

Great Barrington

Open Space and Recreation Plan



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May 2013

An Update of the 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Acknowledgements:

The Great Barrington Master Plan Committee thanks the following for assisting in development of this Open Space and Recreation Plan update:

Appalachian Mountain Club
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Bard College at Simon's Rock
Berkshire Hills Regional School District
Berkshire Grown
Berkshire Natural Resources Council
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Community Development Corporation
Fairview Hospital
Great Barrington Agricultural Commission
Great Barrington Board of Selectmen
Great Barrington Conservation Commission
Great Barrington Council on Aging
Great Barrington Fire District
Great Barrington Historical Commission
Great Barrington Land Conservancy
Great Barrington Parks and Recreation Commission
Great Barrington Planning Board
Great Barrington Trails and Greenways
Housatonic River Walk
Housatonic Water Works
Lake Mansfield Alliance
Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
Multicultural BRIDGE
National Parks Service
Ski Butternut
Trustees of Reservations
Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area

A special thank you is extended to Mark Maloy, GIS Manager at the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, for his work developing the maps throughout this plan.

Cover photos: *Clockwise from top left:* Housatonic school park; Housatonic River Walk in downtown; Squaw Peak on Monument Mountain; Benedict Pond in Beartown State Forest; Downtown; Lake Mansfield; McAllister Wildlife Refuge; East Rock and First Congregational Church steeple.

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Section One: Plan Summary

Overview and Purpose

This Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is the result of a concerted effort to inventory Great Barrington's land assets and recreational opportunities, and it establishes a plan to meet future recreation and conservation needs and our community's vision.

This OSRP was written at the same time as and in concert with the 2013 Great Barrington Master Plan. Thus the public participation, surveys, data gathering, vision and goals of the Master Plan and the OSRP are integrated. The Master Plan Committee included specific representatives from key town boards and commissions, including the Planning Board, Parks Commission, and Conservation Commission, and included a wide range of stakeholders and the general public in this comprehensive planning process. In fact, the specific chapter of the Master Plan that deals with natural resources, open space, and recreation, is simply a slimmed-down, summarized version of this full-scale OSRP that has been developed to meet state requirements and local planning needs.

This OSRP is an update of the OSRP first published in 2006 and revised in 2007. Thus, it does not necessarily contain the exhaustive overview of the town's history, geology, or other information that has not changed. It does, however, update key information on demographics, land use, and community needs and vision.

This document contains information valuable to any manager of land in Great Barrington, whether they are private homeowners, nonprofit land trusts, farmers, or government officials. Section Two through Four broadly describe the town's resources, such as prime agricultural soils, natural habitat lands, water supplies, historic and scenic resources. Section Five inventories the town's protected lands. Section Six reports the concerns and priorities expressed by the participants in the open space planning process. Sections Seven through Nine consolidate the inventories, including the ADA Self-Evaluation, and concludes with an Open Space and Recreation Action Plan designed to meet the goals and objectives of a healthy and vibrant environment.

Vision and Goals

When residents imagine the future of Great Barrington, many see thriving historic downtown set among working farms and framed by the forested hills of the Berkshires. The rivers are clean, the views are beautiful, the towns are safe for pedestrians and bicycles, and there are enough recreation and open space lands easily accessible from the town's developed centers. The following vision statement was developed as part of the consolidated Master Plan and OSRP planning process.

Our Vision

The celebrations of Great Barrington's 250th Anniversary reminded us that our Town today is the product of our natural assets and the dedication of our people. From the settlers, pioneers, and entrepreneurs of past generations we have inherited a wonderful place to live, work, and visit. Our rich soils, abundant water resources, and stunning landscapes supported agriculture and industry for generations, and now they also support our Town's economy through tourism and recreation. Great Barrington is blessed to be the commercial hub for the surrounding populations of towns in three states. It has also benefited enormously from a relatively recent trend toward diversity, which must be savored and encouraged.

Our small town combines rural landscapes with urban infrastructure. The balance between these two features, a legacy of our Town's agricultural origins and its industrialized history, serves our civic, cultural, economic, and social needs. Great Barrington thrives because of this legacy, and maintaining this balance will be the foundation of our Town's tomorrow.

Great Barrington will be both rural and urban. It will embrace and support people of many ages, incomes and ethnicities. Our landscapes, history, walkable neighborhoods, and vibrant village centers will remain the foundations for the prosperity of future generations.

Summary of Open Space and Recreation Goals

- Goal OSR 1: Maintain existing town-owned parks, open space and recreational resources at least at today's level.
- Goal OSR 2: Make information about existing parks, open space and recreational resources widely available.
- Goal OSR 3: Our parks, open space and recreational area will serve the changing needs of our community.
- Goal OSR 4: Make our parks, open space and recreation areas thriving facets of our economy.
- Goal OSR 5: Provide linkage between our parks, open space, and recreation resources as well as to community facilities, neighborhoods, and village centers.
- Goal OSR 6: Create new open space and recreational resources by partnering with the private sector.
- Goal OSR 7: Protect, maintain, and care for street trees.
- Goal OSR 8: Embrace the Housatonic River.
- Goal OSR 9: Protect Biodiversity, Habitat, and Natural Resources.

Section Two: Introduction

Purpose

This document is a renewal and update of the 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), which in turn draws on preceding plans including the 1998 OSRP. These plans are updated regularly, as recommended by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), in order to keep up with changes in the town and to adjust inventories and recommendations accordingly. An updated plan qualifies the town to apply for grants from the EOEA for the purpose of improving the town's open space and recreation lands.

Since the 2007 OSRP was completed, several important developments have taken place in the management of Great Barrington's land resources, including the following achievements. Many of these are the direct results of the planning efforts and goals of previous open space and master plans.

- The Scenic Mountains Act is adopted in Great Barrington in 2006, with accompanying regulations and map were adopted in 2007.
- Project Sprout, an organic garden, is established at Monument Mountain Regional High School in 2007. The gardens continue to grow produce used at the schools, food banks, and local markets.
- The Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force is established. A comprehensive Lake Mansfield Improvement plan is developed to assess conservation and recreational priorities. A significant grant is received and used to address nonpoint source pollution concerns.
- The Lake Mansfield Alliance, GB Trails and Greenways, and the Task Force cooperate with the State and the National Park Service Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area to development an accessible trail system in Lake Mansfield Forest.
- Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC) purchases 125+ acres of scenic land along the Stockbridge Road corridor, connecting Fountain Pond State Park with Berkshire South Community Center via hiking trail, and also preserving flood plains and land along the Housatonic River.
- BNRC also helps conserve 300+ acres of habitat and farmland in Monument Valley and 40+ acres in the Williams River Valley.
- Great Barrington Trails & Greenways is born as a project of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy (GBLC) to bring together conservation, heritage, and recreation groups. Accomplishments include significant trail connections, trail stewardship, public-private partnerships, and promotion of conservation, heritage, and recreational resources.
- A Town Planner is hired in 2009 to work with planning and development boards, coordinate long term planning among town boards and commissions and regional entities, promote economic development, and update the OSRP and the Master Plan.
- An Open Space Residential Development zoning bylaw is adopted by Town Meeting in 2009; the bylaws encourage clustering of residences and the permanent preservation of contiguous open space, as an alternative to conventional subdivision development.
- Great Barrington and other towns sign the Berkshire County joint bike path planning resolution to complete a continuous bike path stretching the length of Berkshire County. Vision maps and potential local route maps are developed.
- The Great Barrington Housatonic River Walk is designated a National Recreation Trail in 2009.
- Great Barrington is designated an Appalachian Trail Community.
- Great Barrington Agricultural Commission begins working with the Glynwood Center and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission on a plan to Keep Berkshires Farming. Its strategies will be incorporated into the 2013 Great Barrington Master Plan.

- Neenah Paper acquires Rising Mill property on Park Street and Division Street, initiating cleanup and remediation of the site, stabilization of the riverbank. Neenah will conserve more than 60 acres of habitat and floodplain, including Housatonic riverfront.
- The Housatonic Mill Revitalization Overlay District zoning bylaw is passed in 2011; improving public access to the Housatonic River is one of the purposes of the bylaw.
- The Community Preservation Act (CPA) was adopted in 2012, to raise local funds for open space and recreation, historic preservation, and affordable housing. A Community Preservation Committee was established in 2013 and funds will be collected beginning in Fiscal Year 2014.
- The Great Barrington Fairgrounds is closed and large scale development is considered, though never realized. In 2012 a community-based organization purchases the property for a project to include conservation, open space, recreation, and agriculture.

This OSRP also responds to four key issues in Great Barrington’s future. These issues, identified in the public participation process and addressed in each chapter of the 2013 Master Plan, are summarized below.

ON THE HORIZON KEY ISSUES IN OUR TOWN’S FUTURE		
ISSUE	WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT COULD MEAN
AGING INFRASTRUCTURE	Equipment, roads, school buildings, water lines, and sewer pipes are aging. Some systems are nearing the end of their useful life, and some things like roads and sidewalks are no match for winter weather. 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.
CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS	Our population is simultaneously shrinking and aging. From a peak of 7,725 in 1990, our town declined to about 7,100 people in 2010. Our median age is 48, up 16% from 2000. The percentage of residents older than 45 is growing. The percentage of people ages 20-44 is shrinking, though at a slower rate in Great Barrington than elsewhere. Our population is becoming more ethnically diverse as well.	Shifting demographics will influence demand for economic, housing, recreation, 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.
ECONOMIC TRANSITION	The regional economy has pockets of excellent professional, health care, and educational jobs, but we are now firmly a tourist-oriented service sector economy. National economic trends and congressional budget battles result in fewer funds for state and local governments to meet increasing demands.	New opportunities such as local agriculture are emerging. Local initiatives and public-private partnerships will become more important than ever to achieve the vision and goals of the Master Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan.
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 depend on predictable weather and precipitation. Severe storms, floods and droughts are more likely in warmer world.	Food prices and gas prices may become more volatile. Leaf-peeping tourists may have to head further north, bypassing our town. Local agriculture could benefit from longer growing seasons, and could become an important magnet for tourists.

Planning Process and Public Participation

A great deal of outreach was conducted to develop this OSRP and the Master Plan. As discussed previously, the town made a conscious decision to write the Master Plan and OSRP update simultaneously. Thus public

outreach and participation for the Master Plan and OSRP were also integrated. Included here is a brief discussion about the general Master Plan outreach and the OSRP-specific outreach.

Master Plan Outreach

Master Plan Committee

The Master Plan effort began in the summer of 2010 when the Great Barrington Planning Board established a 15-member Master Plan Committee and charged it with creating an updated community master plan to be developed through a comprehensive and inclusive public participation process. The committee membership was members of seven key town boards and commissions who acted as liaisons to those bodies, and five members of the general public. The members were:

- three members of the Planning Board;
- two members of the Board of Selectmen;
- one member of the Agricultural Commission;
- one members of the Conservation Commission;
- one member of the Council on Aging;
- one member of the Historical Commission;
- one member of the Parks Commission;
- five citizens at large

It turned out that a variety of community viewpoints were well represented by the Master Plan Committee members who were eventually appointed. The members represented a wide array of ages: some were young parents, some middle age, and some retirees. Some members were born and raised in town, some were long-time residents, and some were more recent transplants. Members represented a variety of professional experience and volunteerism. And, there were members from most neighborhoods in Great Barrington, from village centers to rural areas.

The Master Plan Committee developed outreach goals and strategies and, throughout the process, spoke with people representing the spectrum of Great Barrington's population and community groups. Master Plan Committee members contacted and interviewed stakeholders ranging from downtown businesses, to civic groups, to high school students, the health community, and conservation and recreation organizations. Copies of newspaper articles and outreach materials are included in the Appendix of this OSRP.

The Master Plan Committee began meeting in November 2010 and met monthly through June 2013. Every meeting was a properly posted public meeting, held in an accessible location, and open to the public. Meeting minutes were kept up to date and posted on the town's master plan webpage. Slide presentations, workshop results, and draft documents were all posted on the webpage as well. A copy of the charge of duties is attached.

Public Forum 1

After a substantial outreach effort, a Town-wide public forum was held in July 2011. This was an opportunity for the public to craft the vision and goals of the plan. More than 70 people participated. Each table topic areas ranging from open space and recreation to housing and transportation. Each table then reported its priorities back to the group, and the results were summarized. A copy of outreach materials is attached.

Neighborhood Meetings and Surveys

The Committee realized that not everyone could, or would, attend a large public forum. So in the late summer and fall of 2011, members of the Master Plan Committee hosted workshops in a neutral location in each neighborhood. A total of 11 workshops were held. Committee members used a five-point survey form for this work. These surveys were used in two ways. First, they helped kick-start conversations at the neighborhood meetings and at meetings with other groups. In those cases they were conversation starters, intended to get people talking about our town and to identify what improvements they felt were needed. Second, the surveys

could be completed anonymously and returned to any town staff. At least 100 completed surveys were received. A copy of the neighborhood workshop map and the survey questionnaire is included in the Appendix.

All workshops were well advertised in the newspaper, on the town website, through phone calls to residents in target neighborhoods (using the town's reverse 911 service), and with flyers delivered door-to-door by volunteers. Some workshops attracted over 20 participants, many of which were new to the planning process. Between the workshops and the first public forum, over 250 people participated directly in the process. Summary of Neighborhood Meeting and July Public Forum Results in Appendix

Seniors and Youth

Special consideration was given to reaching our growing senior citizen population and youth groups. For example, the five-point survey was used to conduct in-person surveys at the Senior Center. Held during a popular lunch hour, Master Plan volunteers held over 40 focused conversations with Great Barrington seniors. Also, a forum was held at the high school during an activity period (common study hall) and students were able to share ideas, thoughts, and vision for the community.

Environmental Justice

Recognizing the town's changing demographics, there was a special effort to reach minority residents and those residents who were not proficient in English¹. Working with local nonprofit organization Multicultural BRIDGE, the five-point survey was translated into Spanish and distributed to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. A member of the Master Plan Committee attended an ESL meeting to receive and discuss the responses with participants. There were 20 responses to this effort. A copy of the bilingual survey is included in the Appendix.

Public Forum 2

With a year's worth of public input processed, the Master Plan Committee developed a draft Vision and draft Goals for each component of the Master Plan. At a second public forum, held in June 2012, these draft Vision and Goals were presented for public comment. The forum was well advertised using the successful outreach strategy of the first forum.

Following the forum, the Master Plan Committee revised the draft Vision and Goals and set to work writing the chapters of the Master Plan. Once each chapter was drafted, the Committee reviewed and revised the draft, sharing it with the public, asking for comments, and taking more critical input from key stakeholders.

Public Forum 3 and Master Plan Adoption

At a third public forum, in June 2013, the final draft Master Plan was shared with the public. It had been on public review for several weeks, in the libraries, senior center, and on the website. With final round of comments integrated, the Master Plan Committee presented the final draft Master Plan to a joint meeting of the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen. The Planning Board, in accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 41, Section 81D, adopted the Master Plan. The Board of Selectmen formally endorsed the plan as well, and the two Boards committed to implementation the plan.

OSRP Outreach

In addition the outreach for the Master Plan, which included the topic of open space and recreation, there was also public outreach specific to the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

¹ Great Barrington exceeds two of the four environmental justice thresholds defined by the state: Greater than 10% minority population (GB is 11%), and greater than 3% of the population who speak English less than very well (GB is 6%). The other two thresholds are Greater than 10% of families below the poverty line and greater than 15% of adults with less than a high school education (GB is 8.5% and 7.2%, respectively).

At the beginning of the process in November 2011, the Town Planner and Conservation Agent briefed the **Parks Commission** and the **Conservation Commission** about the OSRP update process and gathered input about which topics were priorities to update. These priorities included park maintenance and promotion, recreational opportunities for a changing population, especially for seniors, the need for protection of lowlands, wetlands, and natural habitats, and the desire to better connect open spaces and parks with sidewalks and trails.

Input from open space and recreation groups was solicited. The Town Planner met with the **Great Barrington Trails and Greenways** group to discuss the OSRP. This was a key constituency since the organization is a collaboration of trail, conservation, and community health groups, including representatives from land conservancies, youth group trail stewards, and state and local agencies. The representatives were asked about the missions of their various organizations, their failures and successes, their future goals, and what resources would be necessary to achieve those future goals.

An **OSRP Public Forum** was held on April 11, 2012 to discuss the OSRP update. This OSRP forum was an information collecting session. The meeting was advertised on the town website, on the Planning Department blog, on local radio, and in the Town libraries, and a story was written in the local newspaper. It was held in an accessible location. The twenty-five people at the meeting discussed open space and recreation strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. These comments are summarized below.

