, like the transfer station), consider locations like at a cemetery, or a lease or partnership for space with the Fire District, National Grid, Verizon or other business or industrial location near to downtown.

Each year the DPW updates its five-year capital improvement plan as part of the annual budget process. The plan includes all road work including pavement, sidewalks and drainage. It also includes improvements to public buildings. The DPW’s planned capital expenses for Fiscal Year 2014 is budgeted at \$2.75 million. Most of this is for \$900,000 in road improvements (\$500,000 funded by borrowing and over \$400,000 in Chapter 90 funds), \$800,000 in improvements to the Dewey School (southern Berkshire District Court), and nearly \$400,000 in environmental remediation costs.

Public Buildings

DPW is responsible for the maintenance of all 15 town owned buildings. The Division has two employees for this purpose that serve as custodians and are able to make many repairs and improvements. As part of the town’s designation as a Green Community, the DPW and Energy Committee developed an energy reduction plan for the town’s buildings. The plan calls for the investment of just over \$57,000 in improvements to realize paybacks within three years. More significant investments of

over \$161,000 would realize improvements within 12 years. More costly projects including heating and window upgrades costing \$531,000 would realize a payback within 50 years.

TOWN BUILDINGS (also refer to the map in Figure 65)

1. Town Hall, 334 Main Street
2. Police Station, 465 Main Street
3. Claire Teague Senior Center, 917 Main Street
4. Mason Library, 231 Main Street
5. Ramsdell Library, 1087 Main Street, Housatonic
6. Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road
7. Housatonic Fire Station, 172 Front Street, Housatonic
8. Housatonic Community Center, 1064 Main Street, Housatonic
9. Housatonic School, 207 Pleasant Street, Housatonic
10. DPW Highway Garage, 14 East Street
11. Recycling Center / Transfer Station, Stockbridge Road
12. Elmwood Cemetery Office, Stockbridge Road
13. Southern Berkshire District Court (Dewey School), Gilmore Avenue
14. Old Fire Station / Inspections Offices, 20 Castle Street
15. Wastewater Treatment Plant, Bentley Avenue

Transfer Station and Recycling Center

The Transfer Station accepts household trash, recyclable items, and, periodically, bulky waste, hazardous waste, and electronics. Located at 601 Stockbridge Road, at the foot of Monument Mountain, the Transfer Station uses two part-time employees. At the swap shack, citizens may drop off and take useable items for free. It is staffed by volunteers during the summer months. Users of the Transfer Station pay for each bag of trash dumped, as well as modest annual fee for recycling. The fees do not cover the costs of the Station.

The property is relatively large and could house other uses if appropriate. The property is approximately 23 acres and includes the former landfill. Today, the landfill is closed and capped. Trash and recyclables are trucked away to facilities in central Massachusetts. Some communities, with the support of state grants, have installed renewable energy facilities like solar panels on their capped landfills. Great Barrington's facility does not have a large enough south-facing, shade-free area to efficiently accommodate such a facility. However, the site is an authorized site for a wireless communications tower under the Wireless Telecommunications Overlay Zoning District. While a tower might seem inappropriate in such proximity to the scenic Monument Mountain, the scenery is already compromised by the transfer station, landfill, and adjacent gravel pit. A tower on this site, filling a potential gap between Stockbridge village and the tower at WSBS, would generate handsome annual lease revenue for the town. Use of town land for this purpose would require Town Meeting authorization and a special permit from the Board of Selectmen.

Cemeteries and Parks

This DPW division maintains a total of 140 acres of grounds. That includes seven cemeteries, all parks and playgrounds, the grounds around public buildings. The division operates with two full time and two additional seasonal staff. The amount of workload during the summer is difficult to keep up with such small staff. The DPW Superintendent estimates that during the summer there are 180 hours of work to do each week, and only 160 hours of manpower. Thus, any cuts to this budget would have immediate consequences on parks maintenance. Since the public desires better maintenance of buildings and grounds, strong consideration should be given to hiring an additional staff person at least for the warm weather months.

Additional discussion about recreation areas, playgrounds, and ball fields is provided above under Parks and Recreation, and in the Open Space and Recreation chapter.

Wastewater Division

The town's sewer system has plenty of capacity to accommodate new users. The wastewater treatment plant, built in the 1970s, has a design capacity of 3.65 million gallons daily. Since the Rising Paper mill ceased its water-intensive operations several years ago, the plant has excess capacity (Rising Paper contributed 1 million gallons per day). Today, average daily flow

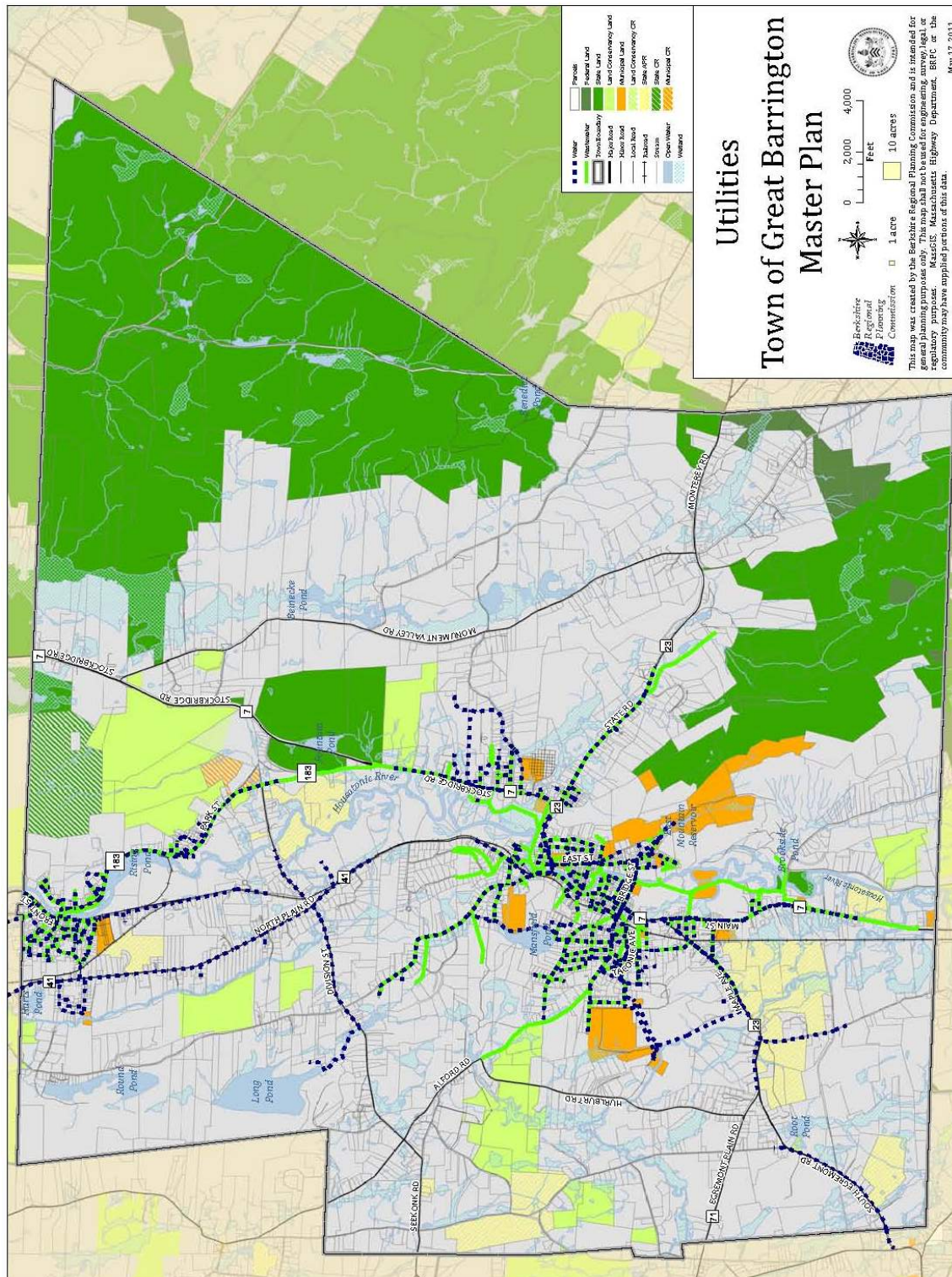
is only 1 million gallons. Since the sewer system is an Enterprise Fund, meaning it is entirely self-funded by user fees, adding users to the system would help offset overall costs without straining treatment capacity. There are seven employees at the wastewater treatment plant.

Unfortunately the plant is aging and is in need of costly upgrades to respond to new environmental regulations. A total of \$20 million in costs are anticipated within the next 20 years to accomplish this work. The investments, funded by grants, revolving low-interest loans, and user fees, will bring the plant up to standard and improve efficiency. It will require a steep increase in previously low sewer rates, however. These improvements are detailed by a professionally-prepared Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP), issued in 2011. The CWMP does not indicate a need to expand the plant, but it is conceivable that future environmental regulations may require additional treatment facilities on site. The plant is completely constrained, however, by the to-be-redeveloped New England Log Homes site, the Housatonic River, Searles Castle grounds and floodplains, and a residential neighborhood.

Extensions to the sewer system are not anticipated or recommended at this time. The town's overall goals are to encourage redevelopment in areas that are already served by sewer, but that are underutilized, such as the Housatonic mills. Areas like Christian Hill and Ski Butternut are already served by sewer. On the other hand new user fees would not offset the costs of a system expansion up Blue Hill Road and Roger Road and thus an expansion is not recommended.

Additional revenue could be generated by increasing collection of night soil. Private companies that pump septic tanks dump the waste into the treatment plant, paying a "tipping fee." The practice is good for the town's bottom line, but the odor and noise can be a nuisance to the neighborhood. The Wastewater Division has begun to investigate the possibility of constructing an automated dump station. It would allow additional haulers to tip at any time convenient to them, and would allow the waste more time in the system to be diluted, thus reducing odors. The station would ideally be located in an industrial area somewhere in town along the sewer main between Housatonic and the treatment plant. Neither the potential cost nor the potential additional revenue has been estimated.

Figure 69: Sewer and Water Facilities, Great Barrington



Drinking Water

The town's public water supply is provided by two different entities not under direct control of the town government. The Great Barrington Fire District Water Department provides water to downtown Great Barrington. It is a municipal entity,

governed by a Prudential Committee whose members are elected at an annual meeting. Its revenues are derived from user fees and by a small surtax on the property tax bill of those property owners who are in the service district. The Fire District Water Department manages its own staff, buildings, pipes, and fleet, as well as its own land, and is not controlled by the town directly.

The Fire District Water Department serves nearly 1,700 service connections in Great Barrington, serving in excess of 4,000 people. The current capacity of the system is 1,300,000 daily. The main supply is from the aquifer under the Green River valley; the infiltration galleries and pumping station are located on the Green River east of Hurlburt Road. It has twin 1.5-million gallon tanks: one is on Berkshire Heights and one is on Blue Hill, which replaced the Berkshire Heights and East Mountain reservoirs, respectively. In 2012 the Fire District Water Department completed an upgrade its 100 year old water main on Main Street with US Department of Agriculture funds.

The Housatonic Water Works serves Housatonic village, including North Plain Road, Van Deusenville road, and portions of Park Street. It is a privately-held utility company regulated by the state, and its revenues are derived from user fees. The system can produce 950,000 gallons per day from Long Pond, its water source. The daily consumption of the system is estimated at 600,000 gallons, with 1,400 service connections. The main line from the Reservoir to the Village is in need of an upgrade. Poor water pressure for firefighting standards in the area of the Housatonic Mills is one of several challenging obstacles to easy redevelopment of the mills. Redevelopment will have to include costs of upgrades to the lines in the vicinity of the mills.

Those areas not served by the two water supply districts are served by individual wells. Some large institutions like the Berkshire Hills Regional Schools, Ski Butternut, Eisner Camp, and the Rudolph Steiner School are served individual water supply wells.

Public Schools

Education is provided by the Berkshire Hills Regional School District. The district consists of the three towns of Great Barrington, Stockbridge, and West Stockbridge. It is governed by a ten-member School Committee whose members are elected by the member towns. School Committee members represent the district as a whole, they are not charged with representing their town's interest on the committee. Pre-Kindergarten through High School classes are offered at three schools on the campus on Stockbridge Road and Monument Valley Road in Great Barrington: Muddy Brook Regional Elementary School, Monument Valley Regional Middle School and Monument Mountain Regional High School. Both the elementary and middle schools are new facilities, opened in 2005. The school system is one of the town's largest employers, after Fairview Hospital.

The schools are well-regarded and are assets to the member towns. Achievement scores are increasing. Graduation rates are ten percentage points higher than the state average, and have increased from 85 percent in 2008 to 95 percent in 2012. Throughout the development of this Master Plan, citizens cited the excellent local public schools as one of Great Barrington's most important strengths.

Great Barrington bears the biggest cost burden of the school district's member towns. The school district is funded primarily by assessments paid by the taxpayers of the member towns. Because the majority of students are from Great Barrington, our town pays the vast majority of the assessment, about 68 percent, or nearly \$12 million, in Fiscal Year 2013. Other revenues come from state aid, and school choice tuition. As illustrated in Figure 1 above, 44 percent of the town's annual budget, or \$12 million in Fiscal Year 2014, goes directly to the schools.

Overall enrollment is stable; the schools have enough capacity for the future. As regional population decreases, so are school enrollments. The total enrollment is approximately 1,060 students, about 70 percent of which are from Great Barrington. Enrollment is projected to remain relatively level, with small reductions or increases possible within the norm. Overall, there is some cushion to absorb new growth should it arise. Currently, class sizes in the elementary school range from 15 to 19 students with smaller classes in early grades, within the guideline of a 20-student maximum. Classes in the middle school are between 23 and 24 students per team, within the guidelines of 25. In the high school, class sizes are between 18 and 20, below the guideline of 25. High school (grades 9-12) enrollment, including choice students, is projected to average 565 to 570 students through 2027. The design capacity of the planned high school renovations is 570.

Table 26: Historical K-12 Enrollment

2008-2009	989
2009-2010	985
2010-2011	965
2011-2012	963
2012-2013	976

Source: Berkshire Hills Regional School District

Table 27: Enrollment Projections, 2013-2022

School Year	Enrollment Projections by Grade													Total K-12
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
2013-2014	86	61	61	79	83	72	64	63	81	87	86	68	82	973
2014-2015	78	68	66	64	80	83	77	67	62	93	91	83	71	983
2015-2016	77	62	74	69	65	80	89	81	66	71	98	88	87	1007
2016-2017	77	61	67	78	70	65	86	93	80	75	75	94	92	1013
2017-2018	79	61	66	70	79	70	70	90	92	91	79	72	98	1017
2018-2019	79	62	66	69	71	79	75	74	89	105	96	76	75	1016
2019-2020	78	62	67	69	70	71	85	79	73	102	110	92	80	1038
2020-2021	78	62	67	70	70	70	76	89	78	83	107	106	96	1052
2021-2022	78	62	67	70	71	70	75	80	88	89	87	103	111	1051

	= based on students already enrolled
	= based on students already born
	= based on estimate of births

* Note: according to BHRSD data, in 2012-2013, approximately 300 students "choiced in" to the district, and 100 students "choiced out"

Source: New England School Development Council, April 2012. Prepared for the Berkshire Hills Regional School District

Programs and new partnerships are increasing. The district, while providing a core curriculum and a range of electives and innovative programs, is also seeking new programs with Bard College at Simon's Rock and with Berkshire County Community College. The swim team uses the pool at Simon's Rock, and hockey is provided with the Southern Berkshire school district. Substance abuse and counseling services are provided in house and in collaboration with Simon's Rock, Railroad Street Youth project, Berkshire South, and Justice Resources Institute.

The school district is investing in relevant new programs to train our youth. For example, the green house and horticultural program can train young farmers to support our growing agricultural sector. The automotive and child care programs are other examples of career-oriented training programs. The district is planning a property management and culinary program to train workers for the restaurant industry, an online business or virtual enterprise program for training in new media, and an Allied Health program with Berkshire Community College. The High School also runs an after school culinary arts program in partnership with Railroad Street Youth Project and local restaurants and farms. These programs are not only exciting for our youth, but also respond to the economic and employment trends of our region.

The high school is old and in need of expensive upgrades. The high school was opened in 1968 and does not include many of the learning and life safety features now considered standard. Plans currently in design include a new wing to house science labs, and renovation of all other systems and rooms in the existing building. Sprinklers, better security, improved heating and insulation systems are also proposed. Initial cost estimates are at least \$50 million, and it is hoped the State will contribute up to at least 40 percent of the cost, or \$24 million. The remaining \$16 million would be borne by the member towns, with at least 68 percent of that falling to Great Barrington. The project, if approved, would begin after the 2013-2014 school year.

The investment in the high school renovation is, on the whole, worth the money. This level of investment is significant, but its benefits will be long lasting. Citizens who participated in this Master Plan are wary of large investments and rising taxes,

but they also have recognized the importance of a good school system to local quality of life and future economic development. Also, investing at a time when interest rates and borrowing costs are low is advantageous.

To justify the investment, Great Barrington must work more closely with the school district than it ever has in the past.

The town must actively partner with the district to ensure that the town is getting the most out of the facility. This could include continued partnerships between the schools and the Senior Center; town use of recreation facilities and school facilities for meetings; use of school land or buildings for solar electric installations; use of school library, computer, media, and automotive repair labs.

Other Schools

Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School

GBRSS is an independent, coeducational day school. Founded in 1971, GBRSS enrolls students from nursery school through grade 8. It has two buildings on 18 acres, including athletic fields. It is located on rural West Plain Road in Great Barrington and is bordered by agricultural and conservation land. GBRSS is an accredited school and a member of the Waldorf Schools of North America. Its current enrollment is just over 200 students. There are 28 instructors in a variety of subjects, and seven administrative staff.

GBRSS is a significant draw for many families who choose to move to the Great Barrington area. GBRSS is one of over 1,000 Waldorf schools worldwide. Many families feel strongly about the value of a Waldorf education, and will relocate to a Waldorf school host town in order to enroll their children here.

Many GBRSS graduates move on to the affiliated Waldorf High School, as well as other public and private high schools. The WHS is currently located at 454 Main Street in Great Barrington, in a portion of the Christian Science Church, the historic “Indianola Place.” The WHS opened in 2004 and enrolls approximately 35 students in grades 9 through 12. WHS anticipates that 100 percent of its graduates will attend college.