<i>Summary of OSRP Forum #1</i>	
<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenery and small town atmosphere • History and heritage • Existing trails and paths • Variety of habitat • Locally grown foods • Town-owned open spaces like Lake Mansfield • East Mountain Reservoir • Monument Mountain • Vistas including farmland, McAllister, East Rock, Monument Mountain • Appalachian Trail 	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unprotected town-owned land and parks • Too few playgrounds • Unprotected lowlands • Unprotected agricultural land • Unconnected protected land • Pollution of Housatonic River • Lack of knowledge and promotion of open space and recreation areas • Poor sidewalks, lack of walkability, speeding traffic
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housatonic River vista at Senior Center • More trails (especially Greenway Trail along the River) • Fairgrounds agricultural/open space restoration • Future Housatonic River access points • Youth interaction and stewardship of open space • Collaboration with active open space organizations • Abandoned rail line trail in Housatonic could be a trail • Regional bike planning • Passenger railroad to connect to New York City • Trail connection with high school and Fountain Pond • Access to East Mountain Reservoir someday • Local food industry • Community Preservation Act envisioned 	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear protection to agricultural land and from solar energy developments • Over-development or unconscious development • Patterns of sprawl • PCB contamination of Housatonic River • Funding is drying up because of economic recession • Climate change impacts

Feedback from all of the above OSRP outreach was then integrated into the **draft OSRP**.

OSRP-specific results from Master Plan outreach (including the five-question survey, the neighborhood meeting results, the senior citizen and youth focus groups and surveys; and the outreach to Environmental Justice populations via ESL classes) was also integrated into the draft OSRP at this stage.

The draft OSRP was made available in the fall of 2012, and **posted for public review** in the libraries and on the town website. The **draft was publicized** in the newspaper and on the local radio station.

The draft was commented on by the Master Plan Committee at an October 2012 meeting dedicated to the open space and recreation draft. In December, the Town Planner met again with Great Barrington Trails and Greenways to receive input about the first draft OSRP. The Town Planner also met with Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation staff, in January 2013, to review the draft OSRP. Additionally, both the Parks Commission and Conservation Commission were briefed about the draft and were asked for their comments. The Commissions provided their comments at subsequent meetings in early 2013. All of this input proved invaluable as more data was gathered, information was corrected, maps were refined, and potential partnerships identified.

A second **OSRP public forum** was held on May 2, 2013 to review the final draft OSRP. The meeting was advertised on the town website, on the Planning Department blog, on local radio, and in the Town libraries, and a story was written in the local newspaper. It was held in an accessible location. A summary of comments is included below.

Groups and program representatives consulted for the OSRP:

Appalachian Mountain Club
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Bard College at Simon's Rock
Berkshire Hills Regional School District
Berkshire Grown
Berkshire Natural Resources Council
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Community Development Corporation
Fairview Hospital
Great Barrington Agricultural Commission
Great Barrington Board of Selectmen
Great Barrington Conservation Commission
Great Barrington Council on Aging
Great Barrington Fire District
Great Barrington Historical Commission
Great Barrington Land Conservancy
Great Barrington Parks and Recreation Commission
Great Barrington Planning Board
Great Barrington Trails and Greenways
Housatonic River Walk
Housatonic Water Works
Lake Mansfield Alliance
Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
Multicultural BRIDGE / English as a Second Language
National Parks Service
Ski Butternut
Trustees of Reservations
Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area

Section Three: Community Setting

Regional Context

There are several regional trends and issues that have occurred in Great Barrington's regional context since the last OSRP was written. Some persistent issues are in need of an update; other issues are new to the region. These are discussed below.

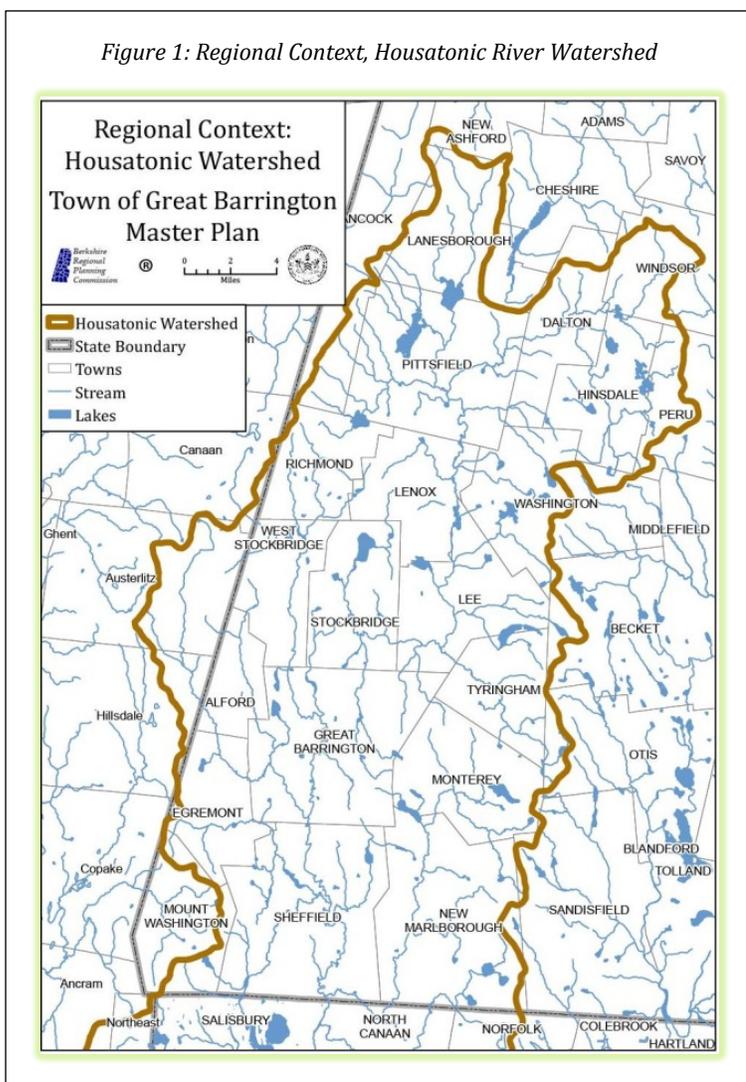
Housatonic River Cleanup

The entirety of the Town of Great Barrington lies within the Housatonic River watershed (see Figure 1). 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.

Figure 1: Regional Context, Housatonic River Watershed



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 2), 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.

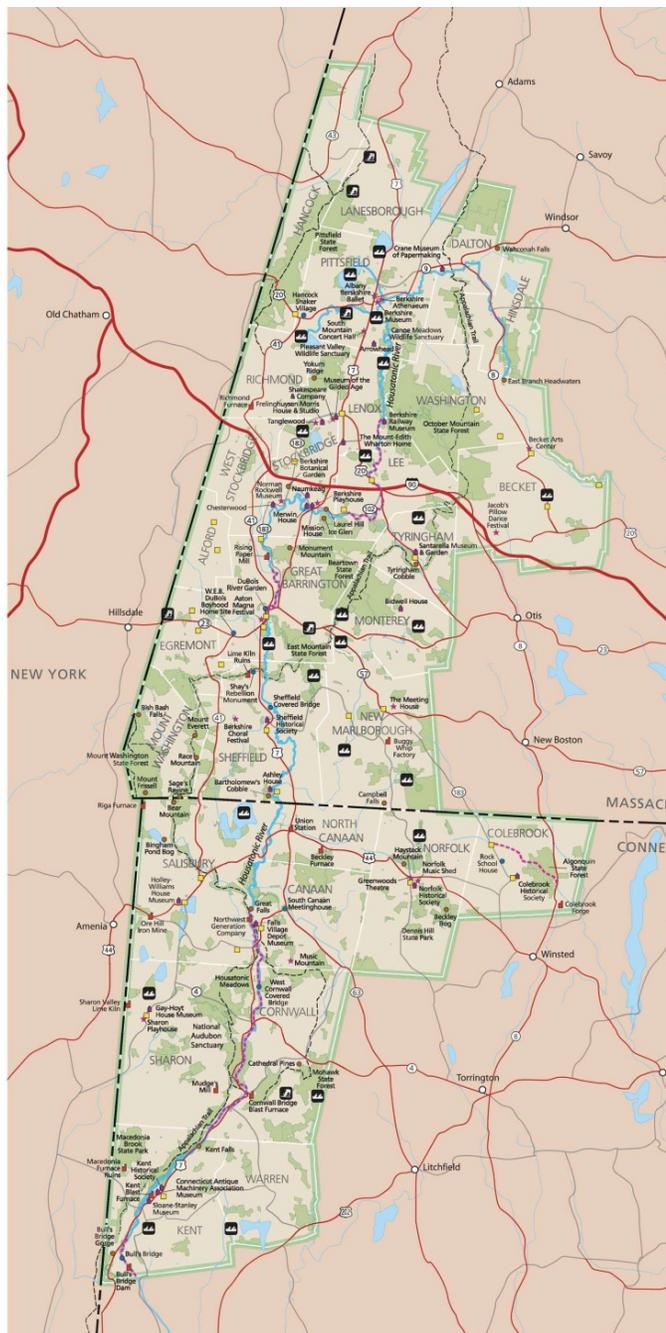
Other Regional Initiatives

Three other initiatives through BRPC also deserve mention in this update. 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 this OSRP update have thus been

Figure 2: Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area



coordinated every step of the way, and the data and goals in this OSRP update are reflective of that cooperation.

History of the Community

There are no changes to this section since the 2007 OSRP. Please refer to either the 2007 OSRP or the 2013 Master Plan for more information.

Population and Demographic Characteristics

Great Barrington’s population has decreased since the 2007 OSRP. It has also grown older and more ethnically diverse. This section summarizes key demographic characteristics.

Population

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). Recently, 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 for the decade of 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.

The previous Master Plan published in 1997 projected that Great Barrington’s population would grow steadily to around 8,000 people by 2020. The 2007 OSRP projected that Great Barrington’s population would be 8,400 by 2020. Instead, trends computed by the Census show the town’s population *declining* to approximately 6,900 by the year 2020.

Table 1 compares Great Barrington’s population growth since 1800 to the population of southern Berkshire, the County as a whole, and the State. Additional demographic information can be found in the Master Plan.

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

Year	Great Barrington		South County		Berkshire County		Massachusetts	
	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%

Source: US Census

Because population is declining, it is not likely that additional recreational facilities will need to be built. On the other hand, this plan examines where recreational facilities are located, how they are accessed, and what amenities or activities are available, and sets goals for addressing these issues.

Aging

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. Additional information about aging trends is included the Master Plan.

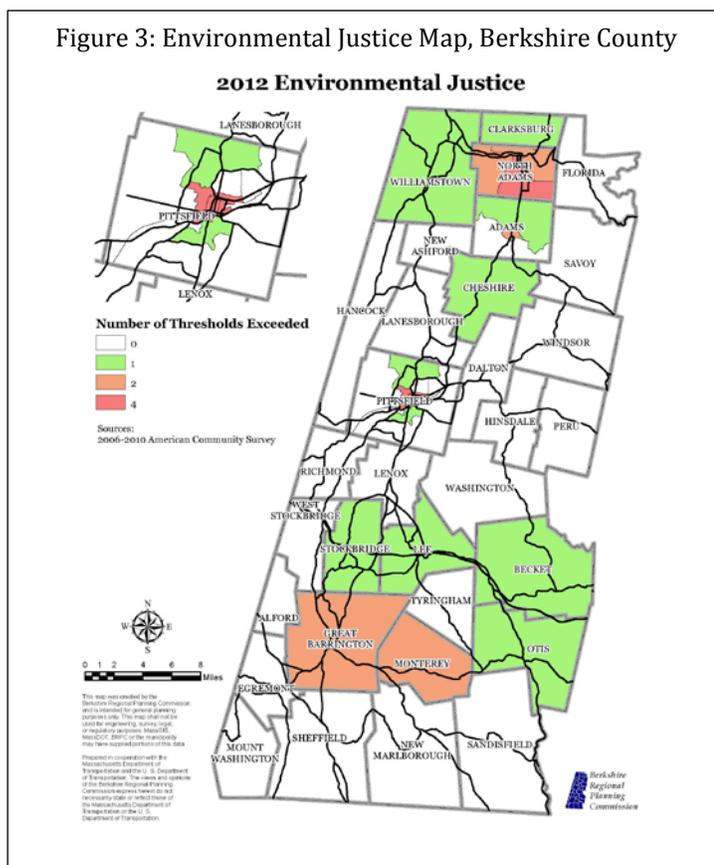
Enrollment data compiled for the Berkshire Hills Regional School District, which includes Great Barrington as well as Stockbridge and West Stockbridge, reflect these overall trends. The number of school age children has been decreasing over the last decade. The decline is projected to level off in the next decade, but enrollment is not projected to increase.

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 data 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.

Total non-white population is estimated by the Census to be 11.0 percent. The percentage of individuals who speak English less than very well is 6.3 percent according to the Census. Both of these statistics exceed two of the four state-designated Environmental Justice thresholds. The map in Figure 3 illustrates this. (See Section 1 Plan Summary, Planning Process and Public Outreach for a discussion of special outreach initiatives for Environmental Justice populations.)

Figure 3: Environmental Justice Map, Berkshire County



Households and Families

The demand for housing is directly influenced by the number, type, and incomes of households. Knowing the characteristics of households is critical to determine the housing needs of a community. 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. 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).

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 Great Barrington relies more on the retail sector and the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service sector than the County, State, or Nation.

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 be the result of which may reflect more production for direct consumption, rather than for value-added profit.

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 (one employee may work two jobs, thus they are double counted in this data), nor are they 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.

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

The Master Plan and this OSRP recognize the vital importance that our natural resources, scenery, and open space play in our economy, and set goals for protecting and promoting these assets. Marketing, promoting, and supporting our recreational landscapes will capture emerging active lifestyle trends for people of all ages. Connections between our farms, lodging establishments, and restaurants will support our working landscapes and capitalize on demand for local food experiences. More information about Economic Trends can be found in the Master Plan.

Growth and Development Patterns

Since the 2007 OSRP, growth in Great Barrington has slowed significantly, particularly in response to the economic recession, but the long term trend of development in rural areas, away from the town centers, has continued. This section briefly describes Great Barrington's recent land use, growth, and development trends.

Approximately 69 percent of Great Barrington town is covered by forest, according to 2005 aerial imagery data, and 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 map in Figure 4 illustrates these different land coverage types.

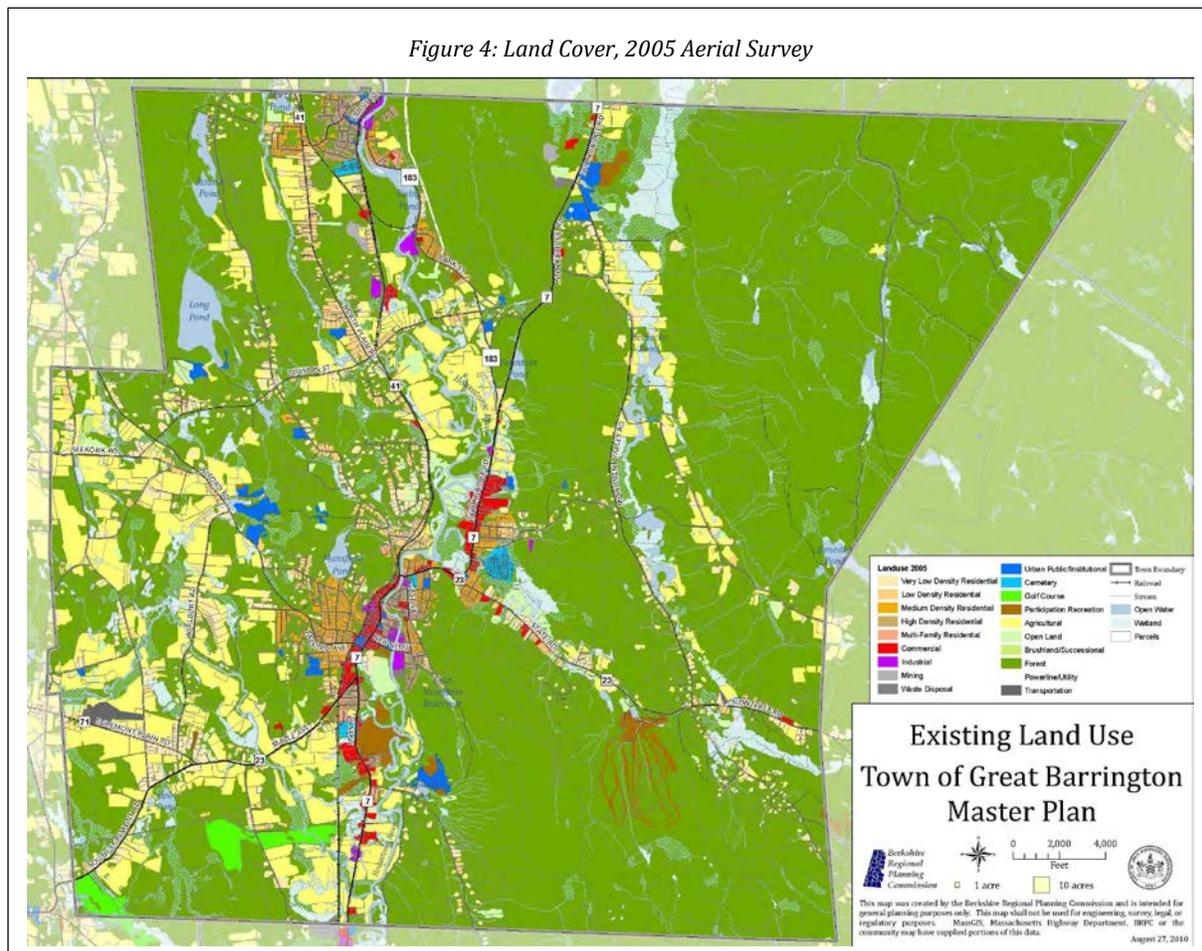
A low density residential development pattern began in the 1960s and 1970s, and continued into the 1980s and the 1990s. During this time, an average of 25 new dwellings were added each year. Statistics compiled by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) estimate that the average acreage of 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.

Today, Great Barrington continues to spread out, not fill in. This 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, the Berkshires version of sprawl is 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.

Figure 4: Land Cover, 2005 Aerial Survey



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. 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.

Since the 2007 OSRP was written, Great Barrington has seen relatively little new commercial development recently. Large scale commercial development of the former Fairgrounds was proposed in the mid 2000s but never materialized. 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 at Maple Avenue and Main Street and located its growing rehabilitation services center there. Iredale Mineral Cosmetics is renovating the old Bryant school in downtown to be its world headquarters.

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.

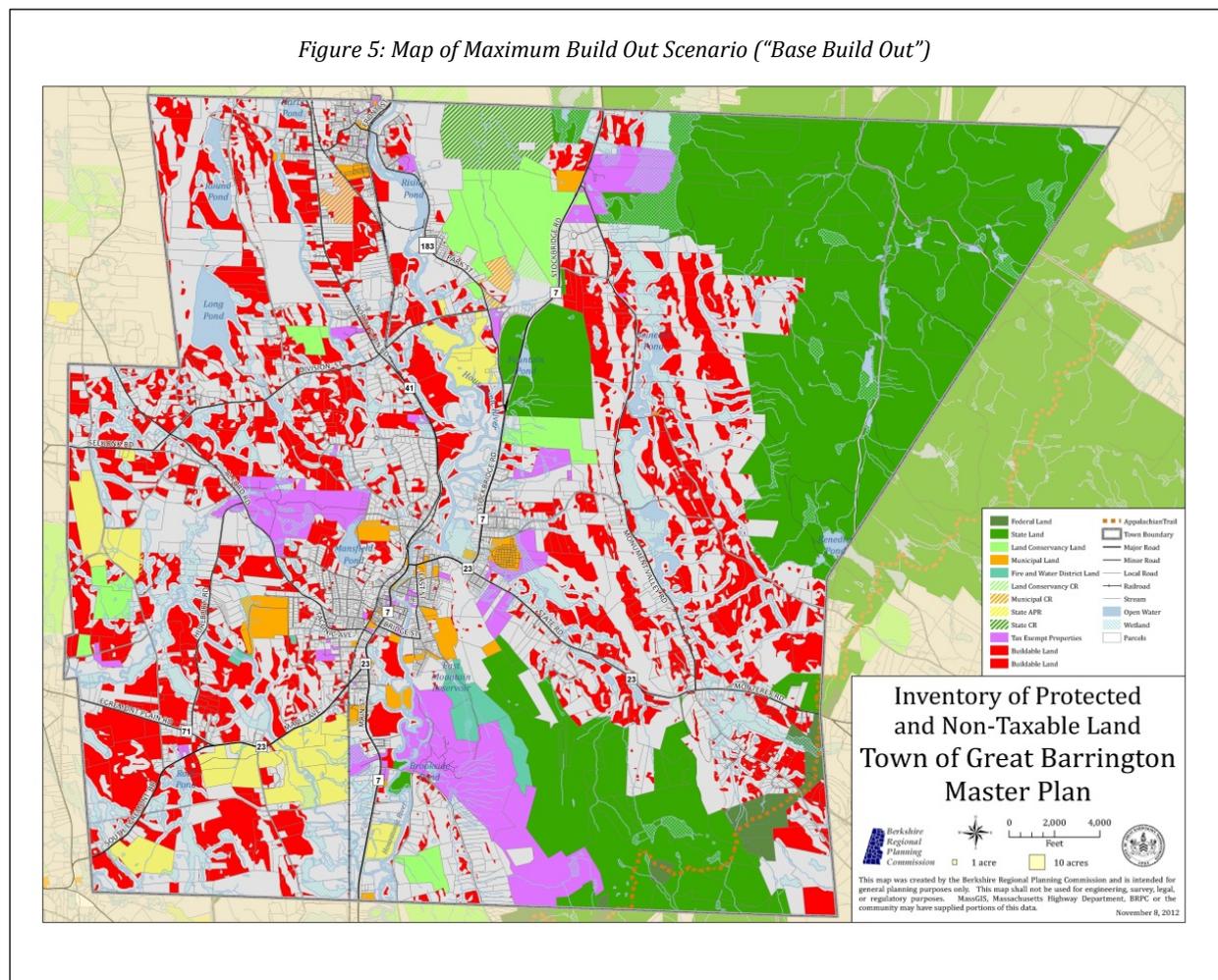
Build Out and Projected Growth

A “build out analysis” was conducted as part of the Master Plan update. This analysis found that 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 exiting 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).

The “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.

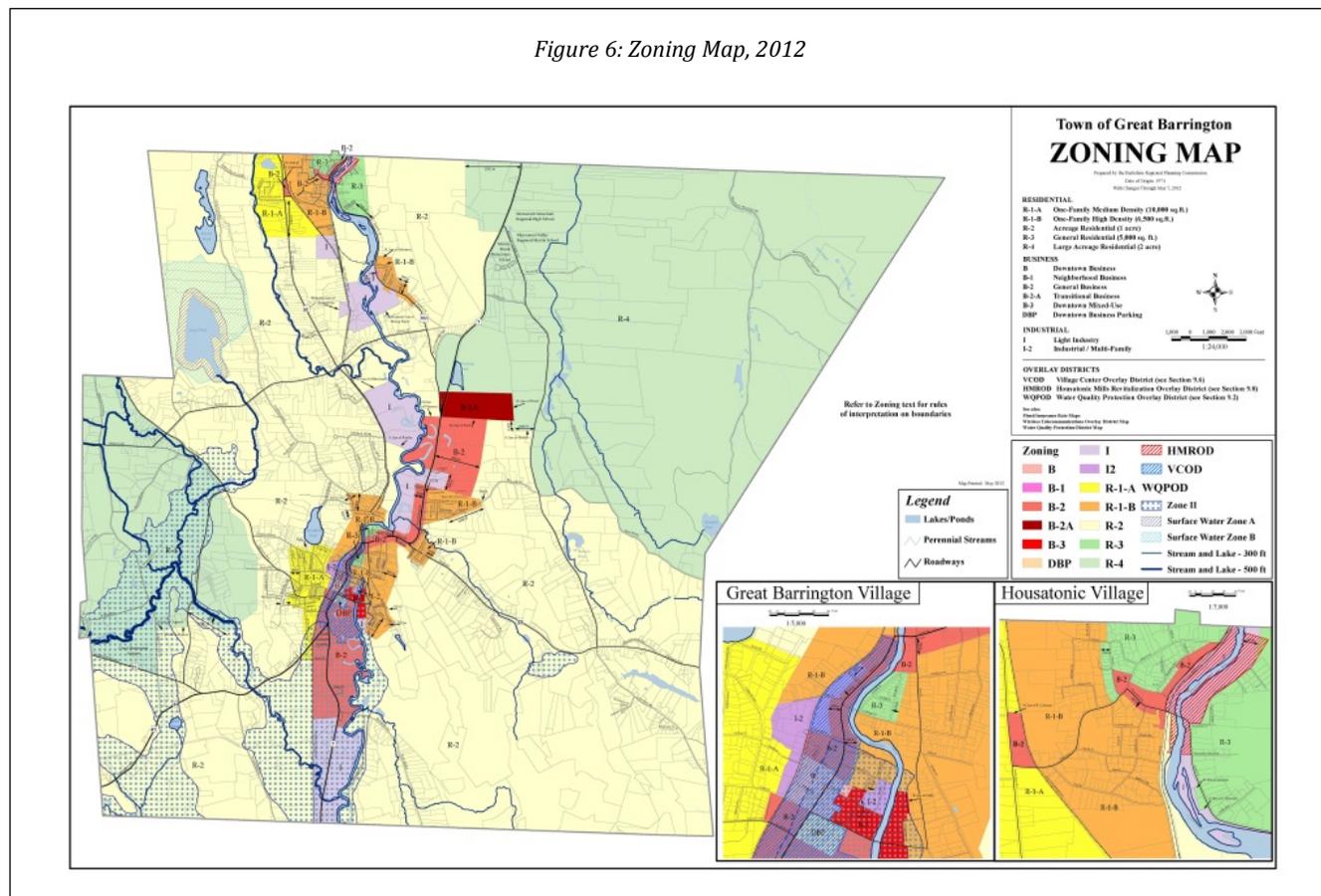
The land that remains, 5,400 unrestricted acres, is shown in red in Figure 5.



However, there is no reasonable expectation that anywhere near this amount of build out will ever occur. Much of the “buildable” acreage in this analysis is never likely to be developed because much of it is 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, and Zoning including the Water Quality Protection District, endangered species protections would further the 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. The current zoning map is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Zoning Map, 2012

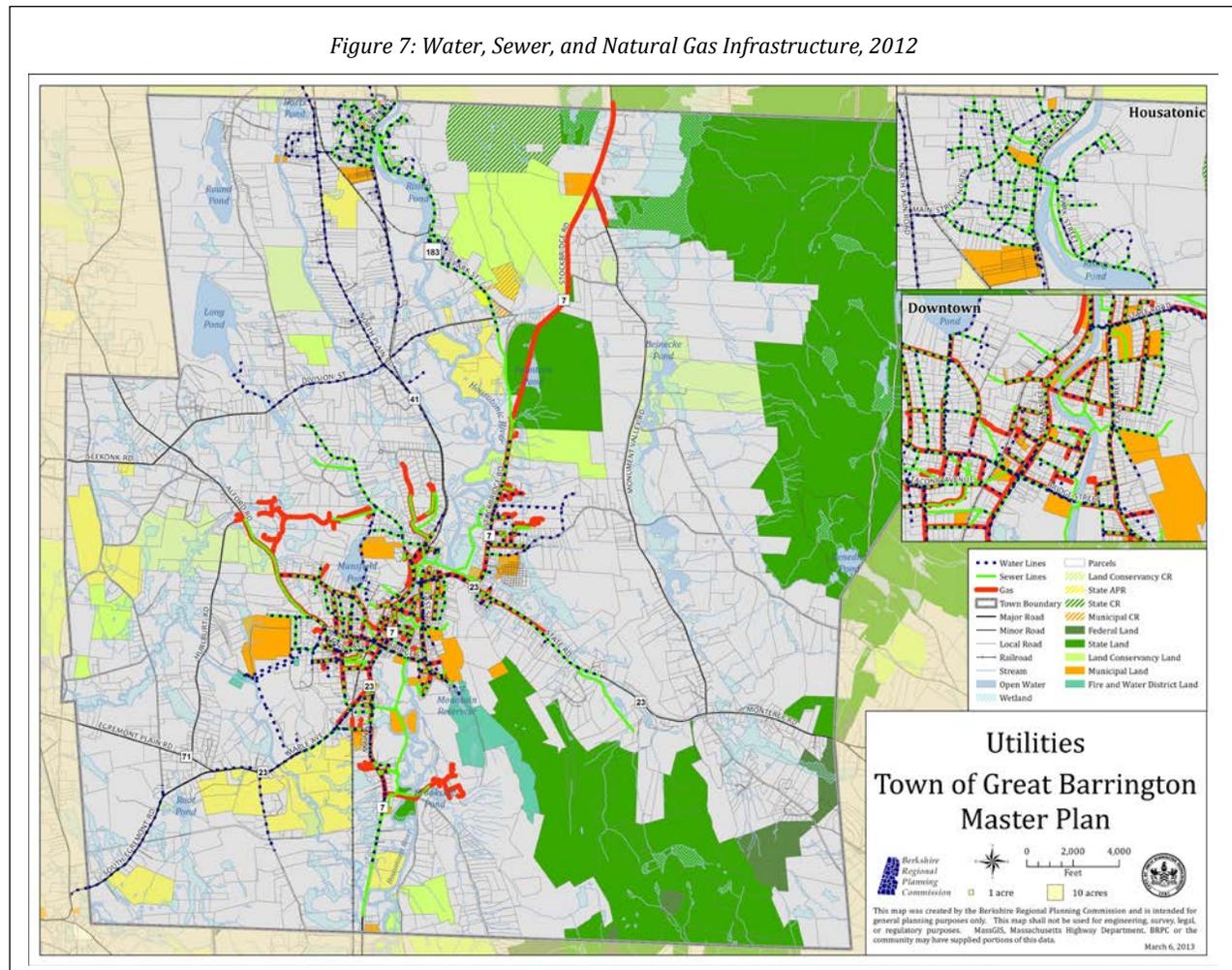


Additional “build out” scenarios removed floodplains from consideration. This reduced the “base build out” by approximately 340 acres (for example, areas like the Fairgrounds and other parcels along Route 7 are removed under this scenario). A different scenario removed Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B land from 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. Finally, a build out scenario in which both floodplains and Chapter lands are removed from building consideration results in 2,805 acres of buildable land.

Past master plans experienced relatively rapid growth, and they predicted significant new growth. The current Master Plan, and this OSRP update, 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.

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 the Master Plan and OSRP update 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. Figure 7 shows a map of existing infrastructure. This has not changed substantially since the 2007 OSRP.



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. 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.

Emerging Land Use Challenges and Opportunities

The 1973 Town Plan and the 1997 Master Plan grappled with relatively rapid development that threatened environmental quality, natural resources, and the vitality of the core business districts. The 2007 OSRP was predicated on the continuation of these trends. Some of these issues abide today, and other challenges are arising. New challenges include:

- Affordability and jobs, which are becoming critical issues. Tax burdens, real estate prices, and cost of living strain the budgets of many young families and seniors. Nearly every workshop of this Master Plan process 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.
- There is also a near-universal agreement that special attention must be paid to revitalizing key sites. Chief among these are the Housatonic mills and other highly visible vacant, blighted, or abandoned buildings, which have high redevelopment costs, and, at the moment, little market pressure. 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.”
- The cost of maintaining and repairing our aging infrastructure is enormous; added to already heavy tax burden, the costs become staggering. Repairs are needed for major bridges and roads, the high school, and the wastewater treatment plant.
- The wish to conserve significant tracts of land can have significant impact on the tax base; the more land that comes off of the tax rolls, the more the already weighty property tax burden will shift to residential property owners. Development and redevelopment must happen simultaneously with conservation, in order to keep property taxes reasonable and ensure the Town has enough resources in order to meet the service needs and challenges ahead.
- Changing real estate market demands. On the local and national level, the most successful residential real estate seems to be units in or near downtown locations.
- 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.
- 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. These also include managing the impacts of commercial and industrial uses which occur in close proximity to many neighborhoods.
- Climate change, with its attendant impacts of warmer weather and more extreme storms.
- Local agriculture and local food is growing in economic importance, and that this sector presents an enormous opportunity for future growth. An interest is also growing in local renewable energy generation, particularly solar. Clear regulations or standards should be developed to forestall potential land use conflicts between solar energy farms, agricultural lands, and aesthetic concerns.