Bard College at Simon’s Rock

Bard College at Simon’s Rock is a unique private college offering two- and four-year liberal arts degrees. BCSR is the nation’s only early college specifically designed for talented students who leave high school after the 10th or 11th grade. A part of Bard College (in the Hudson Valley) since 1979, BCSR spreads over 275 acres and contains some 47 structures, based at 84 Alford Road. In the past 15 years BCSR has expanded its physical plant, opening the Kilpatrick Athletic Center, the Daniel Arts Center, the Fisher Science and Academic Center, and the Livingston Hall Student Union.

BCSR has a long standing connection to the town, and it hopes to strengthen its commitment. As a tax exempt nonprofit institution, BCSR does not pay property taxes to the town (though it does pay sewer fees and water fees). But BCSR contributes to the town in many important ways. First, it is one of Great Barrington’s largest employers, with approximately 250 full and part time employees. Second, BCSR has been an important partner in studying Lake Mansfield’s water quality for years and, since BCSR borders the lake, BCSR and the town hope to continue this work in future lake planning and environmental studies. BCSR facilities are community assets. The Athletic Center draws many members to its pool, gymnasium, indoor track, and other athletic facilities, and the Daniel Arts Center hosts approximately 50 free concerts and events throughout the year. It also provides a venue for regional events such as the Berkshire Fringe Festival, the Berkshire Playwrights Lab, Berkshire Pulse, and Shakespeare and Company. BCSR’s Active Community Engagement (ACE) requirement provides an opportunity for students to become active participants in the life of their communities, and students from the College frequently volunteer at local non-profits including Fairview Hospital, Breaking Bread, Construct, Inc., and the Railroad Street Youth Project. BCSR offers town residents (and residents of Berkshire County and other surrounding counties) the opportunity to apply for the Berkshire Regional Scholarship to the College, which offers significant tuition assistance to qualified recipients.

BCSR is an important cultural and historical partner for the town. BCSR established the W.E.B. Du Bois Collection in African-American literature and history in its library, establishing W.E.B. Du Bois scholarships for outstanding minority students, and sponsoring a regular W.E.B. Du Bois Lecture Series. Since 1996, the W.E.B. Du Bois Memorial Lecture has

sponsored an annual address, open to the public, by a distinguished African American speaker whose own personal and academic achievements follow the tradition set forth by Du Bois himself.

Berkshire Community College

Berkshire Community College (BCC) is a local educational resource in downtown and serves students of all ages. BCC opened the South County Center at 343 Main Street in downtown Great Barrington in 1984. The Great Barrington location allows students who live or work in southern Berkshire County easier access to BCC academic courses. Students attend the Center on either a full- or part-time basis, and they may also enroll in courses both at the main campus in Pittsfield. Most general education requirements towards the various Associate Degree or certificate programs offered by BCC may be fulfilled at the South County Center. Total BCC enrollment on both campuses is nearly 3,000 students enrolled in day or evening credit courses at the main campus, off-campus sites, and/or online. Additionally, more than 5,200 people enrolled in various noncredit and workforce development offerings. There are currently no expansion or contraction plans for the South County Center. Its building is fully utilized.

John Dewey Academy

John Dewey Academy is a residential, college preparatory, year-round high school located at Searles Castle, 389 Main Street. The private school offers education and training for bright but challenged students who have not been succeeding in traditional school settings. Up to 35 students may be enrolled at any time. In addition to full academic course loads, students participate in the operation and maintenance of the school, including meal preparation and cleaning.

Unfortunately, because of the Academy's unique students and its educational philosophy, the 89-acre campus and the historic building are closed to the public. But it should be noted that the Academy is one of the town's single largest taxpayers. The town desires to extend the River Walk south from Bridge Street through the campus; this is a critical component of the Housatonic River Greenway that will link to the Fairgrounds and the Claire Teague Senior Center.

Berkshire Meadows

Berkshire Meadows is a residential special education school, with on-site specialized health care and therapeutic training for children and young adults with severe developmental disabilities. The year round facility is located at 249 North Plain Road and is another important employer in Great Barrington.

Health Care

Healthcare is a critical community need and a fundamental component to our local quality of life and future economic development. Healthcare is provided by several entities in Great Barrington, all working in close cooperation to meet the needs of families as well as the growing number of seniors and minority populations. Despite excellent local resources, the Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) considers our area a health and dental professional shortage area. In their 2012 studies of healthcare professionals and hospitals, the MMS reported that only 25 percent of cardiologists in the region are accepting new patients, and only 43 percent of family doctors are accepting new patients, compared to 84 and 50 percent, respectively, for the state.

Fairview Hospital

Fairview Hospital is an extremely important resource for our quality of life and local economy. It is significant community asset and a major employer. Fairview, an affiliate of Berkshire Health Systems, has been the center of healthcare in the southern Berkshires for a century. In 2012 Fairview was named by the Leapfrog Group as a Top Rural Hospital, one of only 13 such hospitals in the US. Fairview has a strong reputation for excellent, personal health care, all offered in the comfortable setting of a small community hospital.

Fairview is also a federally-designated Critical Access Hospital, serving the town and the region. For a small town like Great Barrington to have a Critical Access Hospital, and one of such quality, is incredibly rare. Fairview has 25 beds and provides a full range of primary care services, including 24-hour Emergency Department, surgery, obstetrics, rehabilitation, cardiology and a comprehensive list of diagnostic services including state-of-the-art diagnostic imaging and laboratory

services as well as therapeutic and prevention programs that address the health needs of the community. When more specialized care is needed, patients can be transferred to Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield.

Fairview is supported by an excellent local health care community. Locally, professional health practices at East Mountain Medical Center and Community Health Programs are supplemented by general practitioners, family doctors, and specialists of every kind, including health and wellness, through Great Barrington. Fairview and Berkshire Health Systems provides assistance to uninsured and underinsured patients to access various programs that can pay for healthcare services. Fairview also donates time and services to Volunteers in Medicine.

Fairview faces significant challenges in the future. The oldest portions of the building were constructed in 1912, and the facility is in need of serious upgrades and renovations, refurbishment or complete replacement. The hospital also struggles to attract new doctors to the region, citing the lack of urban amenities and greater opportunities available at larger, more urban hospitals, such as access to the most advanced medical technology. Attracting specialists to the area is also difficult, as the amount of business available does not provide enough revenue. Many of these challenges have no clear solution at hand.

Ambulance / Emergency Response

Local ambulance care is a volunteer, non-profit service. The Southern Berkshire Volunteer Ambulance Service is not part of the town or by Fairview Hospital. SBVAS provides service to the largest geographic coverage area in Massachusetts. Towns served include Alford, Ashley Falls, Egremont, Great Barrington, Housatonic, Monterey, Mount Washington and Sheffield. Call volume averages about 2,000 per year, and SBVAS members provide nearly 13,000 hours of volunteer service annually. Patients' insurance carriers are billed, but EMT's riding nights are unpaid. Revenue goes toward operations, equipment, medical supplies and staff training. SBVAS is located on the Fairview Hospital property on West Avenue. Its facility includes bunk rooms for emergency responders who work 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

Other Health Services

Rehabilitation and Nursing Homes

Great Barrington's nursing homes and health care facilities are amongst the largest employers in Southern Berkshire County. They are also active members of the community, sponsoring health care and nutrition classes and events for people of all ages. Kindred Care operates two facilities on Maple Avenue in Great Barrington: one at 148 Maple Avenue and one at 320 Maple Avenue (Timberlyn Heights). Berkshire Healthcare operates Fairview Commons Nursing and Rehabilitation Center at 151 Christian Hill Road. All three facilities offer short and long term care.

Community Health Programs

CHP provides affordable health care to patients of ages throughout all of South County. CHP's Community Health Center at 444 Stockbridge Road is a comprehensive medical practice for acute, ongoing, and preventative medical care. CHP was founded in 1975 as Children's Health Programs. CHP is partially funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, Elder Services of Berkshire County, and other grants and donations. CHP's dental center is located downtown, at 343 Main Street (rear), behind Berkshire Community College. OB/BYN services are provided at the East Mountain Medical Building at 780 Main Street.

Volunteers in Medicine

VIM, at 777 Main Street, provides affordable healthcare to low income individuals with no insurance. This critical healthcare service is still necessary even in a state which requires universal health care coverage. VIM was opened in 2004 and relies on local health care professionals who donate their time. In a rural area that is already challenged with adequate health care availability, it is fortunate that VIM can operate at all. VIM is a critical resource for many of the seasonal workers who are a backbone for the region's hospitality, landscaping, and service who serve the tourism and second-home industries. But VIM also serves uninsured entrepreneurs and business owners.

Since VIM doctors are all volunteering their time, there number of patients that can be treated is limited and eligibility is strictly monitored. There are almost 1,000 active patients, and there would be more if there was either more money or more

providers. Patients must be between 19 and 64 in age (because children can be covered by state, and people over 64 have Medicare), uninsured, and having a family income below 300% of federal poverty level. VIM serves patients with an average age of 40 who may not be eligible for state insurance programs either because they have not been residents long enough or they are undocumented. VIM reports that 90 percent of their patients are working full time or multiple part time jobs. One-third of patients are Hispanic/Latino, one-third are Caucasian, and one-third are other, such as Asian. Thirty percent of patients do not speak English as a first language.

The town has in the past provided modest funds to assist VIM, about \$4,500 in Fiscal Year 2012, through the town's Grants and Aid budget. Fairview Hospital donates lab technician fees to run tests. VIM would like to expand their facility, if possible. Access to nearby public transportation is critical for their patients.

Other Community Services

The Berkshire South Community Center serves the fitness, health, and community needs of people of all ages. The facility is a fully equipped recreational center with swimming pool and fitness equipment for the use of members. In addition, there are programs of all types including after-school, day care, reading and writing, music, cooking and nutrition programs. Meeting rooms are used by groups of all kinds and monthly community suppers are free to anyone. Since it opened in 2002, the services offered by the Center have helped meet the needs of thousands of children, youth, families, and seniors throughout South County and the tri-state region. The Center provides financial aid for membership and program assistance for those in need. The facility is located at 15 Crissey Road and can be served by public transportation.

Berkshire South is an important partner for open space and conservation programs. It is an active member of GB Trails & Greenways and frequently hosts GB Trails meetings. Berkshire South owns a significant amount of land on Three Mile Hill above the Center. A trailhead with parking lot at the Center on Crissey Road allow for public access at the southern end of the trail, which links to trails in Fountain Pond State Park, completing a two-mile (one way) link to Fountain Pond. Berkshire South also provides recreation area monitoring and lifeguard service at Lake Mansfield, Housatonic Park, and Memorial Field skate park under contract with the Parks Commission.

Great Barrington is fortunate to have an active faith-based and secular public service community that fills a variety of community educational, health, financial, and social service needs. In addition to their religious missions, these congregations provide education programs, concerts and cultural events, youth activities, and space for meetings for groups including Alcoholic Anonymous, and space for service organizations like the Food Pantry. (Many of these buildings are also historic structures.) These organizations are important service providers in Great Barrington. The town often works with these organizations for various initiatives and should continue proactive outreach and partnerships with these groups. These institutions include:

- American Institute of Economic Research
- Calvary Christian Chapel
- Clinton A.M.E. Zion Church
- Congregation Ahavath Shalom
- Corpus Christi Church (Housatonic)
- First Church of Christ, Scientist
- First Congregational Church of Great Barrington
- Grace Church (the newly combined congregation St. James and St. George Episcopal Churches)
- The Guthrie Center
- Hevreh of Southern Berkshire
- Housatonic Congregational Church
- Kiwanis International
- Living God Fellowship Macedonia Baptist Church
- Rotary Club of Great Barrington
- Saint James Place (the organization now renovating the old St. James Episcopal Church)
- South Berkshire Friends Meeting
- St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church
- Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire (UUMSB)

APPENDIX TWO: ABBREVIATIONS

Commonly Used Abbreviations

ADU	Accessory Dwelling Unit
APR	Agricultural Preservation Restriction
BID	Business Improvement District
BRPC	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
CDP	Census Designated Place
CEDS	Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (Berkshire)
CPA	Community Preservation Act
CPC	Community Preservation Committee
DEP	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
DOT	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
DPW	Great Barrington Department of Public Works
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FY	Fiscal Year (July 1 – June 30)
GBLC	Great Barrington Land Conservancy
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
KBF	Keep Berkshires Farming
LMITF	Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force
MBI	Massachusetts Broadband Initiative
MGL	Massachusetts General Law
MHC	Massachusetts Historical Commission
OSRP	Open Space and Recreation Plan
UHVNHA	Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (Housatonic Heritage)

APPENDIX THREE: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public Participation Materials



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Master Plan Committee

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Contact: Michele Gilligan
Co-Chairman
Michael Wise
Co-Chairman
[Christopher Rembold, Town Planner](#)
(413) 528-1619 x 7

Address: 334 Main Street
Great Barrington, MA 01230

Meeting Schedule: Call of the Chairman

Next Meeting: Every 4th Thursday
7:30 PM @ Fire Station

[Meeting Agendas](#)

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[Master Plan Maps](#)

[July 13th and 14th Workshops](#)

[Master Plan Committee - Results of Public Workshops](#)

Overview

What is a Master Plan? A Master Plan guides a community's growth and development according to the community's economic, environmental, and social objectives. It provides the basis for guidance, coordination and accountability to future decision makers regarding the long term land use and development of the community. A Master Plan should look at least 20 years into the future, and should be revisited at least every five years. The existing Master Plan was written in the mid 1990's and adopted in 1997. Since that time, a great deal has changed in Great Barrington.

What is the role of the Master Plan Committee? The Planning Board established the Master Plan Committee to work with the Town Planner as well as other Town staff, boards, commissions, consultants, regional agencies, and the citizens of Great Barrington, to formulate drafts of a new Master Plan to update and replace the 1997 Master Plan. The MPC will ensure that it involves citizens in shaping the vision, goals, and strategies in the Master Plan.

What is the schedule? The entire process is scheduled to take about two years, ending in 2013. Contact the Town Planner for more information.

Additional Links:

[1997 Master Plan](#)

[Review & Evaluation of 1997 Plan](#)

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[Master Plan August 15 final vol 1](#)

[Master Plan August 15 final vol 2 \(large file\)](#)

[DRAFT Open Space and Recreation Plan 2013](#)

[DRAFT Implementation](#)

[DRAFT Agriculture](#)

[DRAFT Energy Climate](#)

[DRAFT Services Facilities](#)

[DRAFT Historic Cultural Resources](#)

[DRAFT Transportation v 1](#)

[DRAFT Economic Development](#)

[DRAFT Housing and Demographics](#)

[DRAFT Land Use](#)

[DRAFT Natural Resources Open Space Recreation](#)

[Draft Vision Goals and Strategies June 2012](#)

[Presentation Land Use Zoning, Febuary 24, 2011](#)

[Presentation to MPC - Novemeber 10, 2010](#)

[Presentation Population Housing Economy March 24, 2011](#)

[Presentation Natural Resources Open Space April 28, 2011](#)

[Open Space and Recreation Plan 2007](#)

[Six Issues on the Horizon](#)

[Presentation Services & Town Finance June 23, 2011](#)

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GREAT BARRINGTON MASTER PLAN

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ACTIVITIES AND GOALS

The active participation of the entire community is the foundation on which an effective Master Plan rests. This memo highlights some ideas for activities aimed at engaging the residents, businesses, and all others with a stake in Great Barrington in the Master Plan process.

Goals of Public Participation Activities:

1. Generate excitement and enthusiasm
2. Provide timely and useful information
3. Promote broad and diverse involvement

Public Participation Activities for Consideration:

- Master Plan Committee – monthly
- Subcommittees
- Focus groups
- Stakeholder interviews
- Surveys
- Topical workshops
- Town-wide forums (3)
- Open office hours
- Posters and materials
- Speakers series?
- Photo of week
- Blog – weekly
- School outreach / student involvement
- Website
- Local media – newspaper, newsletters, radio – progress updates, issue updates, etc.
- Other Board (not MPC) meetings
- Public hearings
- Others???

Barrington Master Plan panel explores future issues for town

By David Scribner

GREAT BARRINGTON — What will the town look like in 20 years? What infrastructure will it have to replace or update in those two decades?

What services will have to be regionalized and what preserved as independent entities?

Where will development be focused and what kind should the town encourage and attract?

How will the town deal with the proposed passenger rail service to New York City metropolitan area? How will the town become an even more sustainable community in terms of energy use, local food production, and recreational opportunities?

Finding the answers to these and other long-term questions will be the man-

date of the newly formed Master Plan Committee, a 15-member task force set to hold its first meeting Wednesday, Nov. 10, at 7:30 at Town Hall. The session is open to the public.

Currently, the town is operating under a master plan created between 1993 and 1997, with data gathered year before that. Barrington is much different town now, and will be as susceptible to change in another two decades.

The Master Plan attempts to anticipate those future developments.

"The selectmen and town manager have repeatedly stated they want the master plan to be a real guiding resource, and it will be created with lots of community input and advice, so that it will be the community's charge to

town government," said Town Planner Christopher Rembold.

The plan won't be created overnight. It's a two-year process, he pointed out.

"This is a 20-year document, and it's a critical one. It will be like a kind of constitution, providing the town's marching orders," he said.

During the master plan's development, the committee will host town-wide meetings and forums, conduct focus groups and survey public opinion.

"The Town Meeting doesn't have to approve it, but it would be a good idea if it did so, for certainly some of its initiatives will have to come before the voters," Rembold said.

There is, apparently, considerable interest already in the planning process.

"Of the 15 members of the committee — two selectmen, three members of the Planning Board, five from other town boards — there are five places of citizens at large, and I've never had so many applicants," Rembold reported. "We had 11 applicants for five seats."

Rembold will serve as the committee's consultant and adviser, saving the town an estimated \$80,000 in consulting fees.

"We want this process to be as open as possible, so we are going to look at using social media, like Facebook, a Web site, and getting the schools involved," he said. "It's very important for everyone to get involved in the public discussion and decision that go into this plan. It will be the template for what life will be like in this town for years to come."

The members of the committee are selectmen Walter F. Atwood III and Deborah Phillips; Planning Board members Jonathon Hankin, Rich Doherty and Jack Musgrove; David Shanahan from the Conservation Commission; Michele Gilligan from the Council on Aging; Paul Ivory of the Historical Commission; Karen Smith from the Parks Commission; and Mary Beth Merritt from the Agriculture Commission.