Tremendous opportunities exist to address these issues and to fulfill our community’s vision. These include:

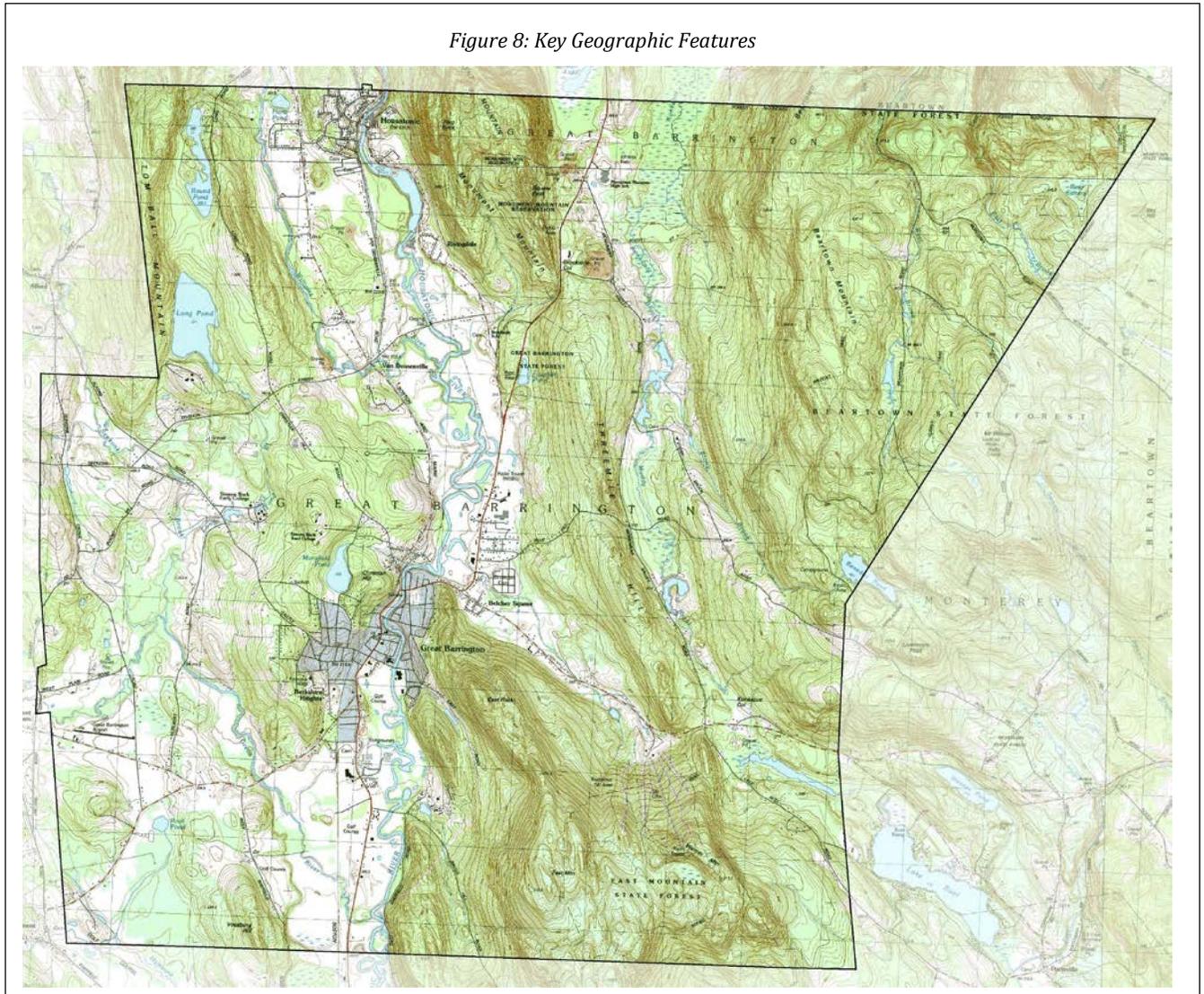
- Overwhelming agreement from participants in this planning process that these are the key issues to address. Consensus on the issues facing us is a major step towards developing solutions;
- Existing land protections that limit development in sensitive and scenic areas;
- Existing infrastructure capacity to support economic growth, located in areas that are suitable for compact development;
- An existing stock of residential and commercial buildings that can be rehabilitated for mixed use, thereby improving the tax base and preserving historic structures;
- Exciting initiatives like the Massachusetts Broadband Initiative, and discussions of restoring passenger rail service, as well as substantial private-sector interest in redeveloping historic buildings, all of which will enhance our quality of life;
- A tax base and credit rating that can support, if needed, borrowing for major projects;
- Dedicated local business owners. The commercial base is overwhelmingly owned and operated by residents of Great Barrington and surrounding communities. These businesses volunteer for and contribute to a variety of community causes, and care greatly about the future of the town.
- Dedicated Boards and Commissions, and professional staff that will implement the recommendations of this Master Plan.

Section Four: Environmental Inventory and Analysis

Geology, Topography, Soils and Landscape Character

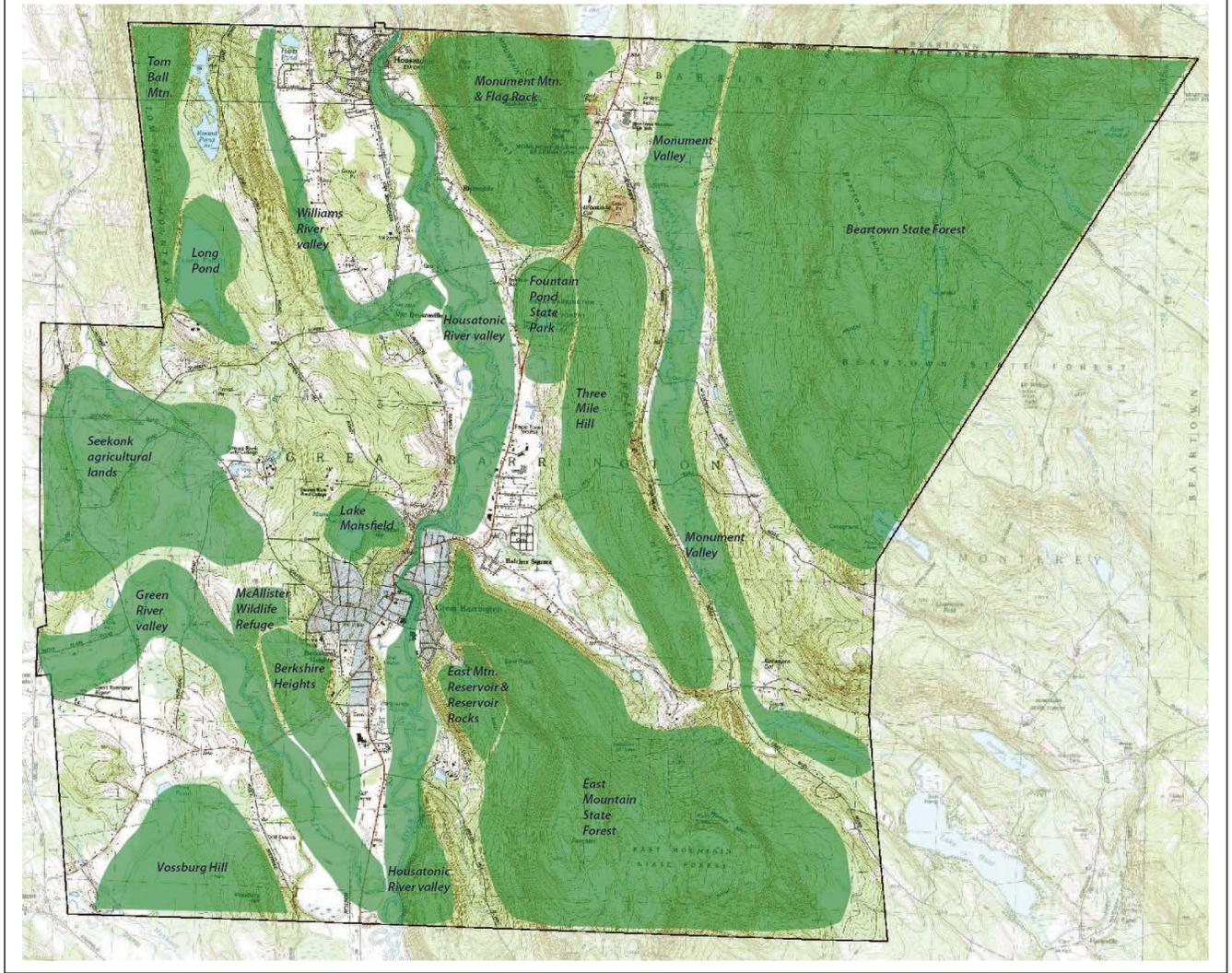
There are no changes to this section since the 2007 OSRP. For reference, the US Geological Survey topographic map in Figure 8 shows Great Barrington's key geographic features, including mountains, ridges, river valleys, water bodies, roads, and developed areas.

Figure 8: Key Geographic Features



The next map, figure 9, 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 OSRP and 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.

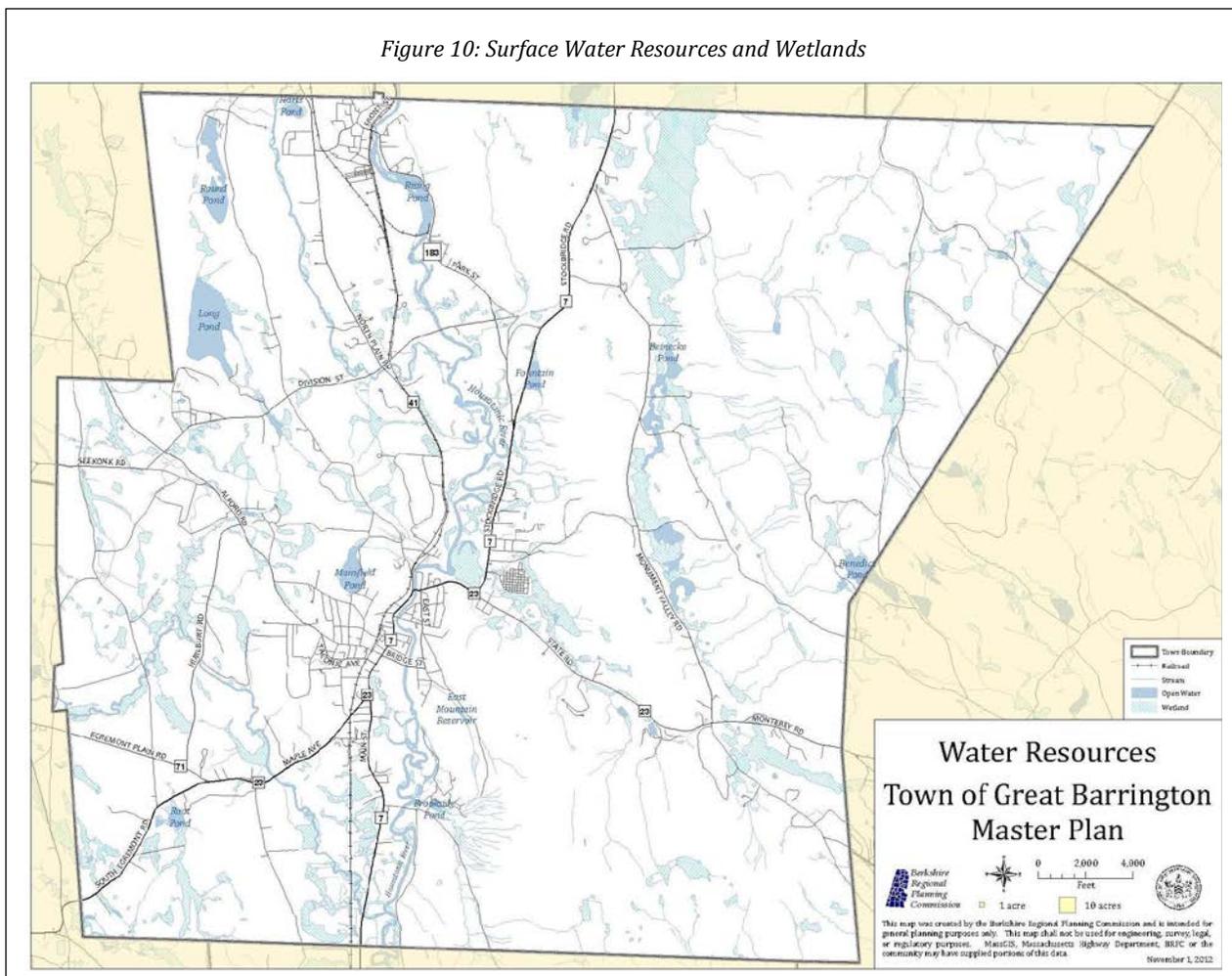
Figure 9: Unique and Scenic Features



Surface Water

There are no major changes to the town's surface water resources since the 2007 OSRP. However, as was noted in Section 3, Regional Context, planning for the cleanup of the Housatonic River is ongoing. For reference, Figure 10 illustrates surface water resources in Great Barrington. A summary of key surface water resources is included in this section.

Figure 10: 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 clean up 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.

Each 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, are 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. There is an informal access to the Williams River at the Division Street Bridge is limited, and 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.³ 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.

³ See MGL Ch. 91

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 DEP lists Lake Mansfield as an “impaired” water body due to these invasive plants.⁴ 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 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. When the DPW studies options for improving the roadway, it must 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.

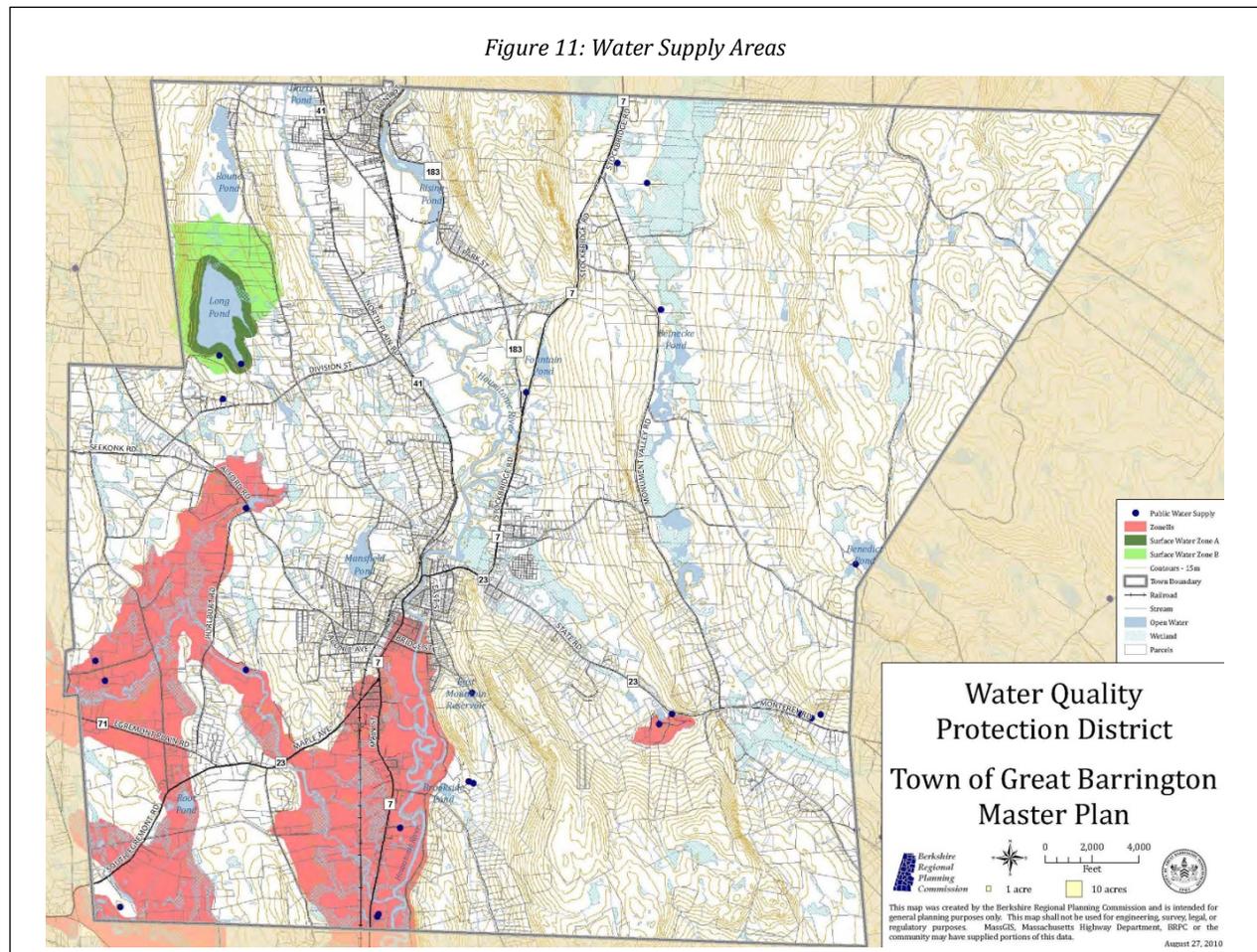
⁴ Listed as Category 4C, “impairment not caused by a pollutant,” on the Massachusetts Year 2102 List of Integrated Waters, Department of Environmental Protection. The impairment is due to Eurasian water milfoil and non-native aquatic plants.

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.⁵ The reservoir is not regulated as a water supply by 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, 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

There are no major changes to the town’s surface water resources since the 2007 OSRP. For reference, Figure 11 illustrates water supply zones and aquifer recharge areas. A summary of water supply resources is included below.



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

⁵ 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.

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 valleys 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 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

There are no changes to the town's wetland resources since the 2007 OSRP. Figure 9, above, illustrates wetland areas.

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 Wetlands Protection Act (WPA)⁶, 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 Rivers Protection Act (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 Department of Environmental Protection (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 may pursue projects not sanctioned by or not in keeping with the regulations. The Conservation Commission, working with Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and Agricultural Resources, should undertake a concerted effort to broaden its outreach efforts to all landowners—farmers, residential owners, and businesses.

Floodplains and Flood Hazard Areas

There are no changes to the town's floodplain areas since the 2007 OSRP. For reference, 100-year floodplains are illustrated in Figure 12, below.

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.

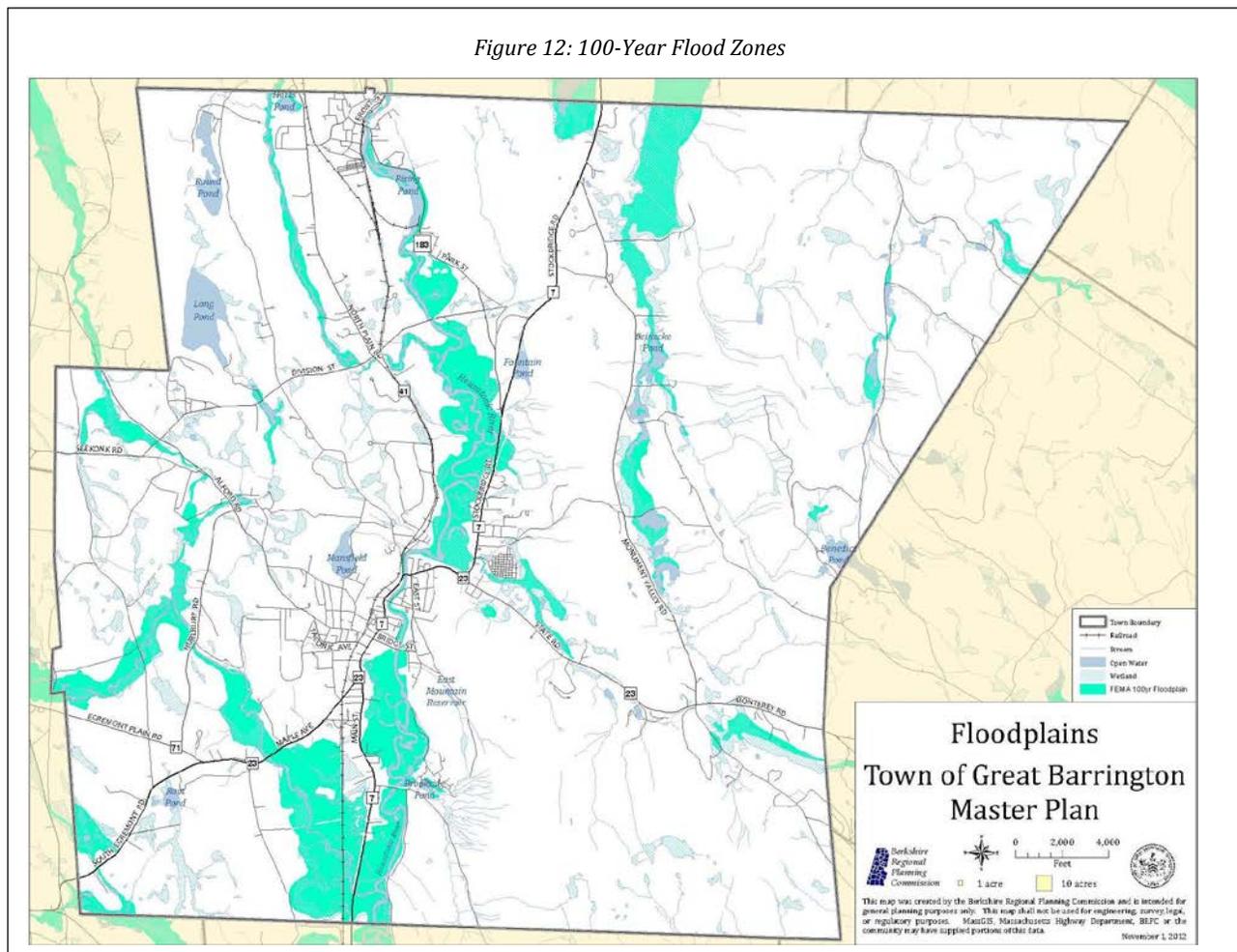
Development within the 100-year flood plain is controlled by the Great Barrington Zoning Bylaw and by the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). Under the zoning bylaw, almost any development activity requires a Special Permit from the Board of Selectmen. The WPA requires review by the Conservation Commission 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

⁶ Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 131, Section 40

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 12: 100-Year Flood Zones



Vegetation and Agriculture

There are no major changes to vegetation patterns described in the 2007 OSRP. However, current information regarding agricultural use is summarized below.

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.

Today, between eight and 14 percent (2,300 - 3,500 acres) of our town's total land area is in agricultural production. Ten farms, totaling 982 acres, are in the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program.⁷ In other words, approximately one-third of our farmland is permanently protected.

⁷ 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

In Great Barrington the overall amount of farmland in production has dropped by about half 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. Today’s land use cover is illustrated in the map in Figure 4, in Section 3 of this OSRP.

The Chapter 61A program data also 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. 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.

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 13.

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 unique 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.

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 14: Bio Map 2, Great Barrington

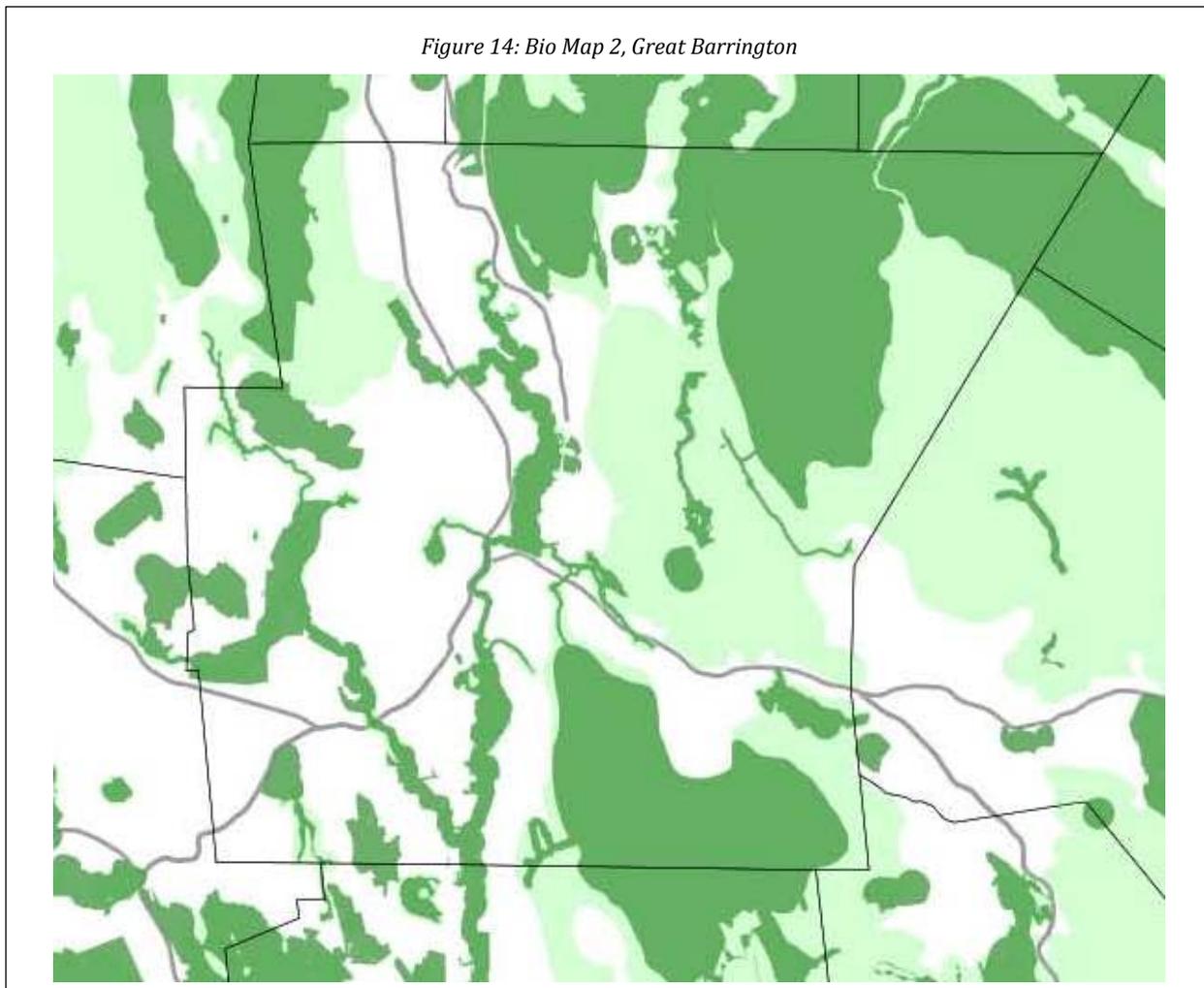
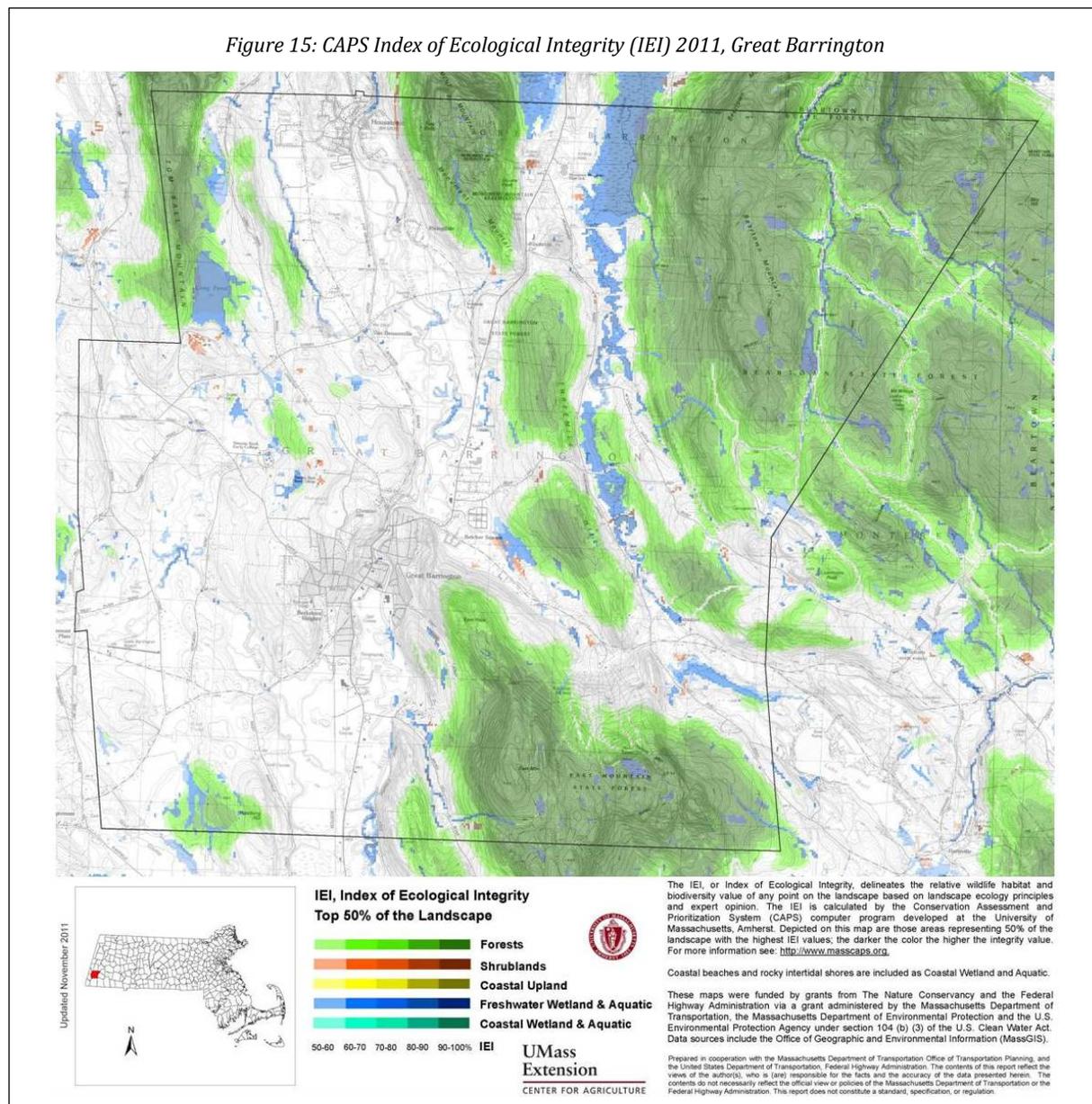


Figure 14 illustrates the Bio Map zones in Great Barrington. Core Habitat (dark green on the map) is critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and other Species of Conservation Concern, as well as a wide diversity of natural communities and intact ecosystems across the Commonwealth. Core 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.

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 15, the darker colors indicate higher integrity and biodiversity value. Darker green indicates higher forest value; darker blue indicates higher aquatic value.

Figure 15: 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 are important for 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, lack the rocky substrate that the aquatic hitchhikers prefer.

There are no major changes to the list of rare, endangered, or threatened species in Great Barrington since the 2007 OSRP.

Scenic Resources and Unique Environments

There are no major changes to the scenic resources and unique environments section of the 2007 OSRP.

The above sections highlight major resource areas and geographic features of Great Barrington. There are no Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), as identified by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs, within Great Barrington.

Environmental Challenges

The environmental challenges described in the 2007 OSRP remain. However, there are several important updates to note:

1. Hazardous Waste Sites:

- 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.
- The former landfill on Stockbridge Road continues to be monitored yearly; there are no contamination concerns.
- 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.

2. Erosion

- Rivers in Great Barrington meander and migrate in their floodplains, often cutting new channels or eroding banks after significant storm events. Bank stabilization has taken place on the Green River south of Route 23 and also near route 7 south of downtown, after extensive permitting processes. The Rising Dam has also been stabilized recently.

3. Surface Water and Ground Water

- Planning to clean up the PCBs from the Housatonic River (and Rising Pond) is described above in the surface water resources section above.
- Planning and implementation of new infrastructure to address nonpoint source pollution at Lake Mansfield, and remove it from the list of impaired water bodies, is described in the surface water resources section above.
- The town complete as Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan in 2010 and a Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan in 2011. Infrastructure needs identified in these plans are now programmed in the town's Capital Improvement Program for funding.

Section Five: Inventory of Lands of Conservation & Recreation Interest

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.