ELECTION RESULTS

	Governor				Congress		4th District	
	Patrick	Baker	Cahill	Stein	Olver	Gunn	Pignatelli	Laugenour
Alford	179	38	5	3	164	45	173	39
Egremont	456	123	11	13	437	132	499	74
Great Barrington	1948	406	85	74	1998	395	2026	387
Lee	1311	459	140	41	1355	486	1525	345
Lenox	1697	419	84	37	1661	450	1861	319
Monterey	306	62	12	8	298	74	323	61
New Marlborough	371	177	26	10	325	189	449	98
Otis	298	217	50	9	311	214	408	115
Sandisfield	185	107	22	5	192	106	223	73
Sheffield	825	317	58	18	838	329	992	178
Stockbridge	689	159	30	17	667	179	736	115
Tyringham	143	52	14	2	145	65	155	44
Totals	8408	2536	537	237	8391	2675	9370	1848

BALLOT QUESTIONS

	Alcohol Tax		Housing Law		State Sales Tax		Single payer	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Alford	59	159	67	142	36	181	153	50
Egremont	217	380	195	370	184	409	448	124
Great Barrington	778	1659	608	1720	623	1816	1794	469
Lee	759	1148	536	1274	554	1360	1282	508
Lenox	685	1492	561	1458	523	1640	1460	526
Monterey	110	287	113	262	113	276	306	70
New Marlborough	218	364	196	374	202	376	397	157
Otis	232	328	188	350	247	320	339	182
Sandisfield	127	181	110	178	132	169	208	84
Sheffield	419	791	316	840	401	805	785	326
Stockbridge	241	601	196	589	207	627	618	169
Tyringham	75	140	89	108	66	149	152	52
Totals	3920	7530	3175	7665	3288	8148	7942	2717

Selectmen to confront reconstruction

Continued from A1

Chairman Sean Stanton. "From my perspective, we don't have to spend it all, do we? If we want items above and beyond the standards Mass Highway offers, will it add to time and disruption? In other words, we need to understand more about what's required, and we need to schedule a meeting right now."

O'Donnell told the board that changes to the project can be made up until the plans are 75 percent complete, but that each change would add to the cost and cause delays.

Downtown businessmen, however, are making their own contingency plans. They're considering the formation of a Downtown Improvement District (BID) that would promote the downtown during the project and would be able to raise funds

to provide enhancements that the state won't pay for.

"We need a downtown that is a real functioning downtown, organic and natural," observed Rob Navarino, owner The Chef's Shop on Railroad Street, a proponent of an organization that would focus on the downtown business district. "We don't want a downtown that's an artifice, like Disneyland. The BID can function as a liaison with the construction project."

On the other hand, while Navarino is generally in favor of sprucing up the downtown and refurbishing Main Street, he points out that merchants have not had an easy time in recent years.

"As a merchant and property owner, I am fearful for the economic vitality of Great Barrington," he said. "Things have been way off. The town is a little ragged. This recession has changed people's spend-

ing habits, and now we have to fight hard for every dollar."

As he sees it, businesses, having survived the recession, will then be hit by the Main Street reconstruction disruption that will go on, he expects, for two summer seasons. "During this downturn, at best, businesses have stayed even, so need to join forces to market our town. We need to take action now," he advised.

The BID, he notes, is a district that assesses its own surcharge on property owners in order to pay for such things as marketing, increased parking, directory signage, pocket parks, and benches. He cited a hypothetical rate of one-tenth of one percent on the assessed evaluation of a building. If the owner of a \$1 million building had five tenants and passed on the BID charge, each tenant would be paying \$18 more per month.

New developments in Lee top special meeting agenda

LEE — The Board of Selectmen has called a special town meeting, set for Nov. 4. Among other items, the town representatives will be asked to consider two sets of items related to new development in Lee.

"These are great opportunities," said David

smaller property. The town would demolish the rectory to make way for the new parking lot.

Nason called the purchase a good investment. He said the College Internship Program, which is renovating the Bookless Block, is investing \$2.9 million in the project.

ship Program, to encourage their expansion at the Bookless Block. The other would provide a similar tax break to Big Y, which is building a new store at the old Diesel Dan's site.

The tax-breaks will be phased out over 10-years, at which point the businesses will be expected to pay the full

FAIRVIEW HOSPITAL

and the
Women and Cancer Support Group
invite you to

A Celebration of Life for Cancer Survivors

Thursday, November 11

4:00 to 5:30 pm

Conference Room, Fairview Hospital

Featuring inspirational speaker,

Bridget Ford Hughes,

Founder of The Pastures

Hors d'oeuvres will be served

Everyone is welcome.

Please RSVP by calling (413) 854-9609

Pellets are safe,
economical,

Master Plan in progress

By Trevor Jones,
Berkshire Eagle Staff

Monday January 24, 2011

GREAT BARRINGTON -- The Master Plan Committee, a 15-member collection of town officials and unaffiliated citizens, will spend the next two years crafting a document members say will establish guidance for significant proposals here over the next 20 years.

"It's a constitution," said Town Planner Christopher Rembold. "It's a compass that we fall back on that says where we want to go."

Rembold said having a new master plan also could provide residents with a better understanding of ongoing or future projects, and will improve the town's ability to acquire grants.

The committee will be reviewing the town's bylaws, history and the two previous master plans -- published in 1977 and 1997, respectively. Rembold said the current plan is outdated, with demographics not meeting population and economic growth projections.

"What was written then and what it was based on is different then what we're reacting to now," said Rembold, adding that there also are fewer young people, more second-home owners, a more ethnically diverse population, and a decrease in affordable housing.

Rembold said the previous master plan had some successes, but added, "Over the years it was put on a shelf and no one referred to it."

With the town manager, Planning and Select boards having already committed to using the master plan as a guiding document, Rembold said the final piece will be getting the public involved so the plan adheres to the desires of the community and keeps residents interested in seeing it followed.

The committee will begin hosting public forums in July to hear residents' views on the town's strengths and weaknesses, as well as what its priorities should be going forward. The committee will then study those ideas to see what steps can feasibly be taken.

The committee, which first met in November, is made up of members of the Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Council on Aging, Historic Commission, Parks Commission, Agricultural Commission and citizens at-large. Among other things, the plan will look at goals and policies, land use, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, open space and recreation, and services and facilities.

The committee is being chaired by two at-large citizens, Michael Wise and Michele Gilligan. Gilligan is a Great Barrington native who recently returned to the town, while Wise moved here four years ago. Wise says the two bring a unique perspective to the process.

"We come with fresh eyes, but we also chose to be here," said Wise, a retired lawyer who has experience working with government programs.

The committee will be coordinating with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, and Rembold said some of the areas the plan could address include the Great Barrington Fair Grounds, the vacant Housatonic mills and the potential for passenger rail service to New York City.

To reach Trevor Jones:
tjones@berkshireeagle.com,
or (413) 528-3660.

Vision of Barrington in 2030

By David Scribner

GREAT BARRINGTON – What will the town look like in 20 years?

Better yet, what do residents want the town to be like in 20 years?

These are the essential

questions being addressed by the 15-member Master Plan Committee now beginning a two-year process of drafting a document that will attempt to address future challenges as the town grows.

"The last master plan

Continued on A8

Vision of Barrington in 2030 subject of new 2-year study

Continued from A1

was drafted in 1997, and you want to have a new plan roughly every 15 years," explained Town Planner Christopher Rembold.

"We will be taking our work on the plan to the people many times, asking 'is this what you want?'," he said. "A master plan is a policy to guide the town's evolution, and an expression of its social, environmental and economic goals."

The first community forums on the master plan and how it meshes with the regional objectives is July 13 at the Fire Station from 7 to 9 p.m. when attendees can review a regional sustainability plan.

The next day, July 14 from 7 to 9 at the Fire Station, the Planning Board will conduct a similar session examining the key trends and priorities for Great Barrington.

"These sessions will be a chance for citizens to tell us and each other what they value, what they like, and what not, and then shape the growth and development of their community," Rembold explained.

In particular, the master plan process will focus on six emerging issues that will have a crucial impact on the town's future: high speed, broadband internet access; passenger rail service to the New York Metropolitan area; the shrinking population and aging demographics of South County; aging municipal infrastructure, including water, sewer and road systems; agriculture and local food production; and the influence of climate change.

"These developments have the potential to really change the region," he noted. "We need to prepare ourselves to accommodate these changes."

The master plan also serves as a guide for adjusting town municipal policies and services.

"We need a blueprint in order to align town policies, budgets and capital improvement projects with where we want the town to go," he said.

The master plan there-

fore, becomes a vehicle for reaching consensus on community goals and the ways to achieve them, Rembold maintains.

"The master plan is a set of land use and development principles, and an action plan for the steps local government and its partners should take to assure the best possible outcomes for the community," he said. "It is also a blueprint for investments in infrastructure, services and facilities required to support the future vision."

But such prognostication can also be inaccurate.

The 1997 plan, he observed, envisioned that the town would grow far faster than it did.

"After a time of steep growth, it forecast significant continued expansion and growth of commerce and population," he said.

In fact, however, the population of Great Barrington declined in the past 20 years, from 7,700 in 1990 to 7,100 in 2010.

Big box stores? Parks? Farms? Housing you can afford?
What is your vision for our town? Tell us what you want!

Stay tuned, it's the MASTER PLAN.

Coming July 14.

More information at www.townofgb.org



Do you ever want someone to listen to what YOU want?
We are here to do that. It's our town. It's our future.

Stay tuned, it's the MASTER PLAN.

Coming July 14.

More information at www.townofgb.org



Great Barrington.

What's good? What's great? What's not so great?
What do you value? What do you want?

Stay tuned, it's the MASTER PLAN.

Coming July 14.

More information at www.townofgb.org



This is your time: We want to know what you want.

Master Plan Vision Workshop

Thursday, July 14, 2011, 7-9 pm

Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road

More info at www.townofgb.org



What's your VISION for the future ?

July 13
& 14

Two Plans: Two Events

1

Regional Sustainability Plan

The Berkshires are working together to develop a new regional sustainability plan. Sustainable Berkshires. Come get involved to define future directions and vision for the region!

South Berkshire Vision Workshop

July 13th 7-9 pm
Great Barrington Fire Station
37 State Road / Rte 7

Hear key trends impacting the **REGION**
Share your priorities for the future of the **REGION**
Learn about other opportunities to get involved



SUSTAINABLE BERKSHIRES
Community Strategies For A Sustainable Future



Contact: Amy Kacala, Senior Planner 413-442-1521 x12

2

Great Barrington Master Plan

Great Barrington is updating its Master Plan side-by-side with the new regional sustainability plan.

Great Barrington Vision Workshop

July 14th 7-9 pm
Great Barrington Fire Station
37 State Road / Rte 7

Hear key trends impacting **Great Barrington**
Share your priorities for the future of **Great Barrington**
Learn about other opportunities to get involved



Contact: Chris Rembold, Town Planner 413-528-1619 x7

Master plan committee preparing guidelines for Barrington's future

By David Scribner

GREAT BARRINGTON — Did you know that the proportion of self-employed workers in Berkshire County is greater than that of the state, country, or the nearby Capital District of New York?

That is just one of the statistics the town's Master Plan Committee has uncovered in its recent work, as it embarks on a two-year project to rewrite, with public input, the town's blueprint for the future.

While the local master plan committee is preparing guidelines for the town's future growth, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is undertaking a similar study of the regional economy and the challenges it faces.

Economic and business issues are just one of the topics the Great Barrington Master Plan Committee hopes to discuss next week at its Vision Workshop.

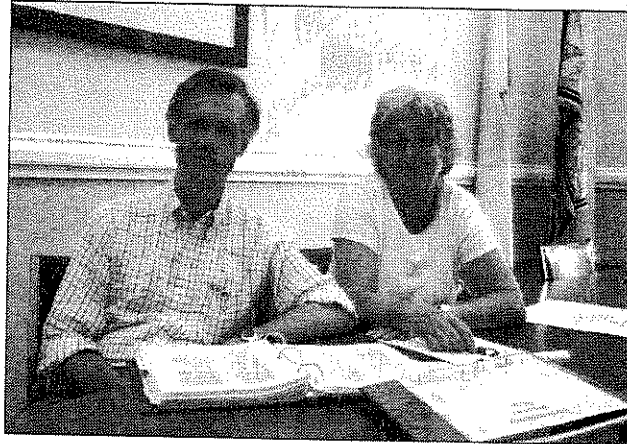
Regional and local planners will be hosting free and open sessions at the Fire Station on State Road in Great Barrington on Wednesday and Thursday, July 13 and 14, both at 7 pm, to solicit the views of South County and Barrington residents about what they want their future to look like in the Berkshires.

"It's no secret that our economy is evolving from its manufacturing base into a service- and tourism-oriented economy. But who knew we had so many entrepreneurial and creative people, starting and running their own businesses?" asked Great Barrington Town Planner Christopher Rembold.

But the statistics may point to an underlying weakness, too.

"It could mean that it's just harder and harder to find a steady, good paying job around here," said Michael Wise, co-chairman of the Master Plan Committee.

At the July 13 Vision Workshop the Berkshire Regional



David Scribner

Michael Wise and Michele Gilligan are co-chairmen of the master plan committee projecting Great Barrington's needs for the future.

Planning Commission has invited all South County residents to provide input into the Regional Sustainability Plan.

The following evening, Thursday July 14, will be for Great Barrington residents to provide their vision for the Great Barrington Master Plan. Both events begin promptly at 7pm.

Nearly one-third of Great Barrington's total land is permanently protected in some way

"These workshops are the first opportunity for residents to share with us their vision for the future of our town, and our region," Rembold said. "This the first phase of an ongoing process in which we all participate to formulate the goals and strategies that will guide our town to reach our shared vision."

The Master Plan Committee points out that Great Barrington is still the jobs hub of South County, and is an important center of education, health care, and retail.

"Supporting and expanding business activity over the coming 20 years could help strengthen the local tax base

and provide jobs for people who might otherwise move away," explained Master Plan Committee co-chairman Michele Gilligan noted. "But we can't just expand wherever we want. We are working with a limited supply of land."

Indeed, over the years, as the economy has shifted, more and more land is being devoted to large residential building lots, and comparatively little is available for commercial uses.

And nearly one-third of Great Barrington's total land is permanently protected in some way.

"We're fortunate that so much of what brings people to our region cannot be developed. But what we are left with is a relatively small amount of commercial land," said Rembold.

He hopes that the vision workshops will help formulate some ideas for existing commercial sites that are underutilized, "and that could be home to some future businesses."

Balancing local land use, regulation, and larger scale economic trends is just one aspect of the Master Plan, which will also focus on housing and neighborhood quality of life concerns.

What's your VISION for the future?

**July 13
& 14**

ON THE HORIZON ... SIX ISSUES IN GREAT BARRINGTON'S FUTURE

ISSUE	WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT COULD MEAN	NEXT STEPS
CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS	Our population is simultaneously shrinking and aging. From a peak of 7,725 in 1990, our town has declined to 7,104 people in 2010. Our median age is 48, up 16% from 2000. The percentage of residents older than 45 is growing while the percentage of people ages 20-44 is shrinking.	Shifting demographics will influence demand for economic, housing, social service, and transportation needs. An aging population, shifting the proportional balance to elderly from non-elderly, could indicate economic and social challenges ahead, such as fewer young people to fill the jobs of retirees.	Community service providers must watch demographic trends closely, in order to plan appropriately to meet changing demands and a variety of needs.
BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS	Reliable, affordable high speed internet via fiber optic cable ("fiber") will serve our homes and businesses in the next few years.	Better connections will make our area a more attractive place to live, work, and run a business. Fiber, as a "future proof" technology, can readily meet the changing internet demands of the upcoming decades.	Wired West is coordinating efforts with all towns to connect a community-owned fiber optic network to our area.
PASSENGER RAILROAD SERVICE	Serious studies are now underway to make the case for restoring passenger railroad service in the Berkshires. The Housatonic Railroad Co. predicts a 3.5 hour ride from Great Barrington to Grand Central Station in New York.	Between 1892 and 1971, passenger service connected us to New York City. Renewing that service would provide a cost competitive, efficient, car-free, transportation, bringing more residents, businesses, and tourists from the New York metro area to Great Barrington and Housatonic.	The Housatonic Railroad is studying options and funding possibilities. Upgrades to stations, tracks, and crossings would be required.
AGING INFRASTRUCTURE	Our roads and sidewalks are no match for winter weather and need constant attention and investment. New health and environmental mandates require constant investment in water and sewer systems.	Funding the millions of dollars in required upgrades for our water, wastewater, and road networks is not impossible, but it will very likely reduce the overall amount of funding available for other items that our citizens need and value.	Needs and wants must be balanced with revenues and costs. Selectmen and Finance Committee members continue to meet and plan prudently.
AGRICULTURE AND LOCAL FOOD	There is a renewed interest in continuing to use local land for farming, recognizing its economic importance and scenic value. Locally produced food benefits local growers and reduces environmental impacts.	Choosing local foods increases the chance that working farms will stay productive, but farmers still face increasing costs, decreasing prices, and higher taxes. Our town began as an agricultural market town, and that heritage is being embraced and supported.	The Keep Farming program is now underway to assess the contribution, and needs, of local food to our economy. Visit www.keepfarminggb.org .
CLIMATE CHANGE	The world's temperature is rising, leading to extreme weather events and unpredictable prices in the short term, and long term ecological changes.	People, plants and animals have come to depend on predictable weather and precipitation. Food prices and gas prices may become more volatile. Leaf-peeping tourists may have to head further north, bypassing our town.	Green building practices, support for local food and land conservation can be important local actions to adapt to climate change.



How should our town tackle these and other issues? Come to the
**Master Plan
VISION WORKSHOP**
and tell us!
Thursday, July 14, 2011, 7-9
at the Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road

Want more info? Contact Chris Rembold,
Town Planner, at
528-1619, x.7 or
email crembold@townofgb.org
www.townofgb.org

GREAT BARRINGTON COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

At a Glance: Profiles of Our Town

PEOPLE AND HOUSEHOLDS



How many are we? And where?

	<u>2010 population</u>
Great Barrington town:	7,104
Great Barrington CDP: *	2,500 (2009 est.)
Housatonic CDP: *	1,300 (2009 est.)
South County:	20,824
Berkshire County:	131,219

How large are our households?

	<u>Avg. Hhold. Size</u>	
	<u>2000</u>	<u>2009</u>
Great Barrington town:	2.28	2.08
Great Barrington CDP: *	2.06	2.11
Housatonic CDP: *	2.46	1.77
Berkshire County:	2.30	2.24

How has our population changed over the years? How do we compare?

	Great Barrington		South County		Berkshire County		Massachusetts	
Year	Total	% Change	Total	% Change	Total	% Change	Total	% Change
1800	1,754	--	14,230	--	33,633	--	422,845	--
1850	3,264	86.1%	17,755	24.8%	50,118	49.0%	994,514	135.2%
1900	5,854	79.4%	15,309	-13.8%	95,667	90.9%	2,805,346	182.1%
1950	6,712	14.7%	15,702	2.6%	132,966	39.0%	4,690,514	67.2%
1960	6,624	-1.3%	16,121	2.7%	142,135	6.9%	5,148,578	9.8%
1970	7,537	13.8%	18,301	13.5%	149,402	5.1%	5,689,170	10.5%
1980	7,405	-1.8%	19,559	6.9%	145,110	-2.9%	5,737,093	0.8%
1990	7,725	4.3%	20,462	4.6%	139,352	-4.0%	6,166,425	7.5%
2000	7,527	-2.6%	21,395	4.6%	134,953	-3.2%	6,349,097	3.0%
2010	7,104	-5.6%	20,824	-2.7%	131,219	-2.8%	6,547,629	3.1%

How old are we? How are we aging?

	<u>Median Age</u>		
	<u>2000</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>% change</u>
Great Barrington town	41.8	48.4	16%
Great Barrington CDP *	40.3	47	17%
Housatonic CDP *	38.9	50.2	29%
South County	44.6	49.2	10%
Berkshire County	40.5	43.6	8%
Massachusetts	36.5	38.5	5%

How diverse are we?

Selected Races, as Percent of Population

	White alone	Black or African American alone	Hispanic or Latino (any race)
Great Barrington (town) (2010)	90.8%	2.7%	6.0%
Great Barrington CDP (2009) *	83.5%	7.8%	7.1%
Housatonic CDP (2009) *	95.7%	4.3%	0.0%
South County (2010)	94.6%	1.5%	3.3%
Berkshire County (2010)	92.5%	2.7%	3.5%

* The Great Barrington CDP (census designated place) includes all of downtown, the neighborhoods west of the railroad and east of the river, and from approximately Welcome Street south to Brookside Road. The Housatonic CDP includes Housatonic village and approximately the area bounded on the west by the old state line railroad branch, the east by Monument Mt., and the south by Division Street.

Summary: What does all of this mean?

- ⇒ Great Barrington's population peaked in 1990, but has been falling since then, at a rate faster than "South County" or Berkshire County. This is opposite what the 1997 Master Plan projected. But our decline is slower than the decline of the county's other large towns and cities.
- ⇒ Housatonic's population decreased at a slower rate, -2.6%, while central Great Barrington's population actually increased by 1.7%.
- ⇒ South County's total population decreased, but at a slower rate than our town's. Some of the smaller towns in South County actually grew.
- ⇒ Age trends also suggest that a significant portion of our children move away after high school. In general, we have fewer young people and a growing population between ages 45 and 65.
- ⇒ As our town and region ages, demands for services will shift. As older persons retire and pass away, there may be fewer young people to take their place in the workforce, or as community volunteers.
- ⇒ 2010 Census data reveal that Great Barrington is amongst the most diverse towns in the County. Local service providers such as Multicultural BRIDGE, however, estimate that we are much more diverse than what the statistics say; BRIDGE estimates our town's Hispanic Latino population at about 12%.
- ⇒ The population of our central areas, like Housatonic Village and neighborhoods near downtown, is younger and more diverse on average than the town as a whole.

What's good? What's great?
What's not so great? What's next?
**TELL US at the Master Plan
VISION WORKSHOP**
Thursday, July 14, 2011, 7-9 pm
Great Barrington Fire Station
37 State Road

*A **Master Plan** is an overall guide for decision makers considering development, investment, and regulatory issues, and is the benchmark for assuring that future decisions reinforce the long term vision and values of the community. A Master Plan is created by you, for you. Your Master Plan Committee and Town Planner will help you get there.*
Want more info? Contact Chris Rembold, Town Planner, at 528-1619, x.7 or email crembold@townofgb.org



GREAT BARRINGTON COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

At a Glance: Profiles of Our Town

HOUSING



Housing Summary

	GB town-wide	GB CDP*	Housatonic CDP*
Total housing units	3,466 ^[1]	1,433	801
Occupied housing units	2,879 ^[1]	1,187	733
Occupancy rate	83.1%	82.8%	91.5%
Characteristics of occupied housing (US Census 2005-2009)			
Owner occupied	2,148	634	374
Renter occupied	1,201	553	359
Units in structure			
Single family detached	2,235	589	307
Single family attached	106	38	23
2-family	763	237	396
3- or 4-family	320	219	0
5-family or more	444	350	75

[1] US Census 2010. All other data US Census 2005-2009 5-year estimates.

* The Great Barrington CDP (census designated place) includes all of downtown, the neighborhoods west of the railroad and east of the river, and from approximately Welcome St south to Brookside Rd. The Housatonic CDP includes Housatonic village and approximately the area bounded on the west by the old state line railroad branch, the east by Monument Mt and the south by Division St.

How Much Does our Housing Cost?

Homes: The table below right shows sales data for single family homes over the last 10 years. Home prices peaked in about 2008, and since then have leveled off slightly. Smaller homes are certainly more modestly priced, but fewer of them sell each year, presumably because there are not as many small homes on the market. The median sales price in 2010 was \$325,000.

Land: Vacant building lots under five acres have sold for a median price of \$130,000 in recent years. To build a modest 1,400 square foot home on that lot at current prices could cost another \$280,000.

Year	Residences < 1500 square feet		Residences 1500 to 2500 square feet		Residences > 2500 square feet	
	Sales	Median Price	Sales	Median Price	Sales	Median Price
2000	16	\$114,000	47	\$165,000	15	\$320,000
2001	15	\$137,500	27	\$200,000	12	\$429,250
2002	20	\$162,000	38	\$247,000	15	\$535,000
2003	16	\$174,500	39	\$252,500	18	\$412,800
2004	22	\$234,500	50	\$314,500	19	\$562,000
2005	26	\$264,000	34	\$293,000	22	\$667,500
2006	13	\$262,500	35	\$352,000	24	\$602,500
2007	26	\$240,000	24	\$346,000	10	\$595,000
2008	26	\$220,000	20	\$330,500	12	\$779,500
2009	19	\$222,500	21	\$365,000	14	\$504,000
2010	14	\$235,000	23	\$307,500	16	\$612,000

Data includes arms length sales for GB only. Source: Berkshire County Multiple Listing Service, May 2011.

Age of Housing Stock

More than half of the homes in our town are more than 70 years old. Homes in our historic village centers, where our town originally developed, are the oldest. In Housatonic, 76% are more than 70 years old. In Great Barrington, 61% are more than 70 years old. The table at top right compares our housing stock to the County and the state; we have some of the oldest housing in the area. While older homes add historic character to our town, this can be an expensive character to maintain and heat. As population shrinks, there is limited local demand for new homes to replace the old homes. The table at right shows how few new homes are being built in recent years.

Year built	Great Barrington	Berkshire County	Massachusetts
2000+	2.4%	3.8%	5.3%
1990-'99	6.0%	4.8%	7.7%
1980-'89	7.3%	9.0%	11.0%
1960-'79	15.0%	20.5%	22.4%
1940-'59	14.6%	21.9%	18.0%
1939 or earlier	54.8%	40.0%	35.6%

Building permits for new homes, per Fiscal Year	
FY 2006	26
FY 2007	15
FY 2008	5
FY 2009	10
FY 2010	6
FY 2011 (part.)	7

Second Homes

There are approximately 300 seasonal or second homes in our town, representing 14% of our single family and condominium units. (Our southern neighbor Sheffield has the same percentage as us. Alford, Egremont, and Stockbridge each have percentages of 28% or more.) It is true that second home sales tend to drive up home prices in general. On the other hand, second homes can have a significant positive fiscal impact: they contribute substantial tax revenues to our town coffers while demanding comparatively fewer services like schools, water, or sewer.

Home Price vs. Household Income: Affordability Gap

Home prices and incomes no longer bear much resemblance to each other. Even assuming your household earns as much as the median income for Great Barrington of \$54,500 in 2009 ("median" means that half of us make less than that, half of us make more), it still might be difficult to afford the typical home.

BUYERS: The median sales price of a single family home in Great Barrington in 2010 was about \$325,000. To be able to afford that house with a conventional mortgage at 28% of your income, assuming a 20% down payment of \$65,000, a 30 year mortgage at 6% interest, taxes at \$12.16 per \$1000, and homeowners insurance, you would need an annual income of about \$89,000. That is about \$34,500 per year more than the median household income.

RENTERS: Renting is much more affordable than buying, but even that is difficult for many. Recent data indicates that the median monthly rent in 2010 for a 2-bedroom residence in our town was about \$800. In order not to spend more than 30% of your income on this residence (the typical affordability standard), you would need to earn at least \$32,040 per year, or \$15.40/hour.

What's good? What's great?
What's not so great? What's next?

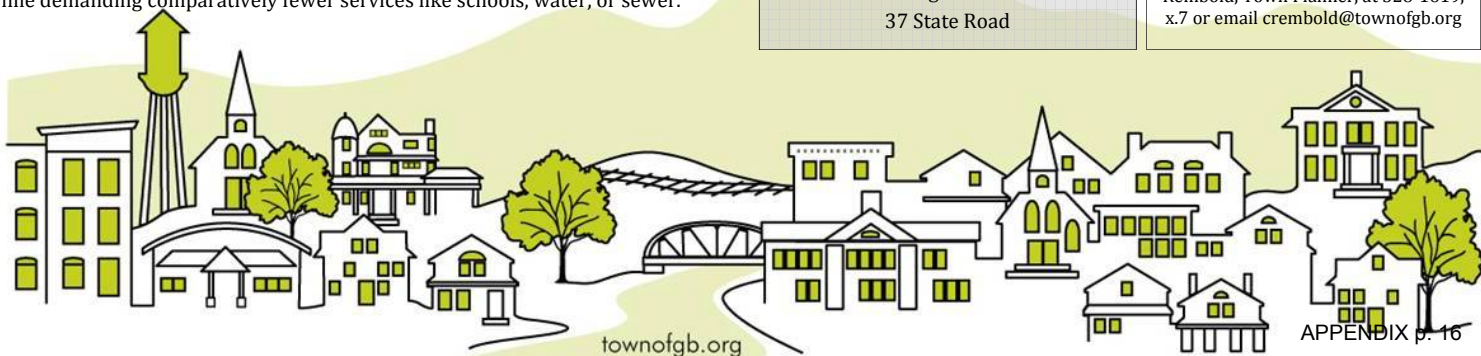
TELL US at the
Master Plan

VISION WORKSHOP

Thursday, July 14, 2011, 7-9 pm
Great Barrington Fire Station
37 State Road

A **Master Plan** is an overall guide for decision makers considering development, investment, and regulatory issues, and is the benchmark for assuring that future decisions reinforce the long term vision and values of the community. A Master Plan is created by you, for you. Your Master Plan Committee and Town Planner will help you get there.

Want more info? Contact Chris Rembold, Town Planner, at 528-1619, x.7 or email crembold@townofgb.org



GREAT BARRINGTON COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

At a Glance: Profiles of Our Town

LAND USE AND ZONING



Land Area

The Town of Great Barrington covers 29,280 acres, or about 46 square miles of land.

Zoning

The vast majority of our land area is zoned for residential use; most of that is R2 (1 acre) and R4 (2 acre) minimum lots. Only 1,667 acres are zoned for commercial (B or I type) uses, and 131 of those 1,667 are protected as part of Fountain Pond State Park. See table below for more info.

District	Acres	% of total
B	13	0%
B1	1	0%
B2	775	3%
B2A	131	0%
B3	25	0%
DBP	7	0%
I	690	2%
I2	24	0%
R1A	412	1%
R1B	628	2%
R2	15,914	54%
R3	147	1%
R4	10,511	36%
TOTAL	29,280	100%

Land Cover

While our area was once 70% pasture land, forest cover now dominates. In fact, aerial imagery data from 2005 shows that 69% of our town is forested, and only about 10% is cropland or pasture. Wetlands and water cover 9%. Only 1% of the land is covered by commercial and industrial uses.

The table at right highlights the most predominant land covers in our town.

Protected Land

Over 10,000 acres (34% of our land) are protected. Most of our protected land is state forest, which covers 24% of our total land area. The table below highlights these statistics.

Ownership	Acres	Acreage as % of Protected Land	Acreage as % of Total Land
Non-Profit	5	0%	0%
Federal	221	2%	1%
Municipal	336	3%	1%
Land Trust	793	8%	3%
Private	1,602	16%	5%
State	7,109	71%	24%
	10,064	100%	34%

Land Cover	Acres	% of total
Forest	20,333	69%
Cropland	2,073	7%
Non-Forested Wetland	1,061	4%
Forested Wetland	978	3%
Very Low Density Residential	804	3%
Pasture	794	3%
Water	562	2%
Low Density Residential	493	2%
Open Land	396	1%
Medium Density Residential	372	1%
Commercial	255	1%
Participation Recreation	230	1%
Urban Public/Institutional	185	1%
Golf Course	163	1%
High Density Residential	149	1%
Transportation	78	0%
Multi-Family Residential	65	0%
Cemetery	64	0%
Industrial	55	0%
Total	29,280	100%

Residential Growth on Large Lots

On average, 25 new residences were permitted per year between 1980 and 2000. Since then, despite the fact that our population began to decline, we have still seen about 15 new homes per year, on average.

A total of 650 new buildings were added between 1985 and 2005.

Most of these were built outside of developed areas. The average lot size for those built between 1985 and 2005 was 7 acres.

Number of Parcels, by Assessment Class

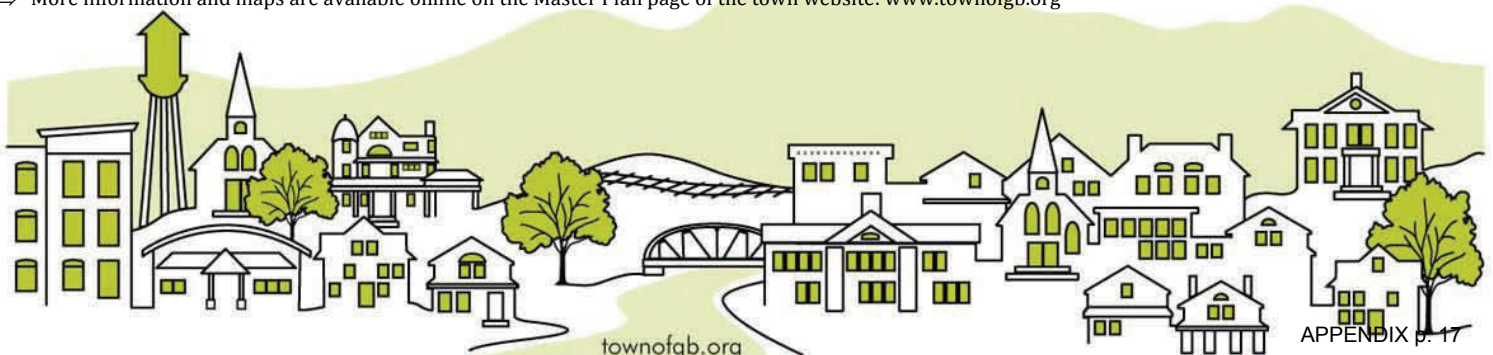
Fiscal Year	Single Family	Multi Family	Condos	Apart.	Commercial	Industrial	Total Parcels
1990	1,874	287	70	60	225	37	3,532
1995	1,874	255	71	42	243	41	3,509
2000	1,956	243	81	39	253	44	3,574
2005	2,033	234	109	38	258	45	3,673
2010	2,096	229	163	35	277	45	3,811

What do these statistics mean? What do they suggest?

- ⇒ While Great Barrington is the undisputed business center of South County, our town enjoys vast amounts of natural landscape. The rural setting that surrounds our commercial hub gives our town a distinct look and feel.
- ⇒ Much of the natural scenery that draws residents and tourists is permanently protected and cannot be developed.
- ⇒ On the other hand, the land that is not protected has been steadily carved up into large residential building lots over the last several decades.
- ⇒ While the number of taxable parcels continues to grow, as very large parcels are split up into more saleable lots, most of the growth is in single family residential parcels. Commercial parcels make up only a small portion of our total land use and total tax base. The property tax burden continues to fall most heavily on residents.
- ⇒ With protected land, environmental constraints, and residential development patterns all limiting the available land for new commercial development, adding to our tax base will require reusing already developed land and buildings.
- ⇒ More information and maps are available online on the Master Plan page of the town website: www.townofgb.org

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GREAT BARRINGTON COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

At a Glance: Profiles of Our Town

EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMY



Who are our employers?

The biggest employers in our town are listed in the table below. Some of these are year round, others tend to be more seasonal.

Source: Town of Great Barrington Independent Audit 2011

Top 10 Employers in GB, 2010		
Company	Type	Employees
Butternut	Skiing / Recreation	300
Fairview Hospital	Healthcare	270
School District	Education	230
Camp Eisner	Summer Camp	200
Simon's Rock College	Education	175
Berkshire Meadows	Residential Care	170
Big Y	Supermarket	160
Price Chopper	Supermarket	150
Fairview Commons	Healthcare	130
Brookside/ITU	Education	120

How has our employment changed?

- Industry was the largest employer in our town 35 years ago. Top firms in the 1970s included Rising Paper, Nuclear Components and High Fidelity-Musical America. But by this time industry was showing signs of decline.

- By the mid-1990s most job growth in our town was in retail, and most employment, about 76% of all jobs in our town in 1994, was in retail, services, government and finance/real estate. Only about 15% of local jobs were in construction, agriculture, manufacturing, transport and utilities.

- The trends of the last two decades have deepened. Today fewer than 10% of our local jobs are in manufacturing. The most important employment sectors for our residents are education and health care (25%), arts, entertainment, food, and accommodations (14%) and retail sales (13%).

Sources: 2011 Berkshire County CEDS, US Census 2005-2009 estimates

Summary and Key Concepts

- ⇒ With a number of local employers and a comparatively low unemployment rate, it's safe to say that our town's place as the jobs hub of South County is still secure. Our town is an important center of education, health care, and retail.
- ⇒ Our town depends increasingly on service, retail and seasonal jobs. To make ends meet, families often have to hold down several jobs or look for work elsewhere, while the jobs that serve seasonal markets are subject to unpredictable forces like the weather.
- ⇒ On the other hand, employment forecasts show that jobs requiring higher education, such as professional /scientific/ administration, and finance, are key sectors and are increasing in importance. Our planning should capitalize on this, ensuring we have the education system and amenities that attract people to, and keep them in, our region.
- ⇒ Self-employment is an important aspect of our economy. In the County, 8.4% of workers are self-employed, markedly higher than the state (6.5%), the nation (6.6%), or the Albany region (5.5%). While this suggests that we have a highly entrepreneurial and creative workforce, it may also suggest that it's more difficult to find conventional employment.