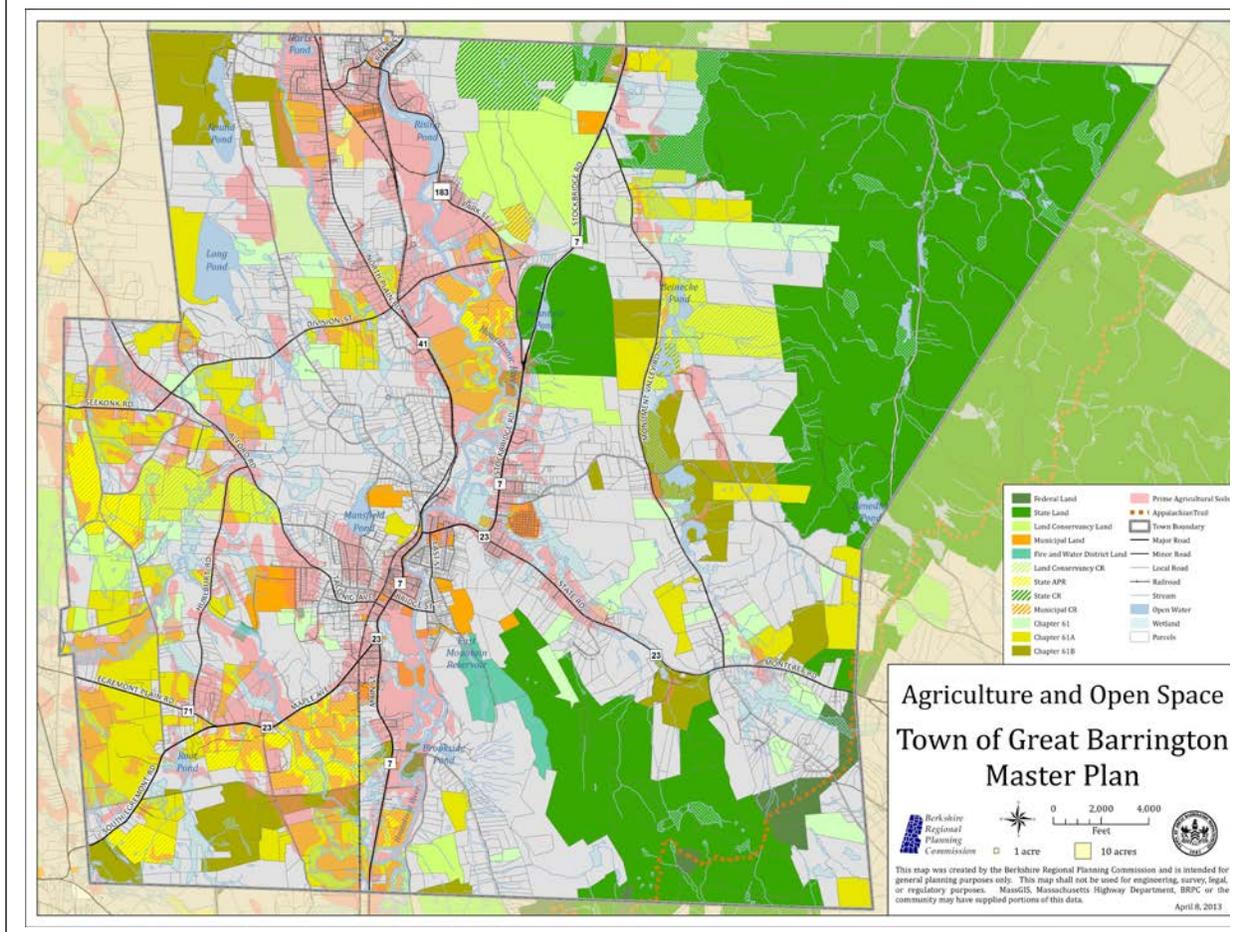
Of Great Barrington’s 46 square miles (29,280 acres), over one-third (34 percent) is permanently protected as state and federal parks, in land trusts, or under the Agriculture Preservation Restriction Program and conservation easements. The amount of protected land has increased slightly from the time 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 2 categorizes these protected lands.

Table 2: Protected Land in Great Barrington, 2011

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%

Figure 16 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.

Figure 16: 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.

The following table 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 this OSRP update and the Master Plan outreach efforts.

Inventory of Protected Open Space in Great Barrington

Table 3: 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 express purposes of conservation and as a 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.

Open Space and Recreation Plan 2013, Great Barrington, MA

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 Conservatio 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
Mahaiwe 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.)													
Pfeffer 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. Portions being remediated and riverbank stabilized	None at this time	River access, fishing, hiking, horseback riding	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 as conservation and habitat 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 Village	Permanent	Stockbridge Road	385	R2	Map 35, Lots 9A, 16-20A			

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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
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 very recently taken control of the property, with the expressed interest in developing the property as an agricultural, housing, open space, and recreational asset for the community. The owners soon 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.

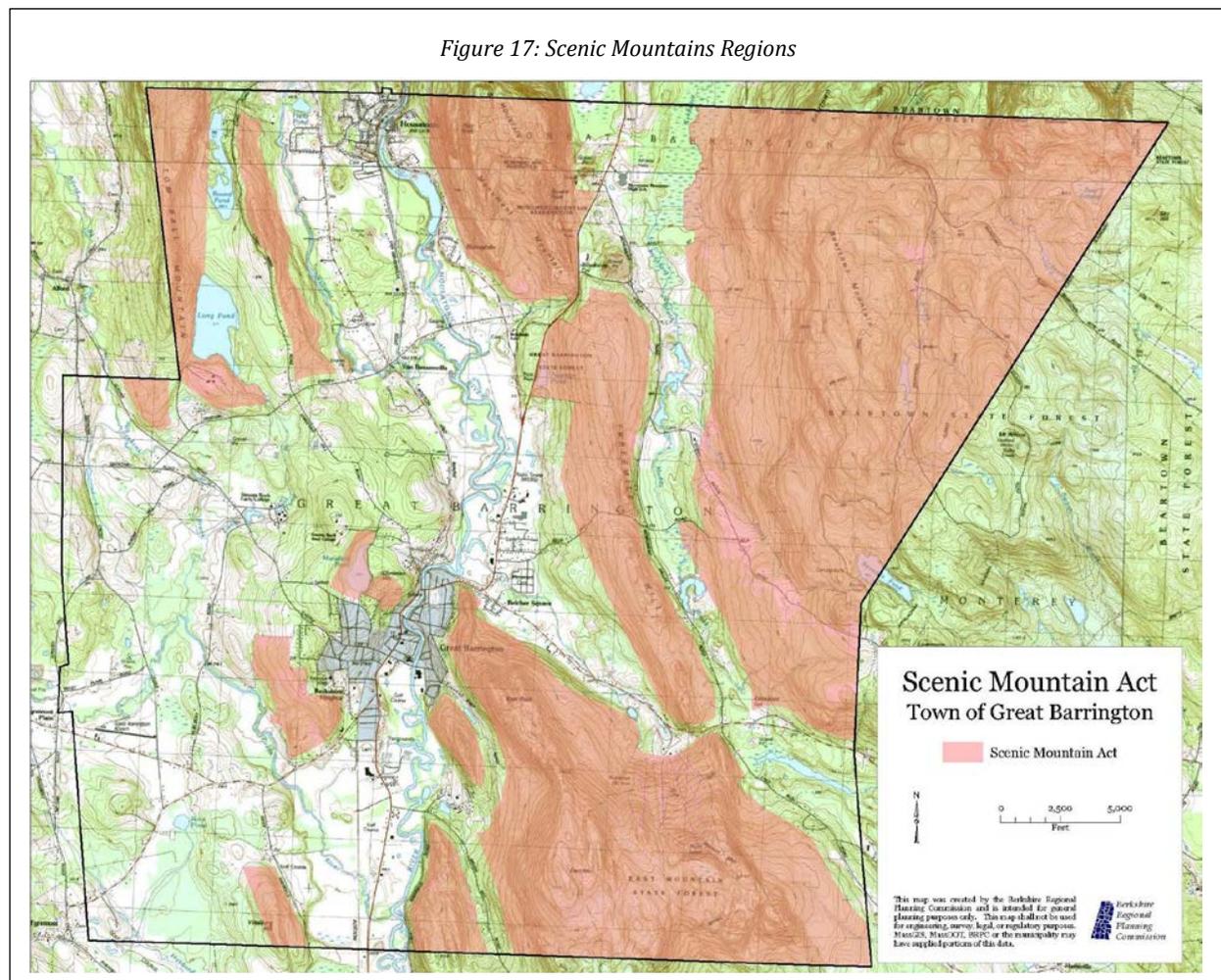
East Rock is located on the western side of East Mountain State Forest, overlooking downtown Great Barrington, and with views as far west as the Catskills. It can be reached via a hiking trail from Quarry Street. Despite it being in use for decades, the trailhead is not marked, the trail is not maintained, 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 17, below.



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. 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 valuable resources are protected.

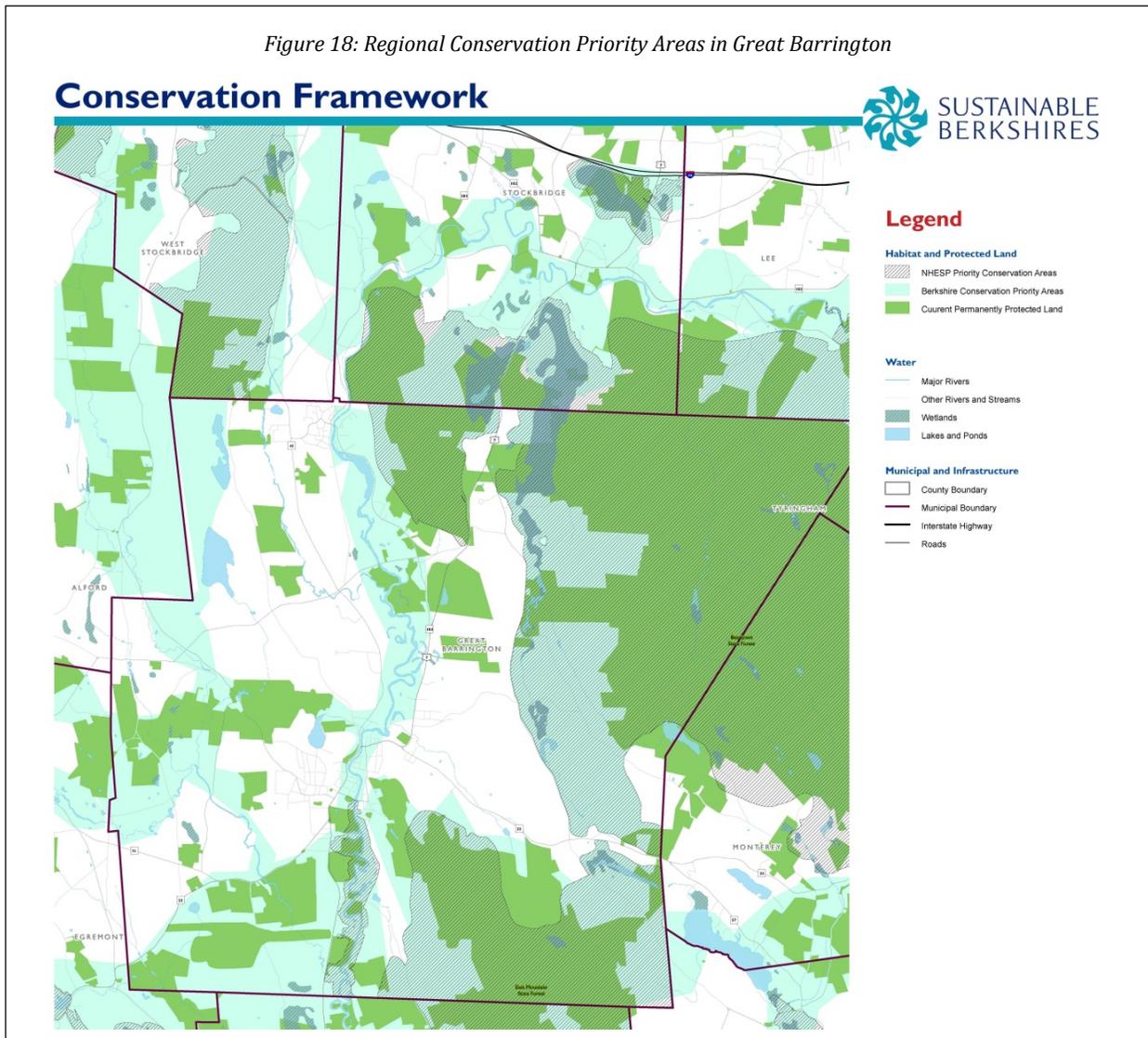
But significant work remains to be done. Our small town character continues to be threatened by the division of former farmland and forest into building lots. Our town is getting older and more ethnically diverse, and this changing population may have recreational needs that we do not currently meet. 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 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 18, 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.



Skeptics might take issue with land conservation, crying foul as landowners place large tracts in conservation, contribute less in property taxes, 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 written in conjunction with this OSRP update 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:

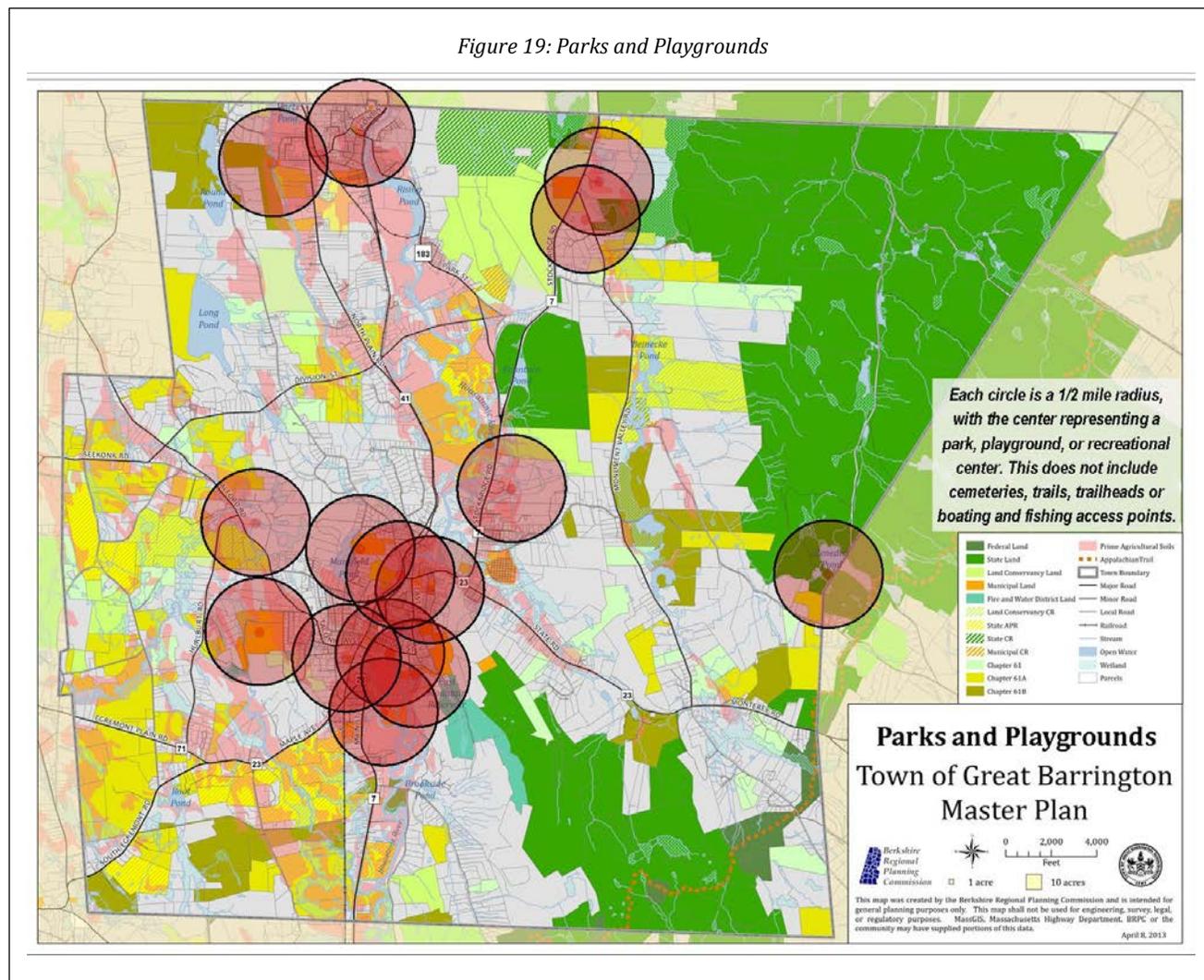
1. Castranova Park (the "GB bushes") is a one-acre park at the intersection of Main Street and State Road with an old set of swings and benches. It is a prominent landmark, and is a link on the "central loop" trail (see trails, below).
2. Dewey School is a one and on-half acre space in a residential 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. Olympia 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 19, shows each park and playground with a half-mile radius circle (one mile diameter) drawn around it.