Unemployment

The recent recession took a toll on our town, but we came through better than the state and the County. Even before the recession, employment was consistently stronger in Great Barrington, as shown by the table below.

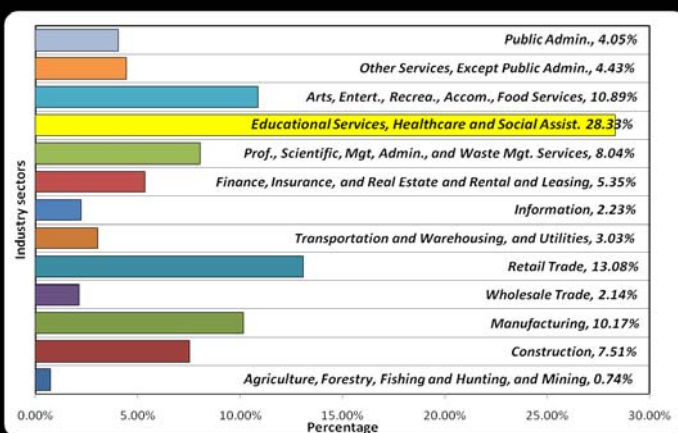
Source: Mass. Office of Labor and Workforce Development, June 2011

Year	Percent Unemployed		
	State	County	Town
2006	4.8	4.3	3.5
2007	4.5	4.4	3.7
2008	5.3	5.1	4.6
2009	8.2	7.8	6.9
2010	8.5	8.2	7
Apr 2011	7.4	7.6	6.4

What jobs are important in our region?

For nearly a century, Berkshire County's economy was founded on manufacturing, but it's no secret that industry has steadily shed jobs over the last three decades. Today, only about 10% of the County's jobs are in the manufacturing sector. The balance is increasingly shifting to education, healthcare, and social assistance (28% of jobs) and retail (13%). This chart shows percentages of jobs by sector for the County.

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 2006-2008



How much do we earn?

Today, the sectors where the most people are employed in Berkshire County are the ones that pay the least. The sectors that pay more tend to be smaller. The table at right details the numbers of establishments, employees and average wage statistics for selected sectors in the County.

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009

Sector	Establishments	Avg. Monthly Employment	Avg. Weekly Wages
Accommodation/Food Serv.	489	6,844	\$333
Arts/Entertainment	109	1,870	\$453
Retail Trade	692	8,469	\$489
Educational	92	7,352	\$797
Health Care	398	11,453	\$833
Manufacturing	171	4,910	\$1,173

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Source for all data is the US Census, unless otherwise noted.

Master plan offers shopping list for future

By David Scribner

GREAT BARRINGTON — Here are some trends and features that the town and its planners must consider as they develop a master plan for the guidance of the town for the next 20 years, according to master plan committee co-chairmen Michael Wise and Michele Gilligan.

During a discussion of the characteristics of neighborhoods and housing, they identified the following:

The town's population will continue its gradual decline; The age of the population, with the second highest percentage in the Commonwealth of those over 65, will remain at its current level;

The price of a median home — and not necessarily one in

move-in condition — is \$325,000, requiring an annual income of at least \$89,000 to afford;

There are 300 second homes in town, about 14 percent of the total;

Housing stock is old, and the lower income housing stock is in need of repair;

There is a long waiting list of people seeking affordable starter houses, and a waiting list of seniors looking for affordable apartments.

On Thursday, July 14, from 7 to 9 p.m. in the new Fire Station on State Road, the Master Plan Committee will be holding an open workshop to solicit public input on the future direction and needs of the community.

The day before, July 13, at the same time and place, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is sponsoring a similar

look at the future and how to develop a regional sustainability plan.

"The July 14 workshop is designed to find out what problems there are in the town and what people need," explained Town Planner Christopher Rembold. "We want to share with people what we know is happening, and what is going to happen if we don't change anything."

"The master plan, which will be done in two years, will become the marching orders for the town and the town staff," added Wise. "For example, do we have neighborhoods that have the amenities to support young families, like enough playgrounds."

"Beyond that, we have to realize that the service industry upon which our economy now depends needs housing, too," noted Gilligan. "We want our neighborhoods to have a mixture of ages and incomes. At the same time, we don't want cookie-cutter tract housing developments. We want our neighborhoods to be connected and walkable."

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Planning commission eyes future with public's help

By Trevor Jones, Berkshire Eagle Staff
Posted: 07/02/2011 10:40:29 PM EDT

Sunday July 3, 2011

PITTSFIELD -- What do you think Berkshire County should be like? A regional consortium led by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission wants to know.

It has begun creating a new long-range guidebook for the economic, environmental and social health of Berkshire County -- a plan that could open the door for a variety of new grant resources for the area in the future. To get input from the public, three workshops -- one each in North, Central and South Berkshire -- have been scheduled this month.

The BRPC received a \$590,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop and implement what is being called a Berkshire regional "sustainability plan." It will be the first over-arching plan the commission has produced since 2001 and is expected to be completed around the end of 2013.

Since the last plan was released, according to Nathaniel Karns, BRPC executive director a number of new issues have arisen that should be addressed, including energy, broadband Internet, and the potential for passenger rail service.

The process of putting this plan together will be different, Karns said, as it will go through a "rigorous public process" that will be open to any group or individual who wants to have their say in the future of the county. The last plan was done in-house, Karns said, with the aid of local municipalities.

The BRPC will begin hosting the first of the public workshops this week. The first session will be held on Tuesday in North Adams, and will be followed by workshops in Pittsfield and Great Barrington the following week.

"Everyone is invited," said Amy Kacala, project manager for the plan. "We want to look at the long-term viability of the region."

The meetings will include presentation of existing data and trends, and a description of the process. Small groups will then be formed to identify needs of the community.

The planning will also include a steering committee made up of groups from around the Berkshires, while a website is expected to be up and running soon. Karns said this is an opportunity to get disparate local organizations together that aren't always in the same room.

The BRPC was one of 45 groups to receive the HUD grant, and Karns called BRPC's selection a "great opportunity." He said the inclusion could pave the way for access to additional grant funding sources -- during and after the planning process -- by taking advantage of specific needs that will be identified.

To reach Trevor Jones:
tjones@berkshireeagle.com,
or (413) 528-3660.

If you go ...

What: Visioning workshops regarding the Berkshire Regional Sustainability Plan. The meetings will be hosted by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

When: Tuesday, 7 p.m.

Where: All Saints Church, Summer Street, North Adams

When: July 12, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Berkshire Athenaeum auditorium, Pittsfield

When: July 13, 7 p.m.

Where: Great Barrington Fire Station, State Road/Route 7, Great Barrington

Great Barrington sets master plan meeting

By Trevor Jonesm Berkshire Eagle Staff,
Posted: 07/14/2011 12:06:33 AM EDT

Thursday July 14, 2011

GREAT BARRINGTON -- Tonight, residents can have a say on how they want their town to look for the next 20 years.

The town committee in charge of developing a master plan for Great Barrington will hold a public "visioning" session tonight at 7 at the Great Barrington Fire Station. It will be the first public-input session since the Selectmen and Planning Board started discussions on forging a new master plan a year ago.

The 15-member master plan committee has been working for the past eight months researching background data and key trends, according to Christopher Rembold, a town planner. The public's take is vital to a viable plan to guide future development and public investment, Rembold said.

"A master plan is really a consensus of where we want to be," said Rembold. "We can't reach that consensus or that agreement unless people come and share with us what they want."

The meeting will allow residents to comment on what they like about the town and what needs to be fixed, Rembold said. The committee will then focus in on a number of goals and patterns that emerge from the meeting. Members will also begin bringing in focus groups and sending out surveys to further understand the public's stance on those issues.

So far, the committee has laid out six issues for the town's future: changing demographics, broadband Internet access, passenger rail service, aging infrastructure, climate change, and agriculture and local food.

The new master plan, the first for the town since 1997, is expected to be completed by the end of 2012 or early 2013.

To reach Trevor Jones:
tjones@berkshireeagle.com,
or (413) 528-3660.

First Master Plan public forum attracts 70 to look ahead to '32

Participants noted what Barrington's future needs should be

By David Scribner

GREAT BARRINGTON — "It was great to see so many new faces," reflected Town Planner Christopher Rembold, after the Master Plan Committee's first public forum in the Fire Station last week to solicit citizen ideas about how the town should evolve in the next 20 years.

More than 70 people took up stations at a dozen large round tables, each supplied with large planning templates and markers, to write down what areas the town should focus on and what directions the community should take to make it yet more vibrant.

The public session was the first in a series of open forums that will be held during the two-year process of developing a new master plan that will guide public policy for the next two decades.

"This was not the usual planning crowd," Rembold said. "These were people who

had never been to a planning meeting. And they were able to think creatively, rather than just respond to the issue of the moment."

Common themes included agriculture, vacant mills in Housatonic

For 45 minutes, they wrote down what they imagined the town needed and what it could have. At the end of the brainstorming session, each table presented the results of its deliberations.

Among the common themes, Rembold pointed out, were the development of local agriculture, the reuse of vacant mill buildings such as those in Housatonic, and the creation of a network of trails and walkways that will make Great Barrington a "walkable" community.

Rembold, however, was

surprised at the lack of disagreement among participants.

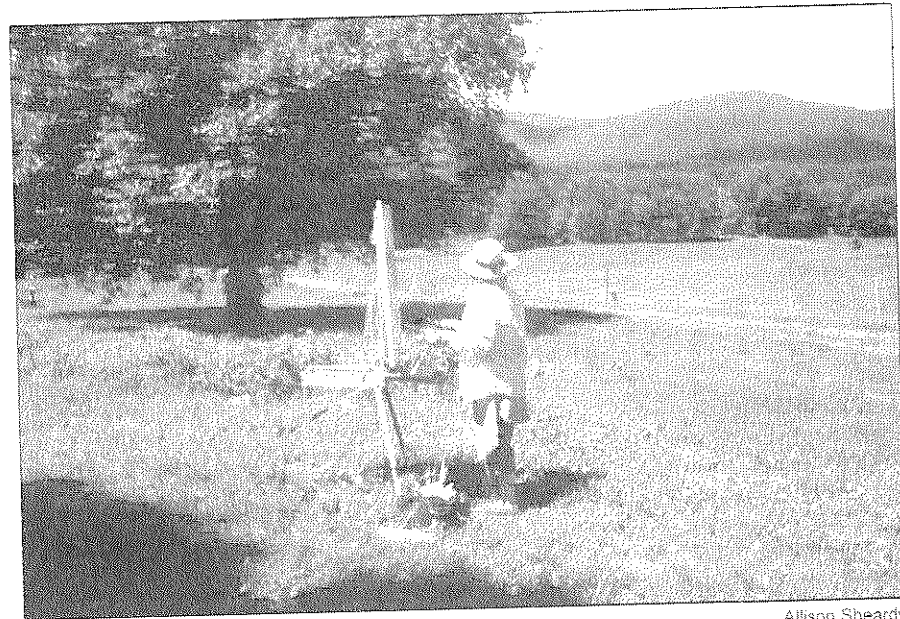
"There wasn't as much controversy as I expected," he said. "I think we were engaging a certain set of people, and we'll have to extend that involvement."

The Master Plan Committee had suggested six issues and trends that the town should consider: changing demographics that indicates a declining but aging population; the installation of broadband internet access that will enable entrepreneurial opportunities; the potential introduction of passenger rail service to the New York City metropolitan area; an aging town infrastructure of roads, sidewalks, water and sewer lines; renewed interest in locally produced food; and climate change.

"In the future, there are some issues we'll want to explore in more depth," Rembold noted. "There are certain targeted populations and neighborhoods we'll want to look at, and commercial areas such as downtown and Stockbridge Road. But we wanted to start the ball rolling, to prime the pump."

'Egremont on Parade' scheduled for July 24

EGREMONT—On Sunday, July 24, the town will



Allison Sheardy

Kate Knapp, above, led her painting class to Balsam Hill Farms last Thursday to work on landscapes. The class travels throughout the Berkshires.

Berkshire art classes, al fresco

By Allison Sheardy

Several days a week, the Front Street Gallery in Housatonic hosts an art class.

On Thursdays, the class focuses on landscapes and travels to different scenic spots throughout the Berkshires. On one such Thursday, the group went to Balsam Hill Farms, an organic dairy farm in Sheffield. The group meets year-round, but, as Kate Knapp, the instructor/organizer of the class said, "We live for summer, when we can paint what

we really love...The Berkshires are full of beautiful places to paint."

Although the group travels from spot to spot, they often revisit the same place for a few weeks in a row.

"We spend several weeks getting to know a place," Knapp said. "And there's no better way to get to know a place than to paint it."

The class meets from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Participants paint for about three hours, and then finish up with a critique over lunch.

"The philosophy of the class is that everyone has their own voice, so you can't get it wrong," Knapp ex-

plained.

She continued, "I try to give comments throughout the class, but I am not going to teach [the participants] how to paint; I like how they already paint. Everyone has a voice, and it's wonderful."

Participants of all experience levels are welcome to attend the class, Knapp said. "Beginners have a fresh outlook—everyone has something to paint."

A variety of mediums are used, from watercolor to acrylic to oil and more.

The class has been meeting for 15 years.

APPENDIX p. 22

WINDY HILL FARM
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Great Barrington residents: Scenery is focal point to town

[By Trevor Jones, Berkshire Eagle Staff](#)

Saturday December 24, 2011

GREAT BARRINGTON -- Residents view the town's rural nature as one of its key assets and want to keep it that way, but they also are concerned with the rising cost of living.

That's the key message received from more than 250 citizens who took part in outreach workshops conducted by a town committee that is preparing a new master plan to replace the existing 1997 document.

The most common theme of these meetings was the aesthetics of the town, with attendees saying the open space and scenery attracts and keeps people here.

"If that's a really fundamental stance, the master plan has to recognize that and say, 'OK, this is our major asset and let's not ruin it,'" said Town Planner Christopher Rembold. "[Participants] just love the scenic beauty of the area."

Many residents want to see future growth concentrated in areas already developed, while keeping rural areas as they are, said Rembold. There was also considerable discussion of refurbishing key sites in town, such as the former New England Log Homes site, the Housatonic Mills and the Great Barrington Fair Grounds.

Affordability was the other issue garnering consensus among residents with concerns over real estate prices raised and attendees questioning if the town is spending more than the taxpayers can afford. At nearly every meeting, residents said they want to see more well-paying jobs and affordable housing, along with lower taxes.

The Master Plan Committee held one townwide meeting in July and followed it with 12 other neighborhood meetings. Rembold said the additional meetings were intended to receive feedback from people who don't always attend town government meetings. He called these meetings a success, saying they received comments from the young and old, as well as residents whose time here ranged from two months to 85 years.

"People who attended these meetings haven't been at a Planning Board meeting recently or ever, so they're really new fresh people eager to be involved," said Rembold. "It's been really exciting that way."

Public health and safety were also frequently mentioned, including concerns with speeding, blighted properties, and a lack of walking and bike paths. Other themes of the meetings included interest in more high-speed Internet access, passenger rail service and improved public transportation, and farming and small business development.

Many of the themes are consistent with the 1997 master plan, but new issues include climate change and local food.

The next step for the committee will be outreach to the business community. Other stakeholders will be brought in as well, including discussions on agriculture, arts and culture, historic resources, and open space and recreation.

Once those meetings are complete, the committee will develop a vision statement and come back to residents for further input. A draft for a new master plan is expected to be ready by the fall of 2012.

A master plan doesn't require approval from town meeting. But if the document is intended to be a road map for public policy, Rembold said, these meetings will be critical to receive the public's endorsement. Future ideas, such as zoning changes or budget-related items, will still need to be approved by voters, so it's important to ensure those proposals fall in line with the public's wishes, he said.

"When the rubber hits the roads," Rembold said, "it's still up to the voters."

Community Master Plan

Great Barrington, MA

The Great Barrington Master Plan Committee invites you to participate in planning our town. Come to a workshop in your neighborhood, learn about the master plan, share your vision for our town and your neighborhood, and collaborate with your friends and neighbors. Over the course of October and November 2011, a workshop will be held in every neighborhood in town. Check the map and schedule below for your neighborhood. The schedule will be updated as needed.

NEIGHBORHOOD WORKSHOPS

Tues., Oct. 11, 7 pm
Neighborhood "A"
Friends Meeting House, 280 State Road

Wed., Oct. 12, 7 pm
Neighborhood "B"
GB Fire Station, 37 State Road

Mon., Oct. 17, 7 pm
Neighborhood "H"
Housatonic Community Center, Housatonic

Wed., Oct. 19, 7:30 pm
Neighborhood "I"
Barrington Brewery, Stockbridge Road

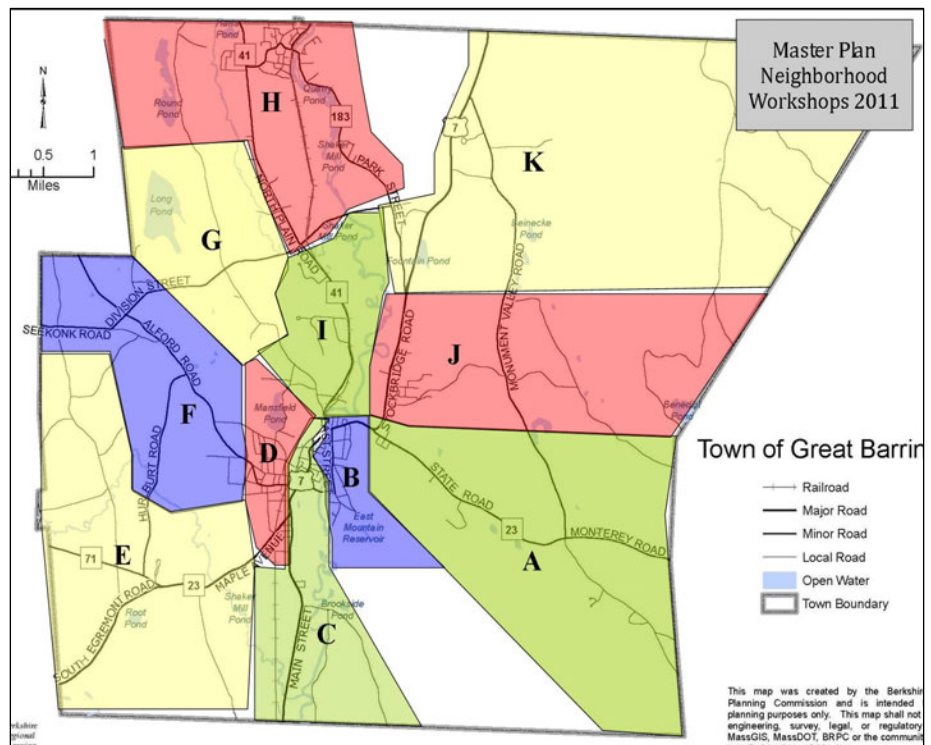
Tues., Oct. 25, 6 pm, and Sat., Nov. 5, 10 am
Neighborhood "D"
RBC Wealth Management, 50 Castle Street

Tues., Nov. 8, 6 pm
Neighborhood "E"
Rudolf Steiner School, 35 West Plain Road

Sun. Nov. 13, 4 pm
Neighborhood "F"
Simon's Rock College, Classroom #9, Classroom Complex (use Main Entrance off of Alford Rd.)

Tues. Nov. 15, 6pm
Neighborhood "J"
Berkshire South Community Center, 15 Crissey Road

Thurs. Nov. 17, 7pm
Neighborhood "K"
Berkshire South Community Center, 15 Crissey Road



For more information about these events or the Master Plan, please contact Chris Rembold, Town Planner, at 528-1619, x.7 or email crembold@townofgb.org

11/3/11



Our Neighborhood Our Town.

What's good? What's great? What's not so great?

We want to know!

Join representatives from the Great Barrington Master Plan Committee for
an informal Master Plan workshop in our neighborhood.

_____, **October** _____, **2011**

6:00—7:30 pm

at _____

Please RSVP by calling 528-____ or emailing _____

See you then!



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*A **Master Plan** is an overall guide for decision makers considering development, investment, and regulatory issues, and is the benchmark for assuring that future decisions reinforce the long term vision and values of the community. A Master Plan is created by you, for you. Your Master Plan Committee and Town Planner will help you get there.*

Want more information?

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Community Master Plan

Great Barrington, MA

GB Trails & Greenways OPEN SPACE & RECREATION FOCUS GROUP

1. Which organization / group / agency do you represent?
2. Where does your organization work (i.e., only in GB, or more regionally)?
3. What are Great Barrington's most important Open Space and Recreation resources? Our region's?
4. Do these assets meet our Open Space and Recreation needs? Are there any Open Space and Recreation needs that are not met? Are there any resources that are currently underutilized? Are there any resources that are under threat? From what, specifically?
5. Please describe several of Great Barrington's most important successes in Open Space and Recreation planning. Why were/are these projects important? What made them successful?
6. Please describe any Open Space and Recreation initiatives that Great Barrington has not yet achieved. Why did these initiatives fail, or, why have they not yet been realized?
7. What are your organization's Open Space and Recreation priorities? If you work both locally in Great Barrington as well as regionally, please describe both your local and regional priorities. Please indicate when you hope to accomplish them (next year, next 3-5 yrs., next 5-10 yrs, etc).
8. To accomplish these goals, what resources, if any, do you need from other organizations like your own? What resources, if any, do you need from the Town?

Community Master Plan

Great Barrington, MA

Dear Citizen,

The Great Barrington Master Plan Committee is helping the community create a master plan to shape our town's next 20 years. We are collecting community input, general ideas, and facts to frame our priorities. The plan is to be delivered in 2013, after a two-year process of community dialogue and participation.

Your input is appreciated, and needed, in order to make the plan relevant and realistic. Please take a moment to answer the following questions. More information can be found at www.townofgb.org or by calling Chris Rembold, Town Planner, at (413) 528-1619, x.7.

1. On a scale from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest) how would you rate Great Barrington as a place to call home, or to do business in?

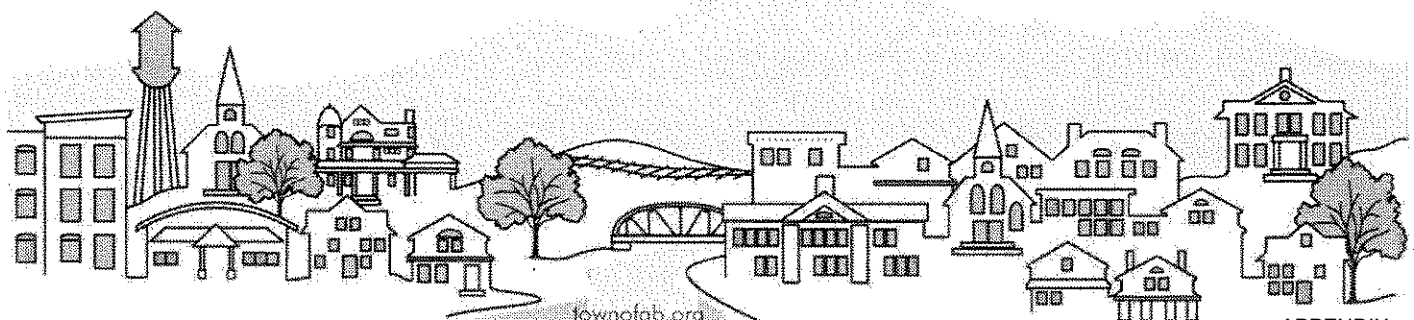
2. Why did you give it that score?

3. What, if anything, needs to be changed in order to improve that score?

4. When do you think these changes need to happen—within the near term (two years), medium term (five years), or longer term (10 years)?

5. Are you a full time resident? Yes No
How many years have you lived here? _____

THANKS FOR YOUR TIME!



Community Master Plan

El Plan Maestro De la Comunidad (Great Barrington)

Great Barrington, MA

Dear Citizen,

The Great Barrington Master Plan Committee is helping the community create a master plan to shape our town's next 20 years. We are collecting community input, general ideas, and facts to frame our priorities. The plan is to be delivered in 2013, after a two-year process of community dialogue and participation. Your input is appreciated, and needed, in order to make the plan relevant and realistic. Please take a moment to answer the following questions. More information can be found at www.townofgb.org or by calling Chris Rembold, Town Planner, at (413) 528-1619, x.7.

Querido Residente del Great Barrington,

El Comité del Plan Maestro Great Barrington está ayudándole a la comunidad en crear un plan maestro para formar los próximos veinte años del pueblo. Estamos coleccionando respuestas, ideas generales y datos para formar las prioridades.

Hay que oír todas las voces para hacer un plan maestro bien informado, realístico y relevante. Por favor conteste las siguientes preguntas. Para más información siga al www.townofgb.org o llame a Chris Rembold, Town Planner, al (413) 528-1619 ext. 7 o si necesita interpretación llame a Multicultural BRIDGE 274-1001.

1. On a scale from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest) how would you rate Great Barrington as a place to call home, or to do business in?

En una escala del 1 al 10, cómo le notaría Ud. al Great Barrington como un lugar para vivir como su hogar o para montar un negocio?

2. Why did you give it that score?

Por qué le marca usted al Great Barrington así?

3. What, if anything, needs to be changed in order to improve that score?

Qué pudiera hacer Great Barrington para mejorar este puntaje?

4. When do you think these changes need to happen—within the near term (two years), medium term (five years), or longer term (10 years)?

Cuándo se necesita hacer esos cambios sugeridos—dentro de dos años, cinco años, o diez años?

5. Are you a full time resident? Yes No

Vive acá todo el tiempo como un residente "full time"? Sí o No

How many years have you lived here? _____

Cuántos años lleva usted aquí? _____

THANKS FOR YOUR TIME! Muchísimas gracias!

Community Master Plan

Great Barrington, MA

Summary of Neighborhood Meeting Results

December 8, 2011

This memo groups together common ideas that have arisen from community outreach to date (including the July 14 Town-wide Vision Workshop and the Neighborhood Meetings convened in October and November). These ideas are not listed in any particular order or priority. Also, since this only reflects commonalities, this does not list every single idea, comment, or complaint that was recorded (though we will retain all of the notes for future reference).

Key Themes:

The common theme, above all others, is that our town's natural beauty is our key strength. People are attracted to live here and visit here by the open space and wonderful scenery. Following closely on that is the sense that the town offers a historic character, a level of arts and cultural amenities, and a close-knit community feeling that is the envy of the region.

Affordability, however, is becoming a critical issue. Tax burdens, real estate prices, and cost of living strain the budgets of many young families and seniors. There is a very strong sentiment that the town is spending much more than residential property owners can afford. Nearly every workshop resounded with the themes that taxes must be reduced, and that more well-paying jobs and reasonably-priced housing options are needed to retain and attract young people.

Quality of life concerns permeate our neighborhoods. These concerns include speeding traffic, blighted buildings, lack of affordable housing, and lack of good jobs. These also include the desire for easier and safer connections, such as sidewalks, walking trails, and biking routes, within and between neighborhoods and village centers. Implicit (sometimes explicit) in these comments is that these issues are keys to providing a safe, healthy, and engaging community for our children and our seniors.

There is also a near-universal agreement that special attention must be paid to key sites. Chief among these are the Housatonic mills and the Fairgrounds. Exactly what these sites should be utilized for was the subject of a great deal of disagreement, but there is a strong sense that something must happen, soon, before it is "too late."

Most workshops have identified that local agriculture and local food is growing in economic importance, and that this sector presents an enormous opportunity for future growth.

Nearly every workshop identified passenger railroad service and better public transportation, fiber-optic service, agriculture, and small business development as the keys to our future economic health.

Finally, there is a strong sense that development, without proper guidelines and regulations, will threaten all of the above strengths and opportunities.



Topic Area	Strong Agreement and/or High Priority	Disagreement	Other thoughts/ideas (but not necessarily a priority)
<i>Agriculture & Local Food</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support, encourage, promote local farms, and the restaurants and stores that sell their products - Preserve existing farmland - Revise zoning to support and protect farmland - Promote community and backyard gardens - Use fairgrounds for community gardens, farms - Better access to local food and affordable - Encourage in-town farming - Recognize agriculture's links to economy, open space, health, climate - Develop "agri-tourism" and hospitality industry - Good farm soils, and beautiful open spaces are being and carved up and developed - Community Preservation Act to buy farms, build worker housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow backyard chickens - Preserve as many farms as possible now - Raise taxes vs. do not raise taxes to preserve farmland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Town-sponsored mulching and compost facility - Community kitchen: place to make/process local products - Aim for bulk of food production within the region - Indoor / year round farmers market - Restrict development on prime agricultural soils or require any development to be tied to local food economy
<i>Arts & Culture</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More of it - Berkshires are known for this - Mahaiwe is huge draw/asset - Promote youth arts accessibility, programs - Promote year round cultural tourism - Promote local artists - Need artist live-work space - Requires infrastructure improvement - Better regional marketing and cooperation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Town museum at Truman Wheeler House - Arts are too expensive for us: make it more affordable to everyone - Cultural Council does a good job with funds, could do more lectures - Love the recycling (containers) - Build appreciation of diversity and cultural differences
<i>Economy & Business</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taxes are too high / need lower taxes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o especially for young people and seniors or those on fixed incomes - Land and homes are too costly for small businesses and young workers - Bring back passenger railroad service - Need more jobs for youth - Need more blue collar jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop fairgrounds to generate tax revenue vs. do not develop it for intense use - Fairgrounds – high density, marketplace, conservation land, condos, farming, connect to the River - Tourists drive economy and will continue that way vs. second homes often empty, not affordable, not enough stores "locals" can afford 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need vocational training programs -Butternut should do more year round activities like concerts and ropes courses - Small and mid-sized companies are the future -Green manufacturing and green products -Agricultural economy – more food, processing, and farms -Energy efficiency: mills 100%

Topic Area	Strong Agreement and/or High Priority	Disagreement	Other thoughts/ideas (but not necessarily a priority)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the tax base - We need more year-round businesses - Small and mid-sized companies are the future - Attract technology companies - Broadband (fiber optic) and the railroad should be used to attract new businesses - Redevelop the mills - Reuse existing buildings: mills, old fire station - Improve communication between Town Hall and businesses - Preserve and concentrate on downtown and village center - Improve parking accessibility downtown - Improve regional and local transportation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> energy efficient demonstration to attract young idealistic firms -Town should campaign to attract businesses -Tax climate that incentivizes start ups -Be green and future-oriented: this will bring young people to work and live -Tourist services: signage, banners, public bathrooms, event listing, more parking, hotel reservation kiosk -New businesses hindered by expensive space -No middle ground between high- and low-cost homes -GB provides commerce and services to those living in outlying towns -No big box stores
Energy & Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Require renewable energy on all new commercial buildings - Provide green power and attract green industry to build local economy - Railroad = green - Improve bus system - Increase density of housing or redevelop areas not currently in use (mills) - Town government should take lead on low-fuel vehicles, renewables on town buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Renewable energy (solar and wind) to reduce carbon footprint and increase tax base vs. not in my backyard and will ruin the scenery and the tourist economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solar energy - Encourage energy efficiency improvements - Small scale hydro - Small scale windmills - Energy audits and tax savings for homes, businesses - Pursue Green Community designation and GC grants - Solar powered streetlights - More locally produced food to protect against climate shifts and oil price increases - Drainage improvements needed to deal with more storms / runoff
Health & Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hospital is excellent / keep it and support it (+ CHP + VIM) - Hospital, health services, and great doctors are key assets in attracting people here - Better and affordable public transportation - RR Street Youth project is great – we need more youth services / programs - Walkability / bikeability - Senior services: more of them - Population is aging – need more senior programs, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disagreement about quality of public schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health resort and retreat - Free legal clinic / access to legal services for low income and seniors - Affordable health care - Food pantry – central located - Central assisted living facility

Topic Area	Strong Agreement and/or High Priority	Disagreement	Other thoughts/ideas (but not necessarily a priority)
	meals, transportation, day care, lower taxes, mentoring, legal, and health assistance		
Historic Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historic buildings and sites are important: basis of downtown tourism, small town / "real" town feeling - Preserve historic buildings and support those who do - Redevelop the mills - Promote historic more (250th events are great) - Preservation = sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preserve the fairgrounds vs. develop the fairgrounds - Save vs. demolish former Housatonic school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education and appreciation for local history - Community Preservation Act Increase local Historic District to include homes and businesses with architectural & historic interest - Support museum at Wheeler Farm
Housing & Neighborhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More housing affordable to 1st time homeowners and rentals for mod-low income - Increase housing options - Increase rental units - Promote accessory units - Remediate blight – housing and businesses - Restore vibrancy to Housatonic: restore homes, make a vibrant town center, preserve green space, plant gardens, intergenerational uses at public buildings there - Connect neighborhoods to amenities (trail and bike paths/systems); connect GB and Housatonic with walking/biking trail - Keep local streets safe / keep pedestrians safe (traffic calming) - Increase police presence (to deal with drugs, enforce speed limits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase housing density, intensity, clustering, infill development vs. do not develop farmland, open space, or views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Preservation Act - Public transportation - Parks and activities for youth and teens - Mandate zoning for cluster housing /No sprawl - Encourage multi-family housing and infill housing - Community gardens - Be green: alternative energy - Increase density in residential where sewer/water is available - Increase parks and amenities in neighborhoods. Every neighborhood should have park, playground, swimming, etc. for people of all ages - A town green / town common in Housatonic and at Town Hall
Infrastructure & Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taxes are too high / stop spending - Reduce speeding - Fix storm drains / stormwater system - Improve, add, extend sidewalks in residential neighborhoods - Employee parking lot - Crosswalks: increase visibility esp on Main St - Jitney (shuttle) between villages / improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extend water and sewer vs. do not develop open space - Town-owned wind and solar power - Bicycle lanes / paths - Passenger railroad vs. concentrate on better bus service - Police and fire dept are great vs. need more police enforcement (speeding, drugs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fix the Brown Bridge - Improve stormwater management (rain water collection) - Better cell service - Public bathrooms - Improve use of transfer station: increase hours, reuse/recycle area for non-trash - Provide parking and rental cars for railroad users - More and more visible youth

Topic Area	Strong Agreement and/or High Priority	Disagreement	Other thoughts/ideas (but not necessarily a priority)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> connection between Housatonic and GB - Increase parking and parking visibility - Passenger railroad to NYC - Reuse sites like Fairgrounds and mills - Fiber optic to everywhere / broadband - Senior need: Affordable elder exercise, transportation, intergenerational activities - Should be energy efficient - Should be accessible 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> programs like RSYP - More vocational – technical training programs
Open Space & Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GB greatest strengths is its open space - Increase parks and river access - Promote Riverwalk - Housatonic River Way Trail connecting Downtown, Olympia Meadows, the Fairgrounds, and Senior Center Extend Riverwalk north and south - Make a Riverwalk in Housatonic - Maintain and upgrade parks and playgrounds - Active community = healthy community - Parks are places for all ages - Make a trail network - Swimmable, fishable Housatonic River = key to economy - More canoe and kayak places - Improve and promote recreation, trails, kayaking are key to economy, tourist draw, and quality of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fairgrounds: develop vs. preserve open / agricultural space - Protect open space by zoning much of it as no build - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - and useable Rising Pond - Add parks for families: skateboards, wireless access - Add Flag Rock to town trails system - Horseback riding trails - Promote Appalachian Trail, Housatonic River, and Butternut - How does environmental protection interface with agricultural preservation? Floodplains, endangered species, etc? - Connect to Housatonic River Walk from Monument Mills to Rising Pond and beyond - Dog park (at fairgrounds)
Transportation & Circulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce car dependence - Passenger railroad to NYC - Better / more frequent regional bus routes - More + better sidewalks - Improve, add, extend sidewalks in residential neighborhoods - Walkability and connections between homes, stores, open spaces, amenities, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More parking spaces downtown vs. remote parking lots - More parking spaces downtown vs. more green / gathering spaces downtown - Parking garage downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Local train service to Pittsfield -Loop / shuttle buses between GB and Housie: energy efficient -Fix the downtown side streets

Topic Area	Strong Agreement and/or High Priority	Disagreement	Other thoughts/ideas (but not necessarily a priority)
	neighborhoods - Slow traffic speeds - Improve traffic, bike, and pedestrian safety - Employee parking lot - Improve connection between Housatonic and GB - Increase parking and parking visibility - Improve parking for farmers market		

Over the next month, I will develop a draft set of Vision statements for your review, and we can discuss them at the January meeting. In the meantime, we will forge ahead with topical investigations including open space and recreation, arts and culture, historic resources, businesses, restaurants, and tourism and hospitality.

In the meantime, it might be worthwhile to consider the six “Basic Principles” of the 1997 Town Plan. I would wager that most of these will remain the same for us today, though we will supplement them with goals based on the themes identified above.