Figure 19: 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 are 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, no matter what happens in lease negotiations for the building, 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 Master Plan 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, are 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 Olympia 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.

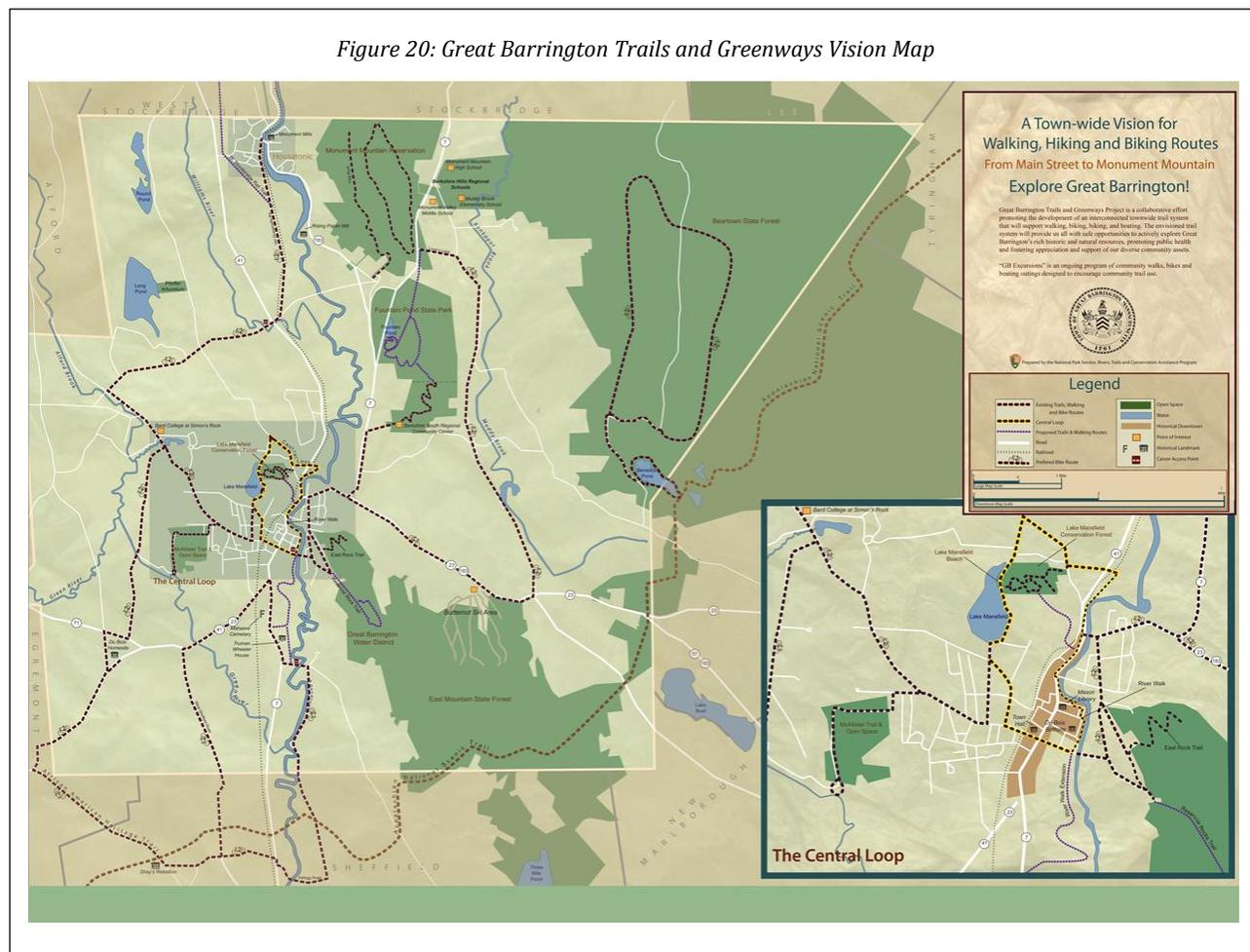
The need and desire for a multi-use path remains, however, and its recreational, transportation, historic and conservation potential is immense. It could also connect popular fishing spots, canoe launches, and wildlife viewing locations. The route still exists in the form of a sewer easement to the Town. 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 20: 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.

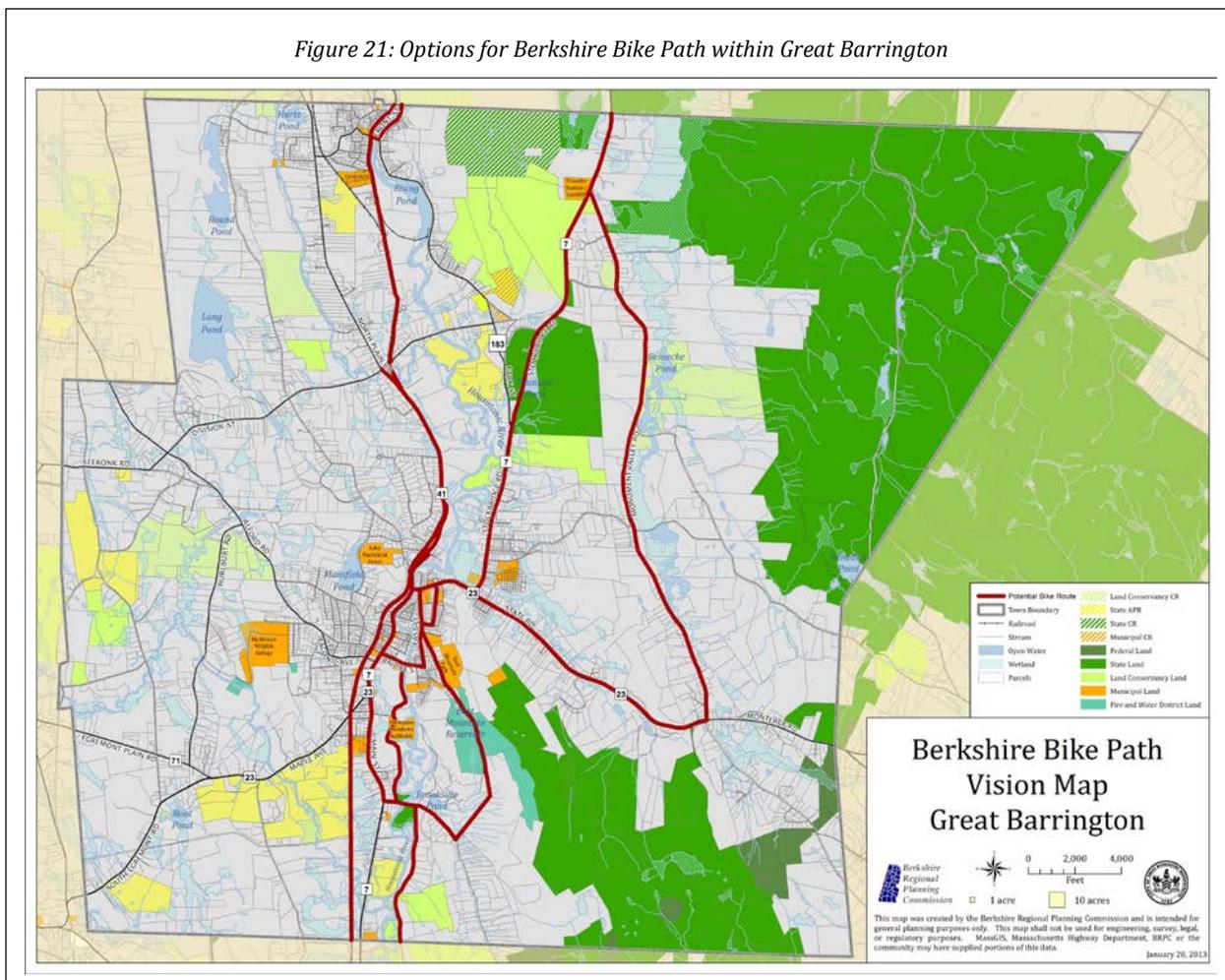
Unfortunately, riding on local roads can be dangerous, even for experienced cyclists. Narrow or nonexistent shoulders offer no refuge from speeding vehicles. Limited street lighting and low visibility in bad weather effectively limits safe cycling to the warm temperatures and long days of summer. To 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 the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (UHVNHA) 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 21: 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) 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 Fame 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.

Section Six: Community Vision and Goals

Description of Process

A great deal of outreach was conducted to develop this OSRP and the Master Plan to determine what open space and recreational resources Great Barrington citizens value. As discussed previously, the town made a conscious decision to write the Master Plan and OSRP update simultaneously. Thus public outreach and participation for the Master Plan and OSRP were also integrated.

Outreach included two OSRP-specific Public Forums, meetings with conservation and recreation organizations, and two public meetings each with the Conservation Commission and Parks Commission. There were focus groups and surveys with youth, seniors, and environmental justice populations.

There were also nearly three years of public meetings regarding the Master Plan, including meetings dedicated to the open space chapter of the Master Plan. There were three public forums, and extensive research and interviews with stakeholders from all areas of the town and representing all areas of interest.

Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals

- Goal OSR 1: Maintain existing town-owned parks, open space and recreational resources at least at today's level.
- Goal OSR 2: Make information about existing parks, open space and recreational resources widely available.
- Goal OSR 3: Our parks, open space and recreational area will serve the changing needs of our community.
- Goal OSR 4: Make our parks, open space and recreation areas thriving facets of our economy.
- Goal OSR 5: Provide linkage between our parks, open space, and recreation resources as well as to community facilities, neighborhoods, and village centers.
- Goal OSR 6: Create new open space and recreational resources by partnering with the private sector.
- Goal OSR 7: Protect, maintain, and care for street trees.
- Goal OSR 8: Embrace the Housatonic River.
- Goal OSR 9: Protect Biodiversity, Habitat, and Natural Resources.

Section Seven: Analysis of Needs

Summary of Resource Protection Needs

This OSRP update, after an extensive OSRP and Master Plan outreach process, has 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 3 of this OSRP. 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.

Summary of Community 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 Section Five of this OSRP and in the transportation section of the Master Plan. It should be noted that the Main Street Reconstruction project for 2013-2014 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 as 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 and changes in land use.

Section Eight: Goals and Objectives

Goal OSR 1: Maintain existing town-owned parks, open space and recreational resources at least at today's level.

Objective 1.1: Increase DPW staff and building and grounds supplies budget. This will enable more time to be spent maintaining parks and the grounds of Town buildings. If budget limitations do not allow for an increase, then at the absolute minimum, maintain current staff and funding levels. Do not decrease the Parks Commission budget or DPW services for town buildings, grounds, cemeteries and parks.

Objective 1.2: Work with the Police Department to improve the police presence at all facilities, particularly the Memorial Field skate park and Housatonic Park, at all hours.

Objective 1.3: Continue to support the existing Housatonic River Walk in downtown through Town funds and DPW services such as trash pickup. Continue the contribution of approximately \$2,000 annually.

Objective 1.4: Keep playground equipment in a state of good repair. Develop a regular inspection, maintenance, and replacement plan if necessary.

Goal OSR 2: Make information about existing parks, open space and recreational resources widely available.

Objective 2.1: Develop signage to direct people to recreation areas; develop signs and/or informational kiosks at recreational areas. This will help people get the most out of our existing parks, particularly if the parks are well cared for. We recognize that more people using these resources may incrementally strain maintenance budgets, but in the long term it will develop a core constituency to care for the parks and reinforce quality neighborhoods.

Objective 2.2: Develop and publish a map of town parks and other recreational areas. Highlight opportunities for those with varied interests; e.g., flat trails for non-hikers, best walks for dog walkers, bike rides for families, and the like. Partner with GB Trails & Greenways and other groups in order to share information and pool resources. Increase public awareness of our resources by distributing the map as widely as possible. Suggested outlets include the Chamber of Commerce, visitor centers, cultural institutions, supermarkets, hotels, downtown merchants and offices, schools and Parent-Teacher Associations, websites, as well as the Annual Town Meeting.

Goal OSR 3: Our parks, open space and recreational area will serve the changing needs of our community.

Objective 3.1: Continue the Parks Commission initiatives of making parks multi-dimensional. The installation of fitness equipment at South Street Park is a great example of this. Offer barbeque grills like those currently at Lake Mansfield at other locations like Old Maid's Park. Review the need for additional improvements to parks based on the needs of the community (e.g picnic tables, pavilions, playgrounds, etc).

Objective 3.2: Improve facilities at the Claire Teague Senior Center. The recent efforts of the Council on Aging to develop gardening plots and bocce courts are laudable. Future plans, including accessing the Housatonic River, or providing a quiet landing near the bank for painting, bird watching, and star gazing, should be supported with CPA and capital funds.

Objective 3.3: Support efforts to make resources accessible to those with physical disabilities.

The recently-completed trail in the Lake Mansfield Forest, completed by the Lake Mansfield Alliance with a combination of State funds, partnerships, and sweat equity, is a model in this regard. Most of our parks and playgrounds currently lack such universal access, but as our population ages, wheelchair accessibility, gentle paths, and plenty of resting places will become increasingly important. It is equally important that accessible locations not be isolated from other areas of our parks, so that seniors and the disabled can be with their children at parks and playgrounds.

Objective 3.4: Add picnic tables, benches, chess tables, and other amenities at existing playgrounds and parks, to be enjoyed by those who prefer passive recreation.

Goal OSR 4: Make our parks, open space and recreation areas thriving facets of our economy.

Objective 4.1: Join forces and marketing efforts with existing recreation resources like Ski Butternut and Berkshire South to market parks and trails.

Objective 4.2: Take advantage of the emergence of “healthy living” trends. For example, working with the Chamber and a future Business Improvement District, develop ideas like a “Hike GB” package that offers guided trails hikes, historical tours, agricultural experiences and promotional deals at retailers, hotels and restaurants.

Objective 4.3: Market Great Barrington’s open space resources for competitive events.

Capitalize on the long history of success of the Josh Billings Run Aground, and the more recent success of the Memorial Day Marathon and the GBLC Run for Hills. Consider linking well-known spaces like Lake Mansfield with lesser-known spaces like East Rock and McAllister Park, via swim/bike/run triathlons and other competitive sports. Such events can be an economic boon as demonstrated by the thousands of visitors and tens of thousands of dollars in local spending for the Memorial Day event.

Goal OSR 5: Provide linkage between our parks, open space, and recreation resources as well as to community facilities, neighborhoods, and village centers.

Objective 5.1: Promote local and regional trails to tourists, including the Appalachian Trail – prominently post GB Trails walking routes, biking routes, and trail route signs.

Objective 5.2: Conduct walkability studies, as recently done in Housatonic, to identify where improvements to sidewalks and crosswalks are needed, and where connections can be made. Use these studies to inform the Capital Improvement Plan. Marshal town funds, CPA funds, and whatever private funds become available to accomplish these connections.

Objective 5.3: Accommodate bike trails, sidewalks, and crosswalks when any road is rehabilitated.

Objective 5.4: Connect Great Barrington and Housatonic village with a bike route or off-road bike trail. Work with local bike advocates and regional partners to build on the possible routes they have already identified, and connect this route to the planned County-long north-south bike route.

Objective 5.5: Complete the River Walk south, as detailed below in 8.2.

Objective 5.6: Support the development of theme-based walking and biking trails, as the African American Heritage Trail has done for the region. Local themes might focus on William Stanley and electricity inventions, and W.E.B. Du Bois and civil rights. Partner with the UHVNHA to accomplish this. Those local examples that already exist—an African American Heritage Trail

brochure and the Du Bois River Garden site, to name two—should be properly promoted, maintained, and used as inspiration for others.

Objective 5.7: Identify unprotected lands, including lands in Chapter 61 tax status, for potential permanent protection and integration into the recreation and trail system. Key parcels would include those that could complete trail systems, link recreation areas, and our neighborhoods.

Goal OSR 6: Create new open space and recreational resources by partnering with the private sector.

Objective 6.1: Improve access to the town-owned parts of East Mountain (not including the fire district's interests around the reservoir where they currently must maintain no trespassing rules). Investigate possibility for a trailhead, with a map or sign kiosk, at Park Street Park or on Quarry Street.

Objective 6.2: Cooperate with the new owners of the Fairgrounds to improve the site and create a recreation and scenic space that benefits the entire community. This includes the extension of the Housatonic River Greenway through the rear (east) of the property, roughly along the existing sewer easement, to connect the new trail north and south. Town participation may include community events, grant writing, funding, or other efforts.

Objective 6.3: Work with pet owners, trainers, and kennel clubs to create a dog park. Numerous possible sites exist, including near existing parks, or on private properties that are currently undeveloped.

Objective 6.4: Complete the accessible trails in Lake Mansfield Forest through the existing partnership with Lake Mansfield Alliance and building on their success in securing funding, building partnerships, and encouraging volunteer stewardship.

Goal OSR 7: Protect, maintain, and care for street trees.

Objective 7.1: Care for our town's trees effectively. Mature trees define our neighborhood streets, add distinctive character and value, and reduce our carbon footprint. Utilize the expertise of the Tree Committee [and the resources and research available to Great Barrington as a newly-designated Tree City](#). Be proactive in protecting and maintaining our trees; [for example, —Develop a tree plan, —and consider Tree City designation and Scenic Road designations.](#)

Goal OSR 8: Embrace the Housatonic River.

Objective 8.1: Take a formal position on the cleanup strategy for the Housatonic River. Gather information about the cleanup strategy by working with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission then develop a formal Town position. Comment regularly and often in the public process to ensure Town concerns are heard and met.

Objective 8.2: Utilize CPA funds to accomplish the long-held vision of extending River Walk south, to connect downtown with Olympian Meadows, the Fairgrounds, the Historical Society at the Truman Wheeler Farm, and the senior housing and Senior Center, as detailed in the 1997 Master Plan and in feasibility studies. Reach out to and cooperate with the John Dewey Academy school at Searles' Castle to attend to their access, insurance, and liability concerns. Explore alternate routes if needed.

Objective 8.3: Develop a River Walk in Housatonic, extending from the Monument Mills to the Berkshire Mountain Bakery, and south, if possible.

Objective 8.4: Create more canoe and kayak launches on the River. Two launches currently exist—one informal unmaintained launch on private property at the former Searles School, and one on State property at Brookside Road. Additional launches should be developed in Housatonic, Rising Pond, and at Division Street. The launch at the former Searles School should be improved (designs funded by the Natural Resource Damages fund are already completed), or a new launch could be explored at the redeveloped New England Log Homes site.

Objective 8.5: Extend the downtown River Walk north to Cottage Street and Stanley Park.

Goal OSR 9: Protect Biodiversity, Habitat, and Natural Resources.

Objective 9.1: Track, monitor, and combat invasive species. On Town conservation lands, develop management and removal plans. In lakes, ponds, and stream, post information about invasives, boat washing stations, and other resources with help from the Massachusetts DEP and Fish and Wildlife. On private lands, encourage owners to include management plans in their subdivision documents, conservation restrictions, or other land policies. The Conservation Agent, Town Planner, and groups like the Conservation Commission, Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force, and Agricultural Commission can help carry out this strategy on Town lands and connect with private landowners.

Objective 9.2: Protect, preserve, and connect habitat areas to one another. Open space conservation should prioritize lands and waters that will connect and increase vital habitat areas. Land use controls like sensitive home siting and conservation subdivisions can protect and preserve habitat areas. Stream crossings including culverts and bridges must use the latest connectivity standards to maintain water connectivity even in times of drought.

Objective 9.3: Minimize stormwater runoff. In municipal projects, use the latest best management practices to collect and infiltrate stormwater runoff. In private projects, use zoning and subdivision standards to require the latest best management practices.

Objective 9.4: Protect buffer zones around lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. These areas provide aquatic and terrestrial habitat, help infiltrate and clean runoff, stabilize river banks, and perform countless other ecosystem services important in times of drought or deluge. This strategy is best managed by the Conservation Commission through its application of the Wetlands and Rivers Protection Act.

Objective 9.5: Continue stormwater improvements and planning at Lake Mansfield. Pay special attention to Lake Mansfield Road, the boat launch and Knob Hill, and the beach area. Engineering and designs for improving Lake Mansfield Road must account for the safety and enjoyment of all users of the recreation area, including bicyclists, fishermen, runners and walkers, as well as vehicles. Work with Bard College at Simon's Rock to establish a long term water quality monitoring and education program.

GOAL / OBJECTIVE / ACTION	TIMING	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Goal OSR 1: Maintain existing town-owned parks, open space and recreational resources at least at today's level.		
Objective 1.1: Increase DPW staff and building and grounds supplies budget.		
<i>Action:</i> Identify funding source to increase staff and budget.	2013	DPW
<i>Action:</i> Request staff and budget increase for Fiscal Year 2015 budget.	2013	DPW
Objective 1.2: Work with the Police Dept. to improve police presence at all facilities, particularly the Memorial Field skate park and Housatonic Park, at all hours.		
<i>Action:</i> Develop policing plan.	Immediate	Police
Objective 1.3: Continue to support the existing Housatonic River Walk in downtown through Town funds and DPW services such as trash pickup.		
<i>Action:</i> Budget \$2,000 annually	Immediate / annual	DPW
Objective 1.4: Keep playground equipment in a state of good repair.		
<i>Action:</i> Develop a regular inspection, maintenance, and replacement plan if necessary.	2014	DPW
Goal OSR 2: Make information about existing parks, open space and recreational resources widely available.		
Objective 2.1: Develop signage to direct people to recreation areas; develop signs and/or informational kiosks at recreational areas.		
<i>Action:</i> Design and post park and recreation area signs.	2014-2015	DPW
Objective 2.2: Develop and publish a map of town parks and other recreational areas.		
<i>Action:</i> Develop and publish the map.	2014-2015	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Distribute the map.	2014-2015	Town Planner
Goal OSR 3: Our parks, open space and recreational area will serve the changing needs of our community.		
Objective 3.1: Continue the Parks Commission initiatives of making parks multi-dimensional.		
<i>Action:</i> Continue long term park improvement planning	Ongoing	Parks Commission
Objective 3.2: Improve facilities at the Claire Teague Senior Center.		
<i>Action:</i> Improve parking lot and entrance landscaping.	2017	Council on Aging / DPW
<i>Action:</i> Develop plan for accessing or viewing the River.	2016	Council on Aging / Cons. Comm.
Objective 3.3: Support efforts to make resources accessible to those with physical disabilities.		
<i>Action:</i> Reexamine accessibility of all parks and playgrounds.	2014	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Develop accessibility action / implementation plan	2015	Town Planner
Objective 3.4: Add picnic tables, benches, chess tables, etc. at existing playgrounds and parks, to be enjoyed by those who prefer passive recreation.		
<i>Action:</i> Coordinate with long term park improvement planning	Ongoing	Parks Commission
Goal OSR 4: Make our parks, open space and recreation areas thriving facets of our economy.		

GOAL / OBJECTIVE / ACTION	TIMING	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Objective 4.1: Join forces and marketing efforts with existing recreation resources like Ski Butternut and Berkshire South to market parks and trails.		
<i>Action:</i> Contact Chamber of Commerce to develop brochures of information for the Chamber and Town websites.	2013	Town Planner
Objective 4.2: Take advantage of the emergence of “healthy living” trends.		
<i>Action:</i> Discuss recreational program options with GB Trails and Greenways.	2013	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Develop hike brochure, agricultural brochure, historic/cultural heritage brochures	2013	Town Planner
Objective 4.3: Market Great Barrington’s open space resources for competitive events.		
<i>Action:</i> Co-sponsor and support local and regional competitive events.	2014	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Develop a town event in town-owned spaces, or in partnership with local institutions and nonprofit conservation partners.	2015	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Encourage employee participation in competitive events	Ongoing	Town Planner
Goal OSR 5: Provide linkage between our parks, open space, and recreation resources as well as to community facilities, neighborhoods, and village centers.		
Objective 5.1: Promote local and regional trails to tourists, including the Appalachian Trail – prominently post GB Trails walking routes, biking routes, and trail route signs.		
<i>Action:</i> Work with Chamber of Commerce, AT Conference, AMC, and GB Trails and Greenways to develop promotional materials	Ongoing	Town Planner
Objective 5.2: Conduct walkability studies and prioritize improvements.		
<i>Action:</i> Identify future walkability sites	2013	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Identify funding mechanisms including CPA funds and volunteer efforts	Ongoing	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Prioritize improvements and include in Capital budget plan	Ongoing	Town Planner
Objective 5.3: Accommodate bike trails, sidewalks, and crosswalks when any road is rehabilitated.		
<i>Action:</i> Develop Town policy to guide Capital budget plan and road improvements	2013	Town Planner
Objective 5.4: Connect Great Barrington and Housatonic village with a bike route or off-road bike trail.		
<i>Action:</i> Work with local bike advocates and regional partners to pick a preferred route.	2013	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Communicate with Mass DOT about their plans and timing of Route 7 improvements	2013	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Communicate with Housatonic Railroad about possibility of a “rail with trail.”	2013	Town Planner
Objective 5.5: Complete the River Walk south, as detailed below in 8.2.		
<i>Action:</i> see 8.2		
Objective 5.6: Support the development of theme-based walking and biking trails, as the African American Heritage Trail has done for the region.		
<i>Action:</i> Meet with Historic, Cultural, and Recreational partners to identify existing and potential theme routes.	2013	Town Planner

GOAL / OBJECTIVE / ACTION	TIMING	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
<i>Action:</i> Work with partners to identify planning and development funds.	2013-2014	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Develop brochures and other materials and market through partners.	2014	Town Planner
Objective 5.7: Identify unprotected lands, including lands in Chapter 61 tax status, for potential permanent protection and integration into the recreation and trail system. Key parcels would include those that could complete trail systems, link recreation areas, and our neighborhoods.		
<i>Action:</i> Identify all Chapter lands	Ongoing	Principal Assessor
<i>Action:</i> Communicate with owners of Chapter lands about existing and future trail and open space conservation vision	2014	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Communicate with owners of Chapter lands about potential preservation options and funding sources including CPA.	2014	Town Planner
Goal OSR 6: Create new open space and recreational resources by partnering with the private sector.		
Objective 6.1: Improve access to the town-owned parts of East Mountain.		
<i>Action:</i> Map existing informal trails and incorporate into GIS system and trail maps	2013	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Investigate possibility for a trailhead with a map kiosk at Park Street or Quarry Street.	2013	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Work with trail partners, neighborhood, and youth groups to develop a maintenance and stewardship plan.	2014	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Install signage, mark trails, develop brochures, and publicize the trail	2015	Town Planner
Objective 6.2: Cooperate with the new owners of the Fairgrounds to improve the site and create a recreation and scenic space that benefits the entire community.		
<i>Action:</i> Cooperate with owners as often as necessary, provide information regarding planning and development process, town trail and conservation vision, and funding possibilities including local, state, and foundation grants.	Ongoing	Town Planner
Objective 6.3: Work with pet owners, trainers, and kennel clubs to create a dog park.		
<i>Action:</i> Convene dog park enthusiasts to identify need and potential location.	2014	Town Planner
Objective 6.4: Complete the accessible trails in Lake Mansfield Forest through the existing partnership with Lake Mansfield Alliance and building on their success in securing funding, building partnerships, and encouraging volunteer stewardship.		
<i>Action:</i> Work Lake Mansfield Alliance and Conservation Commission and develop a project schedule and potential partners	2014	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Secure funding for completion of trail	2015	Town Planner
Goal OSR 7: Protect, maintain, and care for street trees.		
Objective 7.1: Care for our town's trees effectively. Mature trees define our neighborhood streets, add distinctive character and value, and reduce our carbon footprint. Utilize the expertise of the Tree Committee and Tree City resources.		
<i>Action:</i> Develop a maintenance plan and policy for town trees	2014	DPW and Tree Committee
<i>Action:</i> Develop a tree plan.	2014	DPW and Tree Committee

GOAL / OBJECTIVE / ACTION	TIMING	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Goal OSR 8: Embrace the Housatonic River.		
Objective 8.1: Take a formal position on the cleanup strategy for the Housatonic River		
<i>Action:</i> Gather information about the cleanup strategy by working with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission then develop a formal Town position.	2013	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Comment regularly and often in the public process to ensure Town concerns are heard and met.	Ongoing	Town Planner
Objective 8.2: Complete the Housatonic River Greenway trail (the River Walk south)		
<i>Action:</i> Discuss the vision with each landowner	2013	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Budget for trail engineering: CPA funds could be used	2014	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Develop a maintenance and stewardship cooperative agreement with trail partners, landowners, conservation organizations, youth, seniors, and so forth.	2014	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Research and secure grant funds for construction, including CPA funds	2015-2016	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Secure permits as necessary	2015-2016	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Complete the trail	2018	Town Planner
Objective 8.3: Develop a River Walk in Housatonic, extending from the Monument Mills to the Berkshire Mountain Bakery, and south, if possible.		
<i>Action:</i> Discuss with property owners possibilities for access	2014	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Develop a vision map	2014-2015	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Develop a maintenance and stewardship cooperative agreement with trail partners, landowners, conservation organizations, youth, seniors, and so forth.	2015-2016	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Complete individual sections as redevelopment occurs.	Ongoing	Town Planner
Objective 8.4: Create more canoe and kayak launches on the River.		
<i>Action:</i> Additional launches should be developed in Housatonic, Rising Pond, and at Division Street.	2015	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> The launch at the former Searles School should be improved (designs funded by the Natural Resource Damages fund are already completed), or a new launch could be explored at the redeveloped New England Log Homes site.	2015	Town Planner
Objective 8.5: Extend the downtown River Walk north to Cottage Street and Stanley Park.		
<i>Action:</i> Discuss vision with property owners and the Great Barrington Land Conservancy	Ongoing	Town Planner
Goal OSR 9: Protect Biodiversity, Habitat, and Natural Resources.		
Objective 9.1: Track, monitor, and combat invasive species.		
<i>Action:</i> Convene town agencies and identify areas of jurisdiction	2014	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> With town agencies, develop a comprehensive management plan	2015	Town Planner
Objective 9.2: Protect, preserve, and connect habitat areas to one another. Open space conservation should		

GOAL / OBJECTIVE / ACTION	TIMING	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
prioritize lands and waters that will connect and increase vital habitat areas. Land use controls like sensitive home siting and conservation subdivisions can protect and preserve habitat areas. Stream crossings including culverts and bridges must use the latest connectivity standards to maintain water connectivity even in times of drought.		
<i>Action:</i> Develop sensitive home siting guidelines.	2014	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Review zoning and subdivision regulations with Planning Board	2014	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Identify stream crossings, jurisdictions, and develop improvement plan	2014	DPW
Objective 9.3: Minimize stormwater runoff. In municipal projects, use the latest best management practices to collect and infiltrate stormwater runoff. In private projects, use zoning and subdivision standards to require the latest best management practices.		
<i>Action:</i> Ensure zoning and development regulations require best management practices	2014	Town Planner
Objective 9.4: Protect buffer zones around lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. These areas provide aquatic and terrestrial habitat, help infiltrate and clean runoff, stabilize river banks, and perform countless other ecosystem services important in times of drought or deluge.		
<i>Action:</i> Continue enforcement of the Wetlands and Rivers Protection Act.	Ongoing	Conservation Commission
<i>Action:</i> Develop a strategy to communicate regulations and policies to all landowners	Ongoing	Conservation Commission
Objective 9.5: Continue stormwater improvements and planning at Lake Mansfield. Pay special attention to Lake Mansfield Road, the boat launch and Knob Hill, and the beach area. Engineering and designs for improving Lake Mansfield Road must account for the safety and enjoyment of all users of the recreation area, including bicyclists, fishermen, runners and walkers, as well as vehicles. Work with Bard College at Simon's Rock to establish a long term water quality monitoring and education program.		
<i>Action:</i> Develop conceptual engineering plans for the roadway to investigate potential improvement options and cost estimates	2013	DPW with Lake Mansfield Task Force
<i>Action:</i> Identify funding possibilities including 319 grants and partnerships with State DEP and Office of Fishing and Boating Access, and budget for preferred option	2014-2015	DPW with Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Finalize taking and ownership of boat launch parcel.	2013	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> Move ahead with boat launch engineering and improvements with State Office of fishing and Boating Access	2014-2015	Town Planner
<i>Action:</i> With all Lake Mansfield improvements, maintain regular communications about project options, timing, impacts, and benefits with neighbors and the community	Ongoing	Town Planner with Lake Mansfield Task Force

Section Ten: Public Comments

This section includes review letters from Town Boards and Commissions as well as announcements, meeting notices, surveys and questionnaires used to invite public comments to the draft and final draft OSRP.

**Include review letters from PB, BRPC, and BoS (chief elected official)
Also include Parks Comm and Cons Comm**

Appendix

A: Outreach Materials, Flyers, Questionnaires, Articles, and Meeting Results