- A. Manage regulations and the pattern and capacity of Town services so that development contributes to the viability and traditional character of the village centers while sustaining the Town’s rural countryside and agricultural base.
- B. Encourage economic growth that is appropriately scaled to the Town, and that supports rather than detracts from the Downtown and Housatonic Village. Encourage economic growth that is balanced among a variety of commercial activities, serving the needs of all sectors of the economy and creating skilled jobs as higher wages for Great Barrington’s young people.
- C. Direct efforts to support the special places and features of Great Barrington that contribute to its unique character.
- D. Direct future growth toward the villages. Guide growth away from the fragile wetlands and hazard-prone floodplain areas between the River and Route 7.
- E. Discourage development with potential for high traffic impact in order to lessen traffic congestion, assure safer traffic access, parking, and pedestrian access in the downtown and along the Route 7 corridor, and to discourage strip development.
- F. Encourage site and building development design that is harmonious with the Town’s traditional existing buildings and development patterns.

Parks! Open Space! Recreation!
Join us for an

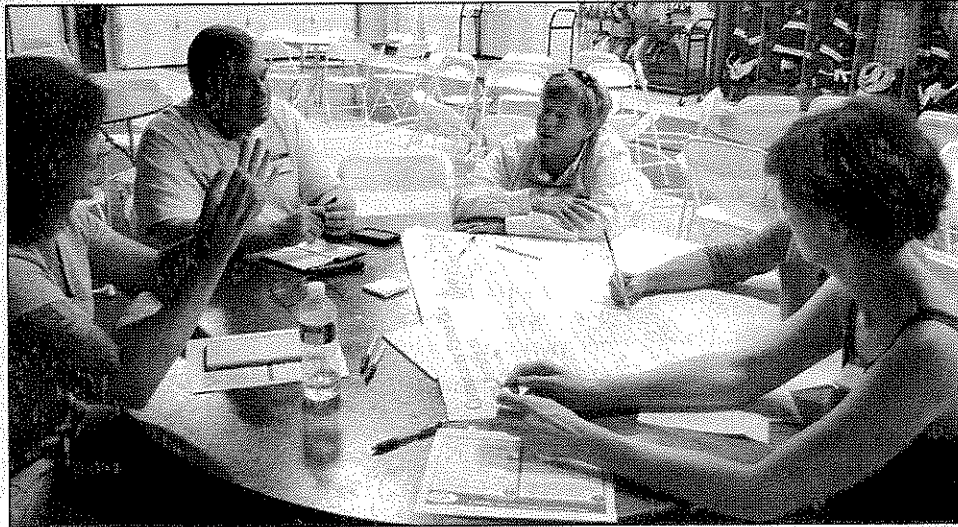
Open Space and Recreation Workshop

Learn about our existing resources.
Share what you think our future needs and priorities should be.
Help plan our future!

Wednesday, April 11, 2012
6:00 - 7:30 pm
Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road

This is another exciting aspect of our Community Master Plan.
For more information, call Chris Rembold at 528-1619, x.7
or email crembold@townofgb.org





David Scribner

DPW Superintendent Joe Sokul leads a discussion of Master Plan objectives.

Master Plan ready for review

By David Scribner

GREAT BARRINGTON—A draft of the new Community Master Plan, outlining future town priorities, goals and strategies based upon public input collected over the past year, will be presented Thursday, June 21, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Fire Station.

Hosted by the Master Plan Committee, the session is intended to make sure the plan

is on the right track and that it includes what residents have envisioned for their community over the next 20 years.

"Our objectives are to sustain the value of community life and to improve that quality of life where we can," explained Town Planner Christopher Rembold. "This will be the roadmap to accomplish those objectives."

The plan addresses eight general topics: Agriculture; economic development; energy and climate; housing; historic and cultural resources; natural resources, open space and recreation; services and facilities; and transportation and circulation.

In the category of agriculture, the top priorities are to permanently preserve as much existing working farmland as possible, and to preserve "prime agricultural soils and unused farmland for future agricultural use."

Noting that unemployment in Great Barrington

has remained .5 to 1 percent below the state rate, the master plan calls for the establishment of an economic development commission to act "as a liaison between businesses and town government."

To encourage future growth, the plan, in both its economic development and transportation sections, recommends the restoration of passenger train connections between the Berkshires and New York City.

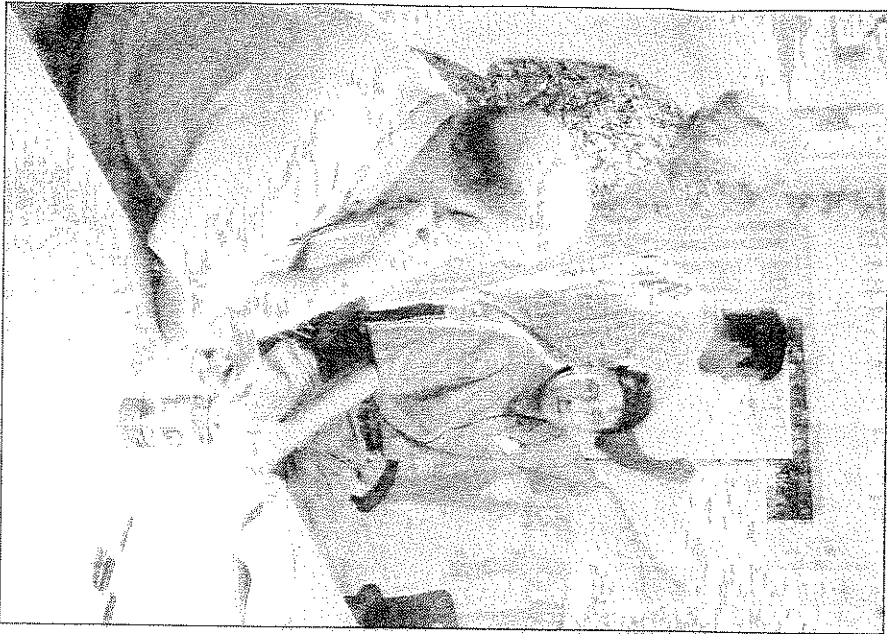
The master plan also emphasizes the need to connect homes and businesses throughout the town to a broadband Internet network.

The plan recognizes the need for housing that is affordable, noting that even median priced houses at \$315,000 are "beyond the reach for many."

The plan calls for greater attention to recreation areas, the refurbishment of existing parks and the development of new open parks.

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Master Plan forum gathers ideas for future goals for Great Barrington



David Scribner
Town planner Chris Rembold leads Master Plan session.

Barrington-Lenox session stresses policy governance

Continued from A1
the big issues," he advised his audience "no one else is Van

Continued from A1
the town's Master Plan Committee.
"We are developing a shared vision for the future of the town," explained Town Planner Christopher Rembold, "and the master plan will state our goals and the strategies to achieve that. This session this evening is to solicit your ideas."
During the past year, the

process of crafting the master plan has included 15 meetings in town neighborhoods, with the participation of more than 300 town residents.
The master plan that will provide the guidelines for town policies for the next two decades will be presented for adoption at next year's annual town meeting.
In its current draft form, the master plan addresses agriculture, economic devel-

opment, energy and climate; housing; historic and cultural resources; natural resources; open space and recreation; services and facilities; and transportation and circulation.
At the June 21 visioning session, the 50 or so participants offered a variety of ideas to supplement the topics presented in the draft plan. Among the suggestions was the preparation of a "biomay-

a list of all species within conservation areas. Another goal was the creation of a Business Improvement District for the downtown, as a tool for maintaining its commercial vitality.
Community Development Executive Director Tim Geller urged the inclusion of financial incentives for the development of affordable housing and a campaign to overcome the stigma that "affordable housing" implies.

Master Plan forum charts town future

By David Scribner

GREAT BARRINGTON – What will the town look like in 20 years? What will its character be – a thriving center for invention and cutting-edge entrepreneurship?

A regional focal point of agricultural innovation, based upon incentives for local farmers and supported by a rejuvenated fairgrounds that offers community supported agriculture facilities?

A pedestrian and bicycle rider community, with a network of trails linking its downtown to its upgraded and expanded recreational resources?

A community renowned for the quality of its school system, its cultural assets, its progressive leadership?

Will it be a community that people can afford to live in, given the salaries available within the region? Or will it evolve into an Aspen East, whose property values and taxes make it viable only for the wealthy, many of whom regard it as a second home?

Will Great Barrington ever restore its access to public transportation that would link the community to metropolitan areas?

Will downtown remain a thriving commercial center, and how do we keep it so?

These were but a few of the ideas for the future of the town that were addressed in the first of a series of public forums, this one at the State Road Fire Station, hosted by

Continued on A8

allfarms.org

Lenox MA

rent Community

allfarms



Great Barrington master plan aims to strike a balance

By Trevor Jones, Berkshire Eagle Staff Berkshire Eagle

Posted:

BerkshireEagle.com

Friday June 22, 2012

GREAT BARRINGTON -- After two years of meetings and public input, the broad strokes of a master plan are starting to come together.

A forum was held at the State Road fire station Thursday night, where members of the Master Plan Committee and general public reviewed the 22-page draft goals and visions for the document that is intended to be the road map for future governance here.

A draft of the full master plan is expected to be completed by the end of the year and adopted next spring.

Town Planner Christopher Rembold said the committee's challenge is crafting a master plan that seeks to maintain the qualities that make the town attractive for visitors and residents, while addressing the challenges that come with that status.

"Here we are trying to protect and sustain what is a really great town to live in," Rembold said. "Unfortunately, the town's getting tougher to live in, more expensive to live in."

The document is broken down into eight categories: agriculture; economic development; energy and climate; housing; historic and cultural resources; natural resources, open space and recreation; services and facilities; and transportation and circulation. A copy of the draft goals and vision can be found on the town's website, www.townofgb.org.

The goals touch on a wide range of initiatives, from promoting local agriculture and energy conservation to upgrading blighted "gateway" properties and diversifying the housing stock. The draft goals also call for preserving open space, improving walkability and neighborhood connections, and revitalizing certain privately and publicly owned historic properties.

One of the biggest lessons from the process so far, Rembold said, is how all of these issues are interrelated.

"That's what we're all starting to understand," Rembold said. "You pull one strand of the web and everything else moves with it."

Outreach efforts with residents and business owners will continue over the next month.

Rembold said the last master plan, developed in the mid-1990s, went largely unused after its release. He said the goal is to make sure that doesn't happen again.

"This plan is going to be your marching orders, basically," Rembold said. "These are the things that we as a community value, prioritize and want to get done."

Master Plan for Barrington grappling with future issues

Continued from A1

will establish the guidelines for town's future evolution and a framework for policy decisions for the next 10 to 20 years.

The Master Plan will consist of nine chapters: Land Use; Natural Resources, Open Space and Recreation; Housing; Economic Development; Transportation; Energy; Historic and Cultural Resources; Services and Facilities; Agriculture; and Implementation.

Having completed drafts of the Land Use and Natural Resources sections, the Master Plan Committee will address land use at its January 8 public forum scheduled for 6 p.m. in the State Road Fire Station.

"The Natural Resources chapter is one of the hardest to draft, and the longest," explained Town Planner Christopher Rembold, who has been guiding the Master Plan Committee through the laborious collection of data and public input that make up the foundation of the document.

He noted that the town was unusually blessed with the number and location of its parks and recreation facilities.

"Fifty percent of our population live within a 10-minute walk of a park," he pointed out. "There is a significant economic value to our recreational facilities,

but we have to be very strategic about what we conserve, given our limited funds."

He cited the preservation of the Flag Rock property above the village of Housatonic and the Housatonic River itself as recreational resources that could be taken advantage of.

"People like the rural character of the town, but it is more than just parks and recreation," he said. "It's about drinking water. We have fantastic soil and lots of clear water, and this is what makes everything else possible. Plus, we have amazing protected forests and wetlands. One-third of Great Barrington — 10,000 acres — is protected."

In public Master Plan sessions, residents have expressed their eagerness for greater access to the town's two lakes, Benedict Pond and Lake Mansfield, and to the Housatonic River.

"There is a concept to have a new kayak and canoe launch at the rehabilitated Fairgrounds," he observed, but he also warned that Rising Pond, and the river below it, may be off limits for now because of the high levels of PCB contamination in riverbed sediment.

"I think that Rising Pond may have its contamination removed by dredging," he remarked, referring to the eventual PCB-cleanup plan being drafted by the Environmental Protection Agency.

While the percentage of protected lands and quality agricultural acreage offer recreational opportunities and environmental sustainability, it also points to the difficulty of enlarging the tax base. Currently, the town relies upon property taxes for 70 percent of its revenue.

"If we conserve somewhere, we need to develop somewhere else — and preferably find property to redevelop," Rembold said. "I think the mills in Housatonic and some downtown properties offer redevelopment potential. It's crucial that we develop these resources, for the town will be facing some staggering infrastructure costs in the future."

He also pointed out that the town must take into account that 10 percent of the town is in a floodplain, the most vulnerable areas being from the Rising Pond dam to the Brown Bridge, and from Bridge Street south into Sheffield. In a 100-year flood, the town could suffer an estimated \$78 million in flood damage.

Master Plan for Barrington grappling with future issues

By David Scribner

GREAT BARRINGTON — Two decades from now, what will the town be like, look like? What kind of resources will be available and what level of services provided? How will the town preserve its rural character, village center and neighborhoods, and at the same time provide opportunities for economic growth and a tax base that will allow people to be able to afford to live here?

Those are the questions being addressed in the now 2-year process of creating the town's Master Plan that

Continued on A7

Record 1/4/13

Great Barrington Master Plan predicts big time future infrastructure costs

By John Sakata, Berkshire Eagle Staff Berkshire Eagle

Posted:

BerkshireEagle.com

GREAT BARRINGTON -- In the next 20 years, the town's shrinking and aging population will be on the hook for "tens of millions of dollars" in renovation costs, a potential threat to the current quality of living residents have come to expect, according to the town's recently drafted Master Plan.

Aging infrastructure will need to be renovated, including Monument Mountain Regional High School, the wastewater treatment plant, and the town-owned bridge on Bridge Street. In addition, the evolving job landscape no longer allows the town to rely on a tax base previously supported by high-paying manufacturing jobs. Climate change portends unpredictable additional challenges, the report says.

"Keeping the quality of life and services while being able to pay for these major capital costs will be a major challenge," said Town Planner Chris Rembold, who worked with the 15-person Master Plan Committee to produce the report.

Following three years of discussion, the Master Plan Committee has developed an 87-page report updating the town's previous Master Plan, last updated in 1997. Once approved, the document will serve as a road map outlining policy priorities and short-and-long-term goals.

The plan will be submitted to the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board during a joint meeting Sept. 26.

The Master Plan, which was developed with members of town boards and commissions, includes sections on land and economic development, housing, agriculture, historic and cultural resources and other topics related to long-term development.

Recurring priorities in the report include the need to accommodate an aging and shrinking demographic, the need for large-scale infrastructure repairs, the need for a high-paying job base and concerns about how climate change might impact life. The town has also set environment-friendly policies that include development of renewable energy and making town operations self-sufficient of electricity by 2025.

According to the plan, Great Barrington is a smaller, older and more diverse town compared to demographics from the 1980s. The town's population, which includes a growing Hispanic population of 7,104, has decreased by nearly 10 percent since 1990.

The town's seasonal population is 14 percent -- comparably less than the 30 percent to 50 percent in surrounding South County communities -- a potential benefit because some build expensive homes and contribute to the tax base while not using infrastructure and schools they support.

Great Barrington's population is aging, with nearly one-third of households housing residents over 65 years.

While there is an aging demographic, Great Barrington has fared better maintaining young adults ages 24 to 44 than other surrounding communities, according to the plan (though only one-quarter of homes have children under 18).

"That's the age when people are settling down and starting families and going to work," Rembold said.

The Master Plan identifies existing strengths that should be protected, including the town's quaint "country atmosphere and small-town setting."

This can be accomplished, for example, by focusing on infill and development of dilapidated buildings that include the old Housatonic school, Housatonic mills and Great Barrington Fairgrounds. The plan says the town should consider assisting that development with Community Preservation Act funding and facilitating development through the town's permit process.

In the years to come, new businesses can be cultivated if the town facilitates the rollout of a fiber-optic network to homes throughout the community, according to the report: "Fiber optic services must reach all the way to the home, where many of our independent artisans, consultants and professionals do their work. Improved wireless communications services is also a priority, for the whole town, not just the core along Route 7."

The plan emphasizes the importance of protecting open space, which can be dually accomplished by protecting and encouraging farm opportunities, enacting farm-friendly policies and promoting an agritourism industry. The farming industry can also be boosted by educating people about the town's Right to Farm bylaw and developing a commercial community kitchen.

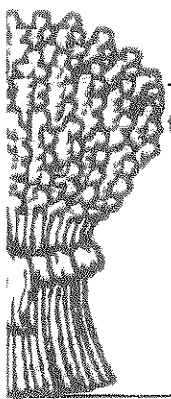
Citywide, affordable housing is a concern, with nearly half of homeowners and almost two-thirds of all renters in Great Barrington spending more than 30 percent of their household incomes on housing costs.

The 30-percent level is the generally accepted metric for determining affordable housing.

Recommendations include targeting blighted property to create new affordable housing, encouraging the development of affordable housing by third-party agencies and a property tax abatement program for property owners who rent units below the market rent value.

"It's this balancing act of what makes us strong, and development that makes sense," Rembold said about the plan.

In the next several weeks, there will be additional meetings hosted for solicitation and feedback on the Master Plan. Anyone interested is encouraged to call the town planner at 413-528-1619, ext. 7.



SHEFFIELD FAIR

The 13th annual fair will take place this weekend at the town park — **B3**



FOOTBALL '13

Check out the Record's indepth preview of Lee and Monument's upcoming season — **C1**



MARIOTT COMING

Vijay Mahida is planning to upgrade his motel to be part of the national chain — **C7**

BERKSHIRE RECORD

Great Barrington, Mass.

SEPTEMBER 6-12, 2013

75¢

Dollar General issue pits neighbor against neighbor in Sheffield



Adam Shanks

The lot of the proposed Dollar General in Sheffield remains vacant while the chain store and the town argue in Boston Land Court. Public opinion on the Dollar General has been difficult to gauge, and remains a highly controversial issue in the town.

It's become a case of dueling petitions and expensive lawsuits

By Adam Shanks

SHEFFIELD — After months of petitioning by those for and against a new Dollar General, public opinion on the matter remains unclear.

Part of the obscurity is due to the petitions themselves. One frequently referenced at town meetings, that its authors claim has more than 900 signatures, still has never been submitted to the Board of Selectman or the town, according to Town Administrator Rhonda LaBombard.

The Berkshire Record has obtained one page of the petition, circulated late last year, opposing a Dollar General in Sheffield.

Although only one page, it could call into question the relevance of petitions in the ongoing debate over the retail chain's proposal to move into town, and the subsequent litigation between it and the town.

A copy of the anti-Dollar General petition was said to have been mailed to the CEO of Dollar General, but several who have asked for a copy have not received one. The Record could not find a full copy of the petition.

In a search for the full copy of the petition, a representative for Dollar General could not be reached. Catherine Miller, a central opponent to the Dollar General, did not return a call by press time. Katherine McCormick, an attorney representing Primax Properties, the developer of the Dollar General, could not be reached.

In the page of the petition obtained by the Record — which was dropped off at Town Hall by accident by someone passing it around — are 15 different signatures from 12 different addresses.

Only four of the 15 signatures come from Sheffield

Continued on A5



David Scribner

The former Great Barrington firehouse on Castle Street. Merchants have criticized the terms of sale.

Firehouse sale's agreement called mutually satisfactory

By David Scribner

GREAT BARRINGTON — Thomas Borshoff, the Rochester, N.Y.-based educator and entrepreneur who has proposed converting the 114-year-old Castle Street firehouse into a vocational training and culinary center, is confident that the terms of the sales agreement being drafted in negotiations with the town will satisfy the concerns of merchants who have fretted over delivery

and service access to their Railroad Street businesses.

"Anything that is worthwhile takes a long time," he said about the 18 months it's taken to nearly finish the transaction. "But I want to be a good neighbor, and I think the solution we've come up with is creative and will accomplish my mission, too. I think I will be able to walk down the street with a smile on my face, knowing

Continued on A9

Lawyer for youth accused of rape: 'victim claims he tried to stop it'

By Adam Shanks

OTIS — The attorney representing Galileo Mondol, a 17-year-old junior at Somerville High School, one of three

"You could drive a truck through the hole that is reasonable doubt," Korman said.

According to District Attorney David Capeless' office, the charges occurred on Aug.

Headhunter contract mixup blamed for Bartha's leaving

By Julie Ruth

LENOX — Steve Bartha, Lenox's Town Manager-elect, abruptly broke off contract negotiations on Aug. 29 after the town's professional search firm mistakenly sent him a preliminary contract, telling him it was his formal contract.

Sources close to the hiring negotiations said that the mix-up confused Bartha, assistant town manager for Avon, Conn., who thought he'd reached agreement on final terms of the three-year contract.

But the contract he reviewed from Municipal Resources Inc. (MRI) was simply

a preliminary draft containing input of only one selectman, David Roche, not a final contract.

When the board met with Bartha at the Aug. 28 selectmen's meeting, they gave him a formal contract, which included the input of all selectmen.

While most of the language was identical on both contracts, including his \$107,500 first-year salary and medical benefits, Bartha discovered that the four weeks' vacation time he had negotiated, common for town managers, was now three weeks' vacation time, the standard policy for

Continued on A5

Barrington Master Plan deals with anticipated shortcomings

By David Scribner

GREAT BARRINGTON — What does a community do when it faces huge costs for infrastructure replacement and reconstruction, a stagnant economic base and a declining and aging population, while at the same time striving to maintain its services and quality of life?

To start with, it could do what Great Barrington has done: draft a master plan

to identify and address the challenges and guide policy decisions of both the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board.

"The difference between this master plan and the one adopted in 1997 is that this one isn't going to sit on a shelf," explained Town Planner Christopher Rembold, who guided a 10-member Master Plan Committee

Continued on A7

Main St. redo ready for bids

By David Scribner

GREAT BARRINGTON — The town is ready to receive bids for the reconstruction of Main Street, a project that will



Adam Shanks

Egremont Selectman Charles Flynn attempted to maintain order at a meeting last month.

In Egremont, 'point of order' demands punctuate meetings

By Adam Shanks

EGREMONT — Point of order. Point of order. Point of order.

Those who attend Egremont Board of Selectmen meetings are surely, by now, quite accustomed to that phrase.

For months, few meetings have gone by without a highly contentious atmosphere between the Board of Selectmen and its audience — usually resulting in calls of "point

of order" by both spectators and board members.

The center of the contention in town has, for months, been the board's placing of Police Chief Reena Bucknell on paid leave. Now, with a deal in place between Bucknell and the Board of Selectmen that sets in place the structure for her leaving the department, tensions remain high between the board and public.

Continued on A5

Buffis case widening

By Julie Ruth

LEE — The charges of extortion and money laundering against former Police Chief Joseph Buffis may be

District Attorney Steven Breslow characterized the Buffis investigation as "complex" with possibly thousands of pages of financial records and dozens of witnesses.

said Toomey. It had been more than a year since 17-year-old Toomey joined most of his friends and enlisted in the military. "At that time everyone was anxious to get into the service, because this was a real war that had to be fought," Toomey said, "not like some

lots. The first of two planes crashed on the ship, on April 11. "That plane was coming in while I was at lookout," said Nichols, whose job on the battleship was to maintain and shoot a 20-millimeter anti-aircraft machine gun. "I was about 70 ft. away from it."

surrender ceremony, Nichols said. "I didn't really think it was over. When we pulled into Tokyo Bay, I can remember looking on every side — they had guns aimed right at us." Toomey agreed. "We didn't know whether they were going to open up on us or not." World War II was 68 years

ago now, the way I read about the Civil War." Both he and Toomey returned to the Berkshires, where they worked, married, raised large families and stayed in touch with each other and another North Adams veteran on the Missouri

would like today's students to know about World War II, it's this: don't judge the people who live in the countries the U.S. fought against during WW II — or any war. "It's the politicians that start wars, not the people," said Nichols, who visited both

"I had a chance to go to Japan on business for five weeks in 1989," Nichols said, warmly recalled their conversations and a party they gave for him. "They were the nicest people, it's too bad people can't get together like that and be people."

Main Street redo ready for bids

Continued from A1
funded project through the maze of bureaucratic requirements, presented the Board of Selectmen Wednesday with a list of seven property owners who had not responded to repeated invitations to donate an easement on their sidewalks for the project.
The board signed eminent domain documents, with payments to property owners ranging from \$6 for temporary access during construction to \$4,968 for a permanent easement.
The value of the easements had been determined by an independent appraiser, Sokul said.
"This is not a taking

of property." Select Board Chairman Sean Stanton was at pains to explain. "This is just an easement. The property owners get to use their property as they always have."
And Selectman Deborah Phillips noted that there was an advantage to the property owners in granting the town an easement.
Currently, half the width of the sidewalk is owned by the building owner, and half by the town, but with the easement liability for the entire sidewalk will reside with the town.
"This taking for easements is absolutely essential," said Town Manager Jennifer Ta-

bakin. The DOT has guided us in how this should be done, and the outreach we've made to property owners has been extensive. This handful chose not to donate, but they still can, if they want to."
In all, the town had needed 144 easements from 48 property owners, and none of those landowners, including those who did not manage to respond, "stood up and said 'I don't want this.'"
"We need to move forward with this project now," Sokul told the board. "We've been working on these easements since February. The federal highway fiscal year closes on September 30, so the DOT wants to certify the right-of-way at least two weeks prior to that date."
We will send certified letters to the seven that did not work out, and hopefully they will decide to donate the easement."
The owners of the seven properties — and the reimbursement for either the temporary or permanent easement — are Massachusetts CVS Pharmacy, \$10; Courier Building Condominium Trust, \$407; Ried Realty, \$208; Peter Hill and Tara Cañero, \$12; Gerald Denmark (trustee of MJK Nominee Trust), \$6; Melvin Katsch 1992 Revocable Trust, \$2; Tom's Toys Building LLC,

Barrington Master Plan deals with anticipated shortcomings

Continued from A1
during its 3-year process to research data and compile public input.
"The committee did a terrific job of writing it," he said. "The committee was made of volunteers from all walks of life and ages, and from different parts of town. We lucked out."
He added that the once the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board approve the plan, "we can tie our permits to this, and develop a 5-year capital strategy consistent with the master plan. That's huge, and it gives me hope."
He pointed out that the previous Master Plan was written in response to periods of growth.
"There had been a pretty good pace of development, so the plan focused on coordinating regulatory and investment policies into or to get all strategies aligned," he said. "The plan predicted a population growth to 9,000, so there were tremendous growth pressures and it was written to accommodate that growth."
Instead, he noted, the town experienced a decline in population — it now stands at 7,104, according to the 2010

census — down 10 percent from 1990 and roughly the same as it was 60 years ago, and not much greater than a century ago.
To make matters worse, as the population decreased, the manufacturing base withered, resulting in clusters of empty mill buildings and a service-based economy that did not provide well-paying jobs.
In his judgment, the future economic health of the town depends on innovation, for which Great Barrington has been traditionally renowned, and two key elements of that environment will be the high capacity broadband communications network and a passenger rail service to New York Metropolitan Area.
"We need to create an environment where serendipity happens, where ideas are born," he said. "And for that we need a clean environment, a safe community, excellent schools, connectivity with the world, a sense of community, and people with ideas. Great Barrington is known for what its residents have invented. It's old-fashioned, but it's so important."
Still, the challenges for the town are formidable.
"As the population has

declined, there has also been a polarization of income levels," Rembold observed. "So we need good community services for a population diverse in age and income."
At the same time, there are "staggeringly big, costly infrastructure projects we have to do, in the many millions of dollars, for bridges, roads, and water and sewer lines."
Future economic growth, he said, will depend on "the redevelopment of existing infrastructure near the river in our downtowns, and having more people live downtown. The more we do that, the less we will have to spend on new infrastructure. We need to create more walkable opportunities."
At the same time, he said, "the climate has changed in more ways than one, altering who we are and what we can afford."
Much of the land in Great Barrington is not taxable.
"With a limited tax base, we need properties to spin off more income," he said. "We need to find a balance. You could call it economic gardening, rather than calling it development. Ten firms employing five people are much more resilient than one with 50. And as smaller companies, locally based, they are much more likely to contribute to the community because they want to be here. A perfect example is Bob Montgomery and Jane Iredale. And Caligari's and Foster's and Carr's. We need partnerships. The kind we have when we create Riverwalk and GB Trails and Greenways. These local businesses and partnerships get something incredible done, and make long-term stewardship possible. That's what makes GB tick now."
And he added: "I'm very optimistic about towns the size of Great Barrington."

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Say Cheese!
WKS-623-C1
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Food and Wine Made Fun
WKS-474-C1
Thurs, 12/5 • 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM • \$40

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Otis Cultural Council seeking applications for grants for 2014

OTIS—The Otis Cultural Council is now accepting applications for grants for the 2013-2014 funding cycle. These grants are funded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council to enable communities the opportunity to hire artists of all genre to submit proposals for performances and/or workshops which enhance the community.

Applications for grants are available online at www.mass-culture.org/lec_public.aspx and at the Otis Town Hall. They can also be obtained on the Otis website, www.townofotisma.com/culturalcouncil, and must be mailed to the Otis Cultural Council, Otis Town Hall, Box 237, Otis, MA 01253.

MASTER PLAN

“OFFICE HOURS”

Great Barrington Town Planner Chris Rembold will be at Mason Library on
Thursday September 12 and September 19, from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM.

Stop by during that time and chat with Chris
about the recently released Master Plan.

A copy of the Master Plan is at the library, and online at www.townofgb.org.



MASTER PLAN

“OFFICE HOURS”

Great Barrington Town Planner Chris Rembold will be at Ramsdell Library on
Wednesday September 11 and September 18, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

Stop by during that time and chat with Chris
about the recently released Master Plan.

A copy of the Master Plan is at the library, and online at www.townofgb.org.



Great Barrington master plan to be reviewed tonight

By John Sakata, Berkshire Eagle Staff Berkshire Eagle

Posted:

BerkshireEagle.com

GREAT BARRINGTON -- Following three years of discussion, the town's master plan will likely receive a final review tonight.

The Planning Board and Board of Selectmen will discuss the 87-page plan -- a blueprint for development over the next decade -- at 7 p.m. during a special joint meeting at Town Hall. The plan hasn't been updated since 1997.

The document, which was developed with members of town boards and commissions, includes sections on land and economic development, housing, agriculture, historic and cultural resources and other topics related to long-term development.

"We've had three years of developing the master plan and receiving public participation and now we are asking for approval," Town Planner Chris Rembold said.

The Planning Board will be asked to vote on and accept the plan. The Board of Selectmen will be presented the report for reference and to make recommendations on funding the projects.

The document outlines the Master Plan Committee's recommendations for addressing long-term challenges.

This includes "tens of millions of dollars" in infrastructure repairs forecasted for the next two decades. Town properties in need of repair include Monument Mountain Regional High School, the wastewater treatment plant and the Bridge Street bridge. Other priorities identified in the report include accommodating the needs of an aging and declining population, the need for a high-paying job base and climate change concerns.

The plan also identifies existing strengths that should be protected, including the town's "country atmosphere and small-town setting."

The report states this can be accomplished by promoting more farming; focusing on infill development -- creating new development on vacant or undeveloped land -- within Great Barrington and Housatonic; and developing dilapidated buildings that include the old Housatonic school, Housatonic mills and Great Barrington Fairgrounds.

The plan highlights other bold suggestions: The town is expected to become self-sufficient of electricity by 2025. The town should support the state-led effort to build out fiber-optic lines across the county, which could spur online entrepreneurship. Developing the area surrounding the Housatonic River is another one of many suggestions for promoting a vibrant town.

"[The master plan] is a way to guide policy and investment decisions so we can make wise use of limited resources," Rembold said.

A copy of the full document is available on the town website at www.townofgb.org/

GREAT BARRINGTON PLANNING BOARD

GREAT BARRINGTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2013, 7:00 PM
TOWN HALL
334 MAIN STREET, GREAT BARRINGTON
LARGE MEETING ROOM

MASTER PLAN SPECIAL MEETING

AGENDA

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. INTRODUCTION BY PLANNING BOARD CHAIRMAN**
- 3. PRESENTATION OF MASTER PLAN (Discussion)**
 - A. Process
 - B. Contents
 - C. Key Issues
 - D. Vision
 - E. Core Initiatives
 - F. Implementation
 - G. Keeping Current
- 4. QUESTIONS FROM THE BOARDS (Discussion)**
- 5. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Discussion)**
- 6. VOTE ON MASTER PLAN**
 - A. Board of Selectmen Vote
 - B. Planning Board Vote
- 7. SET DATE FOR ANNUAL REVIEW MEETING**
- 8. ADJOURN**

PLANNING BOARD

DATE: October 10, 2013

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: Large Meeting Room, Town Hall

FOR: Joint Meeting Planning Board/Board of Selectmen

PRESENT: Jonathan Hankin, Chairman; Suzanne Fowle; Jack Musgrove; Brandee Nelson
Ethan Culleton via Phone
Malcolm Fick, Associate member
Chris Rembold, Town Planner

BOARD OF SELECTMEN: Sean Stanton, Chairman; Deb Phillips; Andrew Blechman;
Daniel Bailly
Jennifer Tabakin, Town Manager

ALSO PRESENT: From the Master Plan Committee
Michele Gilligan
Michael Wise

Mr. Hankin called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M. Mr. Hankin said this is a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen for their endorsement of the Master Plan and the Planning Board's approval of the plan. He said there is a majority of the Planning Board present and Mr. Culleton will be attending and voting via telephone.

Mr. Hankin read an introductory statement giving an overview of the Master Plan process.

Mr. Rembold thanked both the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen for attending. He also thanked former Planning Board chairman Donald Goranson for his support and attendance. He went through a power point presentation of the Master Plan process and an overview of the final plan. Mr. Rembold thanked both Ms. Gilligan and Mr. Wise and all of the Master Plan committee for their efforts and dedication.

Ms. Gilligan and Mr. Wise contributed to the presentation also assisted by power point.

At the conclusion of the presentation Mr. Hankin asked if there were any comments from the audience or Board members. David Magadini spoke for approximately 20 minutes about his interpretation of the plan and what it does not address.

There were no other comments.

Ms. Phillips made a motion for the Board of Selectmen to endorse the Master Plan, Mr. Bailly seconded, all in favor.

Ms. Fowle made a motion to approve the Master Plan, Mr. Musgrove seconded. Mr. Hankin called for a roll call vote:

Ms. Fowle aye

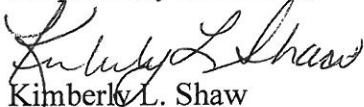
Mr. Musgrove aye

Ms. Nelson aye
Mr. Culleton aye
Mr. Hankin aye
All in favor.

Mr. Rembold said there will be an annual review of the plan and suggested that review be part of the second Thursday in October every year at the regular Planning Board meeting, everyone agreed.

Without objection, Mr. Hankin adjourned the meeting at 7:51 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,


Kimberly L. Shaw
Planning Board Secretary

Reference Material:

Community Master Plan power point presentation dated October 10, 2013
Master Plan final version

Great Barrington master plan revisions approved

By John Sakata, Berkshire Eagle Staff Berkshire Eagle

Posted:

BerkshireEagle.com

GREAT BARRINGTON -- A revised vision for the future of Great Barrington is on the books.

Town officials have adopted a new set of community goals that address challenges including an aging infrastructure and the need for higher paying jobs.

The Select Board and Planning Board last week signed off on the goals laid out in an 87-page revision to the town's 1997 master plan.

"If you're receiving a special permit it ought to further a goal or vision of the master plan," town Planner Chris Rembold said during the meeting. "If you're seeking a capital project it ought to be here in some way, shape or form. Let's not spend money we don't have on something as a community we don't want."

The revised document was developed over three years by the Master Plan Committee in consultation with members of town boards and commissions. It includes sections on land and economic development, housing, agriculture, historic and cultural resources and other topics related to long-term development.

Challenges identified include tens of millions of dollars in infrastructure repairs expected to be needed in the next two decades. Town properties in need of repair include Monument Mountain Regional High School, the wastewater treatment plan and the Bridge Street bridge. Other priorities identified in the report include accommodating the needs of an aging and declining population, the need for a high-paying job base and climate change concerns.

The document outlines immediate policy recommendations that can be enacted to address these challenges.

The Master Plan Committee urged town officials to encourage mixed-use zoning and infill development to protect the town's small-town setting and attractive natural surroundings.

Other recommendations include rezoning in Housatonic. According to the master plan, the village zoning was instituted in 1960 and does not conform with current needs. The zoning should encourage mixed use and shared parking without requiring special permitting to encourage infill.

The policy recommendations were encouraged because they could be enacted without town meeting approval.

In the next year to five years, the town is encouraged to fix the old Housatonic school for use, focus on energy conservation and prepare to allocate resources for repairing the Bridge Street bridge.

In the next decade, "vision projects" that will require sustained and significant investment includes repairing the Great Barrington Fairgrounds and Housatonic mills.

Board of Selectman Chairman Sean Stanton said the town can immediately use the special permit process to achieve goals outlined in the master plan